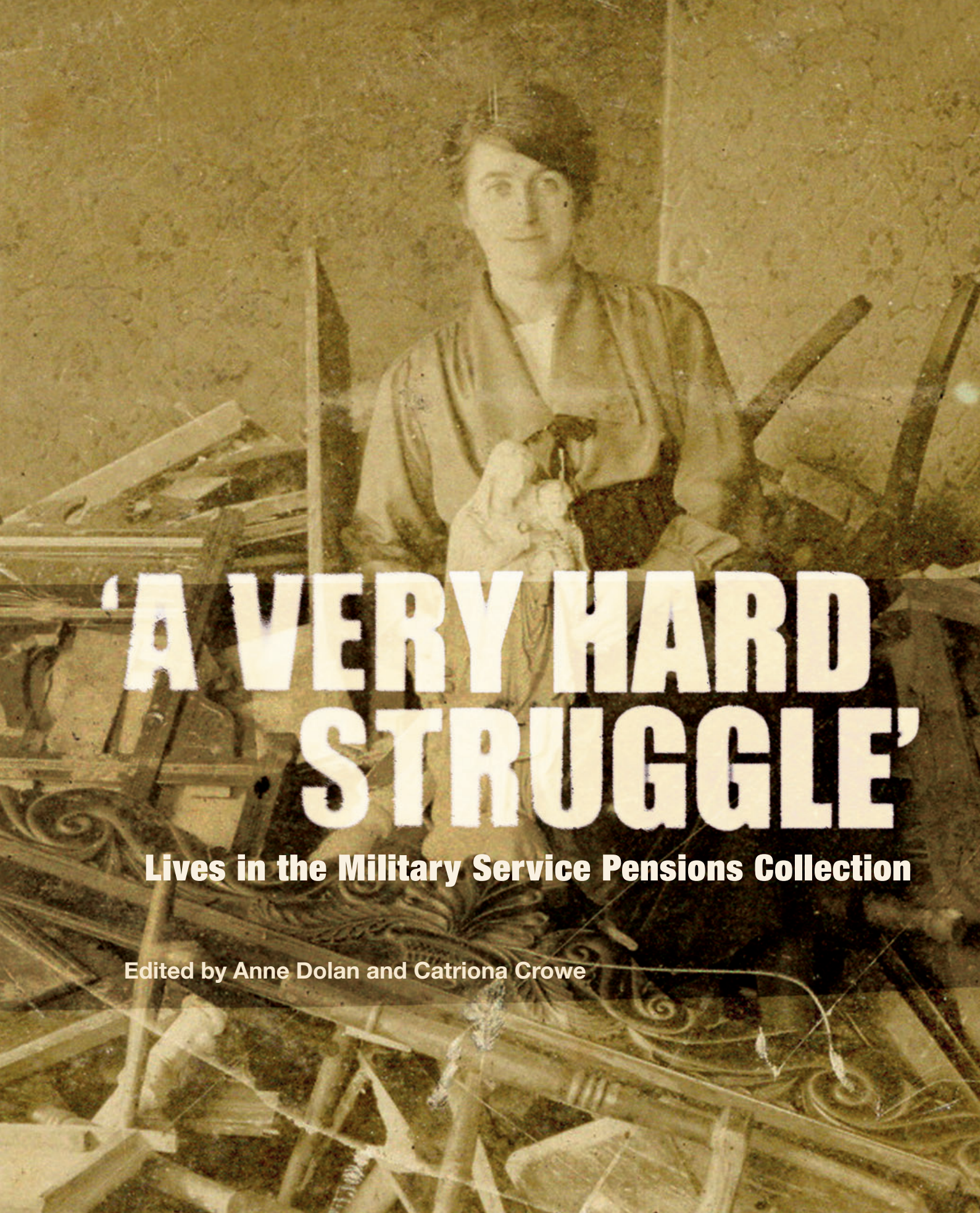

'A VERY HARD STRUGGLE'

Lives in the Military Service Pensions Collection

Edited by Anne Dolan and Catriona Crowe

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REPRISALS – (Dubgarven Ambush.)

Miss English and her Wrecked Furniture,
Abbeyside, March 29th 1921.

‘A very hard struggle’
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Photographed with what remained of her possessions, Margaret Condon submitted this photograph as proof of all she lost in 1921.

Reference:
Margaret Condon
MSP34REF59945.

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Preface

Tánaiste and Minister for Defence, Micheál Martin, TD

When studying important periods and themes in our past the greatest constraint faced by historians is the lack of detailed, first-hand accounts. And within this there is a particular problem in dealing with revolutionary periods because, quite naturally, few new countries or administrations have the time or inclination to stop and systematically gather information on recent events. As such, we are often left only with the memoirs and letters of prominent figures – whose interest in 'setting the record straight' can be more urgent to them than showing the messy reality of the past.

However in Ireland the situation is very different when it comes to the key years of our revolution and our civil war. This is because of two major initiatives in the early decades of our independent state: written evidence used for awarding pensions and medals, and the project of gathering witness accounts.

The systematic gathering of first-hand reminiscences by the Bureau of Military History may well have been one of the first ever national oral history projects ever undertaken. I believe that the decision taken by government at the turn of this millennium to open these records to the public and scholars alike has had a transformative impact on the writing of our modern history. As you can see from many of the excellent works published during our centenary commemorations, a new generation of scholars has used this resource to breathe new life into our engagement with and understanding of our revolution.

But equally as important has been the process of cataloguing and making accessible the Pensions Collection. The Military Service (1916-1923) Pensions Collection project, a joint Department of Defence and Defence Forces contribution to the Decade of Centenaries, has been a remarkable project of which we as a nation should be deeply proud.

Like all archives, it is not a complete picture of those times, and not every statement contained within its files can be taken alone without seeking other evidence. However, there is a deep authenticity to be found there – an authenticity which brings to life what was a time where the historic and the mundane were side by side.

In these files we hear of the heroic deeds of a small nation's struggle for independence. We hear of disappointments and tragic divisions – of years which often left behind both pride and trauma which defined the lives of these still young men and women.

The files raise many issues without claiming to answer them all, but they are a comprehensive foundation for aiding our understanding of social, economic and political issues of those times and how they related to each other.

They are also a source for many families of details of the lives of relatives who are long gone, but whose memories remain precious.

This has been a genuinely world-class archival, historical and technological project. Work involves cataloguing and partially digitising nearly 275,000 files dealing with the service of qualifying members of the Irish Volunteers, the Irish Citizen Army, the Hibernian Rifles, Cumann na mBan, Na Fianna Éireann, the Irish Republican Army and records of the Department from the period April 1916 to the 30th of September 1923.

The work contained in this publication gives us a glimpse into the huge future potential of the archive, looking as it does at some of the unacknowledged and untold stories of our post-revolutionary society.

This book explores the potential of the Collection relating to the relationships, activities and life experiences of those directly involved in revolutionary activity and those who weren't directly involved but whose entire life experiences were shaped by it.

Since the first release of military pension material it has been clear that the files capture all sorts of aspects of the reality of early twentieth-century Ireland, that they contain many thousands of otherwise unrecorded and unheard voices, that they capture women and men living complicated and often very difficult lives.

This book will allow readers to begin to really hear what those voices have to say. I hope and am confident that this work will inspire a new generation of users of the MSPC archive to embrace it as a key source for the study of modern Ireland.

As we approach the end of the decade of centenaries, I can think of no more appropriate or productive legacy.

I would like to thank all those who contributed to this important publication. I would also like to thank those who continue to put so much work and passion into this project, including Ms Cécile Chemin and the staff of the MSPC.

A special thanks also to the Interdepartmental Steering Committee who oversee the project which is comprised of representatives of the Department of the Taoiseach, the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media, the National Archives of Ireland, Ms. Catriona Crowe, the Defence Forces, the Military Archives and my own Department, the Department of Defence.

Go raibh míle maith agaibh.

Acknowledgements

This book and all the authors in it owe a considerable debt of gratitude to the Military Service Pensions Collection team, but particularly to Cécile Chemin and Leanne Ledwidge, who have inspired this work. The Military Service Pensions Collection has already proved itself to be an essential source for the history of the Irish revolution, but it has a purpose far beyond that. It is a record of all sorts of people and the variety of life they lived, and the MSPC team are to be thanked for their extraordinary skill and dedication in bringing us into the lives of so many as they made their ways through twentieth-century Ireland.

We are indebted to archivists and staff at the National Library of Ireland (Berni Metcalfe), National Museum of Ireland (Brenda Malone), the Dublin Port Archive (Marta Lopez and Lar Joye), University College Cork Archives, Digital Repository of Ireland, Irish Capuchin Provincial Archives (Dr Brian Kirby), the Office of Public Works (Brian Crowley), the Royal College of Physicians of Ireland (Harriet Wheelock), Kilmainham Gaol (Aoife Torpey), University of Galway Library and Archives (Niamh Ní Charra) as well as David Kenny and Colbert Kearney for their permission to access and re-produce materials from their collections. We extend these thanks to Nuala O'Connor and photographers Fiona Morgan and Tara Thomas.

We are thankful for the continued support and assistance of the Executive Branch staff, at the Department of Defence for their willingness to contribute to research through publishing projects. We would like to express our deep appreciation for the personnel of the Defence Forces Printing Press, especially Captain Colm Fox and CQMS Seán Murphy for their guidance and expertise and we acknowledge the support of Comdt Ayiotis, and all the staff of the Military Archives as well as Lt Col. Eugene Cooke, Director Defence Forces Public Relations Branch.

We would like to express our deepest appreciation to Ger Garland for her patience and for turning this into such a rich and beautiful book.

Books are always the product of encouragement and good advice, and thanks for both are due to Joseph Clarke and Ciarán Wallace, but none more so than Catriona Crowe. Historians of Ireland are forever in her debt.

Note on the text

To capture the nature of the interactions of applicants and correspondents with the Military Service Pensions Board and its bureaucracy all material quoted in this book is reproduced in its original form. Words are transcribed as they appeared to recognise the challenges many faced when confronted by forms, by the regulations of the pensions process, and by the urgency to have their case heard. Errors, whether of spelling or punctuation, and omissions are maintained for this purpose.

Military Service Pensions Collection material is cited in footnotes as follows:
MSPC (denoting the Collection), followed by the unique file reference. This file reference is needed to find an individual's application using the 'Reference code' search facility in the MSPC catalogue.

Abbreviations

Adj.	Adjutant
Amt	Amount
AOH	Ancient Order of Hibernians
APA, 1923	Army Pensions Act, 1923
ASU	Active Service Unit
BMH, S	Bureau of Military History, Voice Recording
BMH, WS	Bureau of Military History, Witness Statement
CAB	Cabinet
Capt.	Captain
Cmd	Command
C. na mBan	Cumann na mBan
Co.	County
Col.	Colonel
Comdt	Commandant
Coy	Company
CP	Collins Papers
Dept.	Department
DG	Director General, Raidió Teilifís Éireann
DSER	Dublin South-Eastern Railway
FE	Fianna Éireann
GAA	Gaelic Athletic Association
GHQ	General Headquarters
GNR	Great Northern Railway
GOC	General Officer Commanding in Ireland
Gov.	Governor
GPO	General Post Office, Dublin
GSWR	Great Southern and Western Railway
HA	Home Affairs
HC	House of Commons
HO	Home Office
Hqrs/HQs	Headquarters
IAA	Irish American Alliance
ICA	Irish Citizen Army
ILP&TUC	Irish Labour Party and Trade Union Congress
INA&VDF	Irish National Aid and Volunteer Dependents' Fund
IRA	Irish Republican Army
IRB	Irish Republican Brotherhood
IRP	Irish Republican Police
ITGWU	Irish Transport and General Workers' Union
ITUC	Irish Trade Union Congress
Lieut.	Lieutenant
LFM	Language Freedom Movement
MAI	Military Archives of Ireland
MPGWU	Marine Port and General Workers' Union
MSP	Military Service Pension
MSPC	Military Service (1916-1923) Pensions Collection
NAI	National Archives of Ireland
n.d.	no date
NLI	National Library of Ireland
No.	Number
NUI	National University of Ireland
O/C	Officer Commanding
o.c.	o'clock
P.P.	Parish Priest
PRONI	Public Record Office of Northern Ireland
PTSD	Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder
RIC	Royal Irish Constabulary
RUC	Royal Ulster Constabulary
RTÉ	Raidió Teilifís Éireann
Sergt	Sergeant
SIPTU	Services Industrial Professional and Technical Union
SSFA	Soldiers' and Sailors' Families' Association
TB	Tuberculosis
T/Cadet	Temporary Cadet
TD	Teachta Dála
TNA	The National Archives, United Kingdom
TUC	Trades Union Congress
UCD	University College Dublin
UCDA	University College Dublin Archives
WO	War Office
WUI	Workers' Union of Ireland

Introduction

Anne Dolan

In January 1943 the woman on the cover of this book wrote to the minister for defence, Oscar Traynor, to ask him 'as an Honest Man' to reconsider her claim for a military service pension. 'After waiting for months, filled with hope', Margaret Condon's application had been rejected, something 'I didn't deserve … from anybody'. All she wanted now was '"Right & Honest" dealing' and she thought it was within his power to see that it was done. She had reckoned up the costs: she had given, and now, in 1943, she was owed: 'I did my Best, for all these I.R.A Boys, I risked my own life – & I lost all I had – for their sakes'.[1] And she sent her photograph taken in 1921 as proof of that: 'Here's all that's left of me – in my Happy Home' she had written on the back, but by 1943 she needed more tangible consolation than her statue of the Madonna and child could give.[2] With her health now 'completely broken down' and her husband's pension application also come to naught, she had 'our 5 young children praying that Mama would get good news for the "New Year"', but to no avail.[3] A blunt note informed her, like so many others, that 'you are not a person to whom the Act applies'.[4]

Margaret Condon's application tells us all sorts about her War of Independence in Abbeyside in County Waterford, about the evenings and nights taken up with Cumann na mBan, about the money she raised, the dances she organised, the men she fed, even the 'underclothing' she bought for them, and the 'ciggaretts' she gave them 'free from my shop'.[5] Her war had put her in the way of harm: there were 'no nights without raids' on her home; there was 'the revolver pointed at my chest'; there were the things she can't have imagined doing when it all began: hiding guns after an ambush, moving 'poor Pat Keatings body'; all by the time she was twenty-three.[6] But in her letters to the Pensions Board she gives us more than her résumé of her 'fight for Irish freedom'; we get a life lived hard in 1942 and 1943, we get a woman in her forties looking back and reckoning with her lot.

And her lot had certainly changed. She had married one of those IRA men she had hidden in her home: perhaps a wartime romance followed quickly by a truce-time wedding.[7] She went from Margaret English, a 'merchant', to wife, to mother, to a type of poverty that left her too poor to travel to Dublin in 1942 to appear before the Pensions Board.[8] Too poor, but also too ill to make the trip, she gives a stark glimpse of the methods of small-town medicine, of a doctor who 'ordered all my teeth out, as my nerves are shattered'.[9] Desperate, she implored the Board directly, 'hoping you will do your best for me', and she called in the few connections she had, but a letter from P.J. Little, then minister for posts and telegraphs, did her no good.[10] She applied too late; she had forgotten to sign her form.[11] And so, the letters stopped. But in the handful she did send, there is hope and expectation and the assumption that what had been given would be recognised; there is nostalgia, perhaps, for more exciting times, there are grievances, and growing discontents, and the coming shame that 'All Abbeyside & Dungarvan' knew 'what I went through' but still no pension cheque.[12] Even in her short file, in an application that failed, there are histories here of struggling and of getting by, of being slighted, of being overlooked, histories of disappointment and middle age, of health and harm and what the revolution asked, of being a woman in her forties, married in a small place, of the cruelty of knowing at forty-five that 'I lost all I had' at twenty-three.[13] In this one application there are histories of things the Pensions Board might never have expected us to find. And the point of this book is to begin, and to encourage others, to write those histories now.

The Military Service Pensions Collection has let us find the many Margaret Condons we could not have found before; it has, since the first release of material in 2014, along with the release of applications for disability pensions and dependants' and widows' allowances, brought within the scope of the history of the Irish revolution more men and women, more forms of activism and participation than any other single source. It brings us further down the ranks, and far beyond the ranks, in ways that the Bureau of Military History, the Ernie O'Malley interviews, the Richard Mulcahy papers amongst others never could. And it will continue to change how we write about the revolution long after the Decade of Centenaries is done. But the challenge of an application like Margaret Condon's, and the challenge of the Collection as a whole, is possibly one of choice: what do we choose to do with a collection that may well change what we think about the Irish revolution, but might reveal much of the fabric of twentieth-century Ireland as well?

There is certainly an issue of scale. Each application brings with it so many more than the solitary name on the cover of a file. Margaret Condon brings a husband, five children, a doctor, two government ministers, several civil servants, her referees, Pat Keating, and a Miss Broderick who took her in and gave her a bed in 1921. There are the men she hid, the police she feared, the friends she made, and that's just the people. There are the emotions she expressed, the poverty she endured, and the many causes of those 'nerves shattered' that we will never know.[14] And her file spanned just a short

1 Margaret Condon to Oscar Traynor, 4 Jan. 1942, MSPC, MSP34REF59945 Margaret Condon (née English).

2 Photograph taken after the destruction of her home, submitted as part of her application. The note on the back finished with 'I'll carry my cross for Ireland Lord' after Thomas Ashe, ibid.

3 Margaret Condon to Oscar Traynor, 4 Jan. 1942, ibid.

4 J.J. Horgan to Margaret Condon, 31 Dec. 1942, ibid.

5 Application form, 27 Apr. 1942; Margaret Condon to the Pensions Board, 2 Nov. 1942, ibid.

6 Margaret Condon to the Pensions Board, 2 Nov. 1942; Margaret Condon to Oscar Traynor, 4 Jan. 1942, ibid.

7 Margaret Condon to Oscar Traynor, 4 Jan. 1942, ibid.

8 Marriage certificate of Margaret English and Laurence Condon, 9 Feb. 1922 (https://www.irishgenealogy.ie/en/) (accessed 12 Apr. 2023); Margaret Condon to the Pensions Board, 19 July 1942, MSPC, MSP34REF59945 Margaret Condon (née English).

9 Margaret Condon to Oscar Traynor, 4 Jan. 1942, ibid.

10 Margaret Condon to the Pensions Board, 19 July 1942; Secretary to P.J. Little to Secretary to Minister for Defence, 9 Jan. 1943, ibid.

11 Finance Office to Margaret Condon, 23 Mar. 1942, ibid.

12 Margaret Condon to Oscar Traynor, 4 Jan. 1942, ibid.

13 Ibid.

14 Margaret Condon to the Pensions Board, 2 Nov. 1942, ibid.

few months. The successful applicants come with decades of notes and letters and memos, years of chits and receipts, files that broadened out to take in a lifetime of family and the maybe mixed fortunes of good years and bad. They bring children and new addresses, the reach and the geography of a life. They bring old ailments and new illnesses, age, and spidery handwriting, and the coming of everything to a sudden stop: a death cert, the cost of a funeral, sometimes a pension passed on, always balances owed, balances left. Michael White applied for his pension in 1924. In a file spanning almost fifty years he comes from its pages burdened, restless, settled, at ease, and old.[15] He had a short revolution and a long life: it is hard to be a historian of one without being a historian of both.

Which is what many of the essays in this book are grappling with. Some explore aspects of the revolution which the MSPC has made it easier or possible to see. But what we see always comes shaped by the circumstances in which the applicant applied. Michael White's retelling of his revolution cannot be separated from what was at stake for him in 1925 and 1926: 'Sir in the name of God when are we going to get our money. I am in a terrible fix for what I owe and if I don't get an advance for which I have wrote I will be in the workhouse'.[16] Worried for the health of his wife because 'the Dr off Hollis St Marterniery Hospital says she Needs a change of Climet' meant every line he wrote about his revolution had to count, had to impress; there was £34 13*s*. 6*d*. a year at stake and he needed every bit of it down to that last six pence.[17]

White's was one kind of struggle. But there are many more in this book: the struggle with all sorts of poverties, with precarious work and poor health; the struggle with forms and bureaucracy, with bean counters who don't seem to understand, with language and writing and having to sign a form with an X. There are the struggles of families in all the shapes they took, the struggles of those left behind with the consequences of a life lost, with all those years of living after 1923 with someone altered, someone broken, someone altogether changed. There is the struggle with expectations, with resentment, with the jealousy at another's success; the struggle of feeling hard done by, of being forgotten, of being let down. There are the struggles of getting old, of looking back, the struggles of knowing how life had turned out and remembering how it might have been. And they are only some. There are more this book has missed that others will find.

If the book is about struggle it is also about dependence, and not just the dependence on the pension system to provide but also to evolve, to recognise different types of need, and to meet the growing expectations people had over time that the state would take a greater role to relieve their distress. We have known for a long time why Irish families depended on the labour of their children to make ends meet, but the MSPC lets us see the forms that dependence took, the perilously balanced family arithmetics that could plunge into penury if a son or daughter's modest earnings suddenly stopped. The types of work, the amounts handed over to mothers at the end of a week, how often parents through hardship or illness themselves could no longer work becomes clearer than before. In so many of these applications there are the makings of new histories of family life.

15 MSPC, 24SP202 Michael White.

16 Michael White to Army Pensions Department, 10 Feb. 1925, ibid.

17 Michael White to Army Finance Office, 21 Feb. 1926, ibid.

Several of the essays in this book draw out different forms of dependence, particularly the dependent positions women found themselves in, whether as a consequence of their own activism, or as wives, mothers, widows, sisters faced with the consequences of how other's decisions had changed their lives. The MSPC takes us behind Evelyn Flanagan's front door. She had applied for a pension in her own right, and when her husband, Patrick, died in 1935 'he left utterly unprovided for, five young children – the eldest 12, the youngest barely 1½ years'. She also found herself responsible for 'His mother, an elderly woman in delicate health'.[18] Though she was told 'we do not take up his time in such matters', she wrote to Éamon de Valera in June 1936 to remind him that her husband 'served under yourself in Bolands Mill', that one child was already in Peamount Sanatorium and that 'my little daughter is in danger of contracting the same complaint', all because 'I am unable to give the proper nourishment which they were getting during their father's lifetime'. Though getting by on money from the Irish White Cross she was loath to move from 'a good district' in Ranelagh, which she admitted 'is fairly expensive in its upkeep' for fear of 'the added difficulty of bringing up boys' in 'a less respectable neighbourhood'. She confessed to being on 'the verge of a nervous breakdown' but she still wanted to avoid at all costs a social fall.[19] Her application takes us back to a marriage in April 1921, to the birth of a son in December, to the many times her growing family changed address, to the beginning of her husband's problems with his health, to the many different hospitals he spent time in, and that the cause of his problems was 'the extreme mental and nervous stress he underwent'.[20] We can know the £34 18*s*. 6*d*. it cost to bury him, the job she got in the Department of Justice, the life she found herself living because her husband's life, as his doctors claimed, was so drastically changed by what he had seen and done in 1920 and 1921.[21] We might count the costs of the revolution in such a file or see it as a means to understand one woman's complicated life.

And the same could be said for so many more. Nora Condon tried to apply for a pension in 1953. She was due to marry Michael Fitzgerald when he died on hunger strike in 1920 in Cork. In a letter signed with a rather pointed 'Miss' she wrote that after his death she had to 'go out & earn my living', that 'I did not mind, while I was young & able to work, but now I feel I will not be able to work much longer'. She thought it would be only fitting that 'the Irish Government should thank Michael Fitzgerald in some way for what he suffered' and was sure that 'the only thanks he would ask is that I would not be in want at the end of my days'.[22] Similarly, Mary Young applied for a dependant's allowance in 1955. Her brother had died a soldier with the Dublin Guards back in October 1922. When she applied she was fifty-one years old, a clerk in Phelan's furniture manufacturers where she earned £5 per week. She lived with her older sister Annie; Annie owned the house and Mary paid her rent.[23] Both Mary

18 Evelyn Flanagan to Éamon de Valera, June 1936, MSPC, MSP34REF1515 Evelyn Flanagan (née O'Brien).

19 Margaret Pearse to Oscar Traynor, 4 June 1936; Evelyn Flanagan to Eamon de Valera, June 1936, ibid.

20 John Dunne to Secretary, Army Pensions Board, 15 Oct. 1937, ibid.

21 Note by J.J.H. concerning funeral expenses, 24 Nov. 1935, MSPC, MSP34REF455 Patrick Flanagan; Application for a special allowance, 19 June 1962, MSPC, MSP34REF1515 Evelyn Flanagan (née O'Brien).

22 Nora Condon to Dept. of Defence, 28 Aug. 1953, MSPC, 49SP6656 Nora Condon.

23 Application for a dependant's allowance by Mary Agnes Young, 25 Jan. 1955, MSPC, 2D270 John Joseph Young.

Young and Nora Condon may have taken their time to apply, but after all that time in their decisions to apply they give us histories we have so far been slow to think about: histories of the fear of growing old, the fear of having no one to depend upon.

Mary Young's application also highlights other forms of dependence that this book only begins to touch upon: the dependence on the good memory or the good nature of referees and the willingness of the those who administered the pensions system to adapt the rules to an individual's needs. In response to her application Frank Henderson wrote apologetically but bluntly that 'I cannot recollect deceased'.[24] Harry Colley wrote a more benign reply: if her brother was 'the same Jack Young who was killed in Kerry … it would be a great pity if his sister's claim was lost'.[25] The office of the minister for defence decided to leave it to the Department of Finance to exercise discretion in favour of a grant for her even though thirty-three years had passed since her brother's death.[26] Success could be dependent on the confidence of an applicant in their own claim, in their ability to write with clarity, to speak with coherence and conviction if called for an interview. There is much to be done yet on how the system worked, not as a process, but rather how those individuals who kept the records, wrote the memos, and interpreted the regulations reacted to each case. We might surmise as to why the opinions of some referees were heeded more than others, or to what extent Garda reports to the Pensions Board of a family's circumstances or character reflected the moral registers at work at a given time in a given place, but there were reasons why some decisions must have been easier than others for those who administered the pensions and allowances to make. Because we come to the Collection chiefly through the Mary Youngs and the Margaret Condons the temptation is strong to take their side, the side of the individual trying to get '"Right & Honest" dealing' out of a hulking system that was slow to work and terse in its *pro forma* replies.[27] But for good or ill that system was by no means a faceless or an unfeeling one. Most applicants may have been told no, but there were all sorts of routes taken to get to that reply.

Illness shows itself in different ways in many of this book's essays, but there is so much more to uncover still. Our histories of health and illness are being written, but the MSPC shows not just the ubiquity of illness, but how those illnesses affected, narrowed people's lives. We have been quick to use the Collection to look for certain conditions, chiefly trauma, but maybe not the more familiar ones that were far more commonplace, far easier to find. But in a haste to diagnose, something most historians are not trained to do, we might instead listen to what illness felt like, how it was described, endured, hidden, how illnesses of all sorts constricted, cut short life.[28] There are histories here of what illness brought that are otherwise hard to find: the wife lost to breast cancer, so many miscarriages and premature births, the refusal to acknowledge a diagnosis of TB, the alcoholism, depression, the hearts that failed, all the ailments of old age, the illnesses come of lives lived poor and hard.[29] But there is more to find than that. A year before he died in 1973 Joseph Guilfoyle wrote a letter to the army finance officer because he was 'in wretched health' and wanted to put his mind at ease. He knew he had 'not much longer to live' and he needed to know 'whether my widow would be entitled to any continuing pension … she, herself, is a wheel-chair invalid for the past seven years, so in these circumstances you will appreciate my anxiety in the matter'.[30] At that point they were married almost fifty years and he was worrying about her life with him gone. And, so, a history of one thing brings the history of another: illness lets us see affection, the married lives of so many women and men, the admissions that 'I have a little Domistic Trouble at Home', that 'I am in very poor circumstances, having a wife and five children to maintain', that a husband 'finds it very hard to rear family in one room', that the tangle of affection and responsibility could be terrifying.[31]

A number of essays in this book draw light on what the Collection can tell us about all sorts of different women's lives in twentieth-century Ireland, but there is more to be said about how the Collection lets us see women and men together, as well as how the Collection might open up the history of masculinity in an Irish context. The revolution has prompted some of the most innovative research on the history of masculinity in Ireland, but rather than discourses about masculinity idealised, about youth and violence, about militarism and hyper-masculinity, many of the men we might find in the MSPC embody a much more fragile masculinity instead.[32] There are men worrying and getting older, coming to realise that the power they once had amounted to little now. There are men asking for help, admitting helplessness; this is masculinity under an obligation to others, at the mercy of the good word of an officer all those years after revolution was done. It is masculinity hoping some glimmer of camaraderie could still be counted on, that something of who a man once was could be recalled. It is masculinity frustrated as applications went for months unheeded, no better than anybody else. But the pensions process also provided a place to say in private what could not be publicly said, a place to rage, to let the grievances be aired, and though some assumed their letters went straight to 'the waste paper basket' someone got to hear the disappointment, some satisfaction must have been taken in telling a government minister it was all 'a farce'.[33]

What is common to many of the essays and much of what you have just read is the bleakness the Collection lets us find. While the notion that we can assume to know another's torment is a flawed and a conceited one, we do seem drawn most by the harshest realities of people's lives. There may

24 Frank Henderson to Finance Office, 4 June 1954, ibid.

25 Harry Colley to Secretary, Military Service Registration Board, 24 June 1954, ibid.

26 S. Ó Cearnaigh to Secretary, Dept. of Finance, 26 Feb. 1955, ibid.

27 Margaret Condon to Oscar Traynor, 4 Jan. 1942, MSPC, MSP34REF59945 Margaret Condon (née English).

28 See Graham Dawson, 'The meaning of "moving on": from trauma to the history and memory of emotions in "post-conflict" Northern Ireland' in *Irish University Review*, xlvii, 1 (May 2017).

29 For example, MSPC, 24SP1605 James Joseph Slattery; MSPC, MSP34REF2070 William Conroy.

30 Joseph Guilfoyle to Army Finance Officer, 28 July 1972, MSPC, 24SP7912 Joseph Guilfoyle.

31 Michael White to Mr Horgan, 23 Sept. 1929, MSPC, 24SP202 Michael White; Edward Devitt to Frank Aiken, 5 Nov. 1934; Joseph O'Connor to M.S. Sheppard, 24 Apr. 1933, MSPC, MSP34REF2211 Edward Devitt.

32 For example, Aidan Beatty, *Masculinity and power in Irish nationalism, 1884-1938* (Basingstoke, 2016); Jane G.V. McGaughey, *Ulster's men: Protestant Unionist masculinities and militarization in the north of Ireland, 1912-1923* (Montreal & Kingston, 2012); Jennifer Redmond, 'Revolutionary masculinities' in *Irish Studies Review*, xxix, 2 (2021); Rebecca Anne Barr, Sean Brady and Jane McGaughey (eds), *Ireland and masculinities in history* (Basingstoke, 2019); Marnie Hay, *Na Fianna Éireann and the Irish Revolution, 1909-23: scouting for rebels* (Manchester, 2019); Sikata Banerjee, *Muscular nationalism: gender, violence and empire in India and Ireland, 1914-2004* (New York, 2012).

33 Edward Devitt to Frank Aiken, 28 May 1935, MSP, MSP34REF2211 Edward Devitt.

be more at stake in finding them, and maybe the pensions process by its nature put a premium on stressing the difficulties an applicant found themselves in, but there are all sorts of contentments, happinesses, to be found if we can be convinced to be inclined. There are the quiet social climbs as well as the devastating falls; one job succeeded by another better one, addresses changing from rented rooms to family homes. Often the distressing times did pass. There are the many marriages that came out of revolution; there are letters that note in passing the birth of a child, the marriage of a daughter, the coming of a grandchild. There is a history of friendship, the survival of connections that just happened to form in revolution, but that last throughout a life. Paddy O'Daly and Joe Leonard have long been connected by what we know of their War of Independence, but the MSPC tells us that Joe Leonard was the executor of Paddy O'Daly's will.[34] The will in the file of another squad veteran, Vinny Byrne, gives us faith instead of friendship; he left money to different priests in different parishes 'for Masses to be said for the repose of my Soul'.[35] It may not seem an obvious place to find them, but piety and devotion leave all sorts of complicated traces in MSPC files. There are histories of all sorts of things if we are inquisitive enough to look.

The essays in this book take different approaches to the MSPC, but whether microhistories, histories of gender, histories of the family, histories of emotions, whether exploring language, youth, poverty, illness, crime, they pose questions about how we choose to think about people in the past. The people who come from the MSPC files are awkward and cantankerous, worried and gracious, rushing, stumbling through the confusions and the certainties of a life. Their files give us so much to go on but for all that they give they keep much more to themselves. In every pension form filled, in every letter sent, in every Margaret Condon or Michael White we might find, the MSPC questions how readily we presume to know what it was to live their lives.

Pages 19-21

James Carrigan outlines his service with Fianna Éireann, the Irish Volunteers, the IRA, and the National Army and the 'very hard struggle' he faced after 1923.

Reference:
James Carrigan 24SP2477.

34 Will of Paddy O'Daly, 17 Apr. 1957, MSPC, 24SP424 Paddy O'Daly.

35 Will of Vincent Byrne, 10 Mar. 1993, MSPC, 24SP3162 Vincent Byrne.

I

24. North Clarence St.
Dublin.
5th December 1924.

Dear Sir.

I became a member of Na Fianna Éireann in the year 1911. and served in same until 1916. when I became a member of C. Coy. 1st Batt. Dublin Brigade. I.V. in February. 1916. I served in same until. I was transferred (on account of my Motor Driving experience) to the Dublin Brigade Transport. in which I served until December 1920. when I transferred to the Active Service Unit. on the 1st January 1921. I served with the A.S. Unit. until about August 17th 1921. when I returned to my old Company, that is C. Coy. 1st Batt. D.B. in same until I joined the National Army Transport. at South Wall. Dublin. on the 10th Feb. 1922. I served in the Transport until March 19th 1923. when I transferred. to the Marine Investigation Department, taking up duty at the North Wall. Dublin. on the 20th March. 1923. I was attached to the M. I. D. until that unit was disbanded on the 28th Dec. 1923.

While serving in the Fianna. I took part in the Howth Gun-Running. and every other engagement in which the Fianna. participated

While attached to the I.V. and I. R. A. I took part in the Insurrection of Easter Week 1916. the Hold up of the Kings Inns. Henrietta st Dublin the attack on the British Military Lorry in Church st. Dublin. (Kevin Barry was captured during this operation) I also took part in most of the operations carried out by the I.R.A.

While attached to the A.S. Unit I took part in nearly every operation carried out by same, amongst others being the burning of the Custom House Dublin.

While serving with the National Army. I was attached to the Transport, and served in Dublin and Kerry. up to the time of my transfer to the Marine Investigation. Department.

While attached to the M.I.D. I served in Dublin. Dun-Loaghaire. and Co. Tirconnaill. until the unit was disbanded, when I returned to civil life.

I found it very hard to get work, and did not succeed in getting any work, until the Gover-ment Road Scheme came along, when I got a job using a pick and shovel, at the moderate salary of £2-10-0. per week, and when you take into

consideration, the fact, that I am the only one at home, who is working, and also the fact, that out of my meagre salary, I have to keep my Aunt & my Brother (who cant find work) and Myself. I feel that you will agree, with me, when I say that it is a very hard struggle.

So hoping to have an early and satisfactory reply to my application. I thank you in anticipation

Yours very Sincerely.

James Carrigan.

'A lump sum would be altogether undoing her…' [1]
Dependency claims: an overview of the army pensions legislation

Cécile Chemin

Some of the most fascinating material of the Military Service Pensions Collection is contained in the claims lodged by the dependants of those who died in active service during the revolutionary period or in the years that followed. These files are some of the most interesting due to the nature of information they yield, but it is also important to note that without them, a significant portion of participants would not be represented at all. Their existence gives a voice to the dead and also to the many civilians (women, mainly mothers and widows are a large majority) who lost sons, brothers, husbands during the revolutionary period. These claims also represent the aftermath of a short but pivotal and intense conflict since 1916 and illustrate how not only the conflict but also the pension machine impacted families across Ireland and shaped the lives of countless individuals.

Material generated through the systematic investigation of the level of financial dependency claimed by parents, widows, and children gives us a unique glimpse into the living circumstances of individuals and families from the mid-1920s, 1930s, and later years. Many seemingly straightforward cases reveal tragic backgrounds in which poverty, class, and grief all play a role. They also expose the economic vulnerability of women and children and reveal a very raw picture of the hardship people experienced as they tried to rebuild their lives and wrestled with complex personal situations before the emergence of a more comprehensive Irish welfare system.

In order to get a sense of what these families went through, it is essential to gain an understanding of army pension legislation. This essay will present an overview of the legislation (1923 to 1937) in relation to dependency claims, explain the modes of verification, and will point to cases of note. While the cataloguing of the MSP Collection is ongoing, some 3,000 cases of dependency have already been referenced.[2] The major part of those claims were lodged by mothers (1,282 cases), fathers (704), and widows (648). Brothers, sisters, and joint applications by both parents are also found throughout. The rest is divided between sons, daughters, uncles, and aunts.

I
The Acts

Army Pensions Act, 1923 [3]

The very first legislative piece to be enacted in recognition of the service of those who took part in the revolutionary period was the Army Pensions Act, 1923. For the new state, the immediate aftermath of the Civil War meant dealing with members of the National Army: those who died during the Civil War (on or after 1 April 1922) or were wounded during the Civil War (and who died within three years). Members of anti-Treaty forces were thus excluded. The APA, 1923, also included the dependants of members of the Irish Volunteers or ICA who lost their lives during the Easter Rising 1916, during the War of Independence, and those who were wounded before April 1922 and subsequently died within three years.

Claims for wounds, diseases, and disablement were lodged under this Act and all subsequent Acts for those who were in active service during the period 1916-23 but crucially, this was also the very first Act granting allowances or gratuities to dependants of deceased officers, soldiers, and other persons.[4] Payments were relative to the rank of the deceased, the degree of dependency, but also the good character of the recipient. The payment would commence from the date of death of the deceased officer or soldier. If found wholly dependent, officers' widows could be granted allowances of £90 per annum (and a £120 gratuity on first remarriage) while the allowance granted to the widow of a soldier (private rank) could only reach 17*s*. 6*d*. per week (and a £45 gratuity on first remarriage). Annual allowances of £24 for officers' children could be granted (until the age of eighteen for sons and twenty-one for daughters), while the children of a soldier could be compensated at the lower rate of 3*s*. (up to 8*s*. per week), depending on their circumstances. Mothers and fathers (fathers, over sixty years old or incapacitated by ill-health) of officers could be afforded allowances at the rate of £1 a week while soldiers' parents would be awarded a lower rate (15*s*. a week). Siblings and grand-parents could also apply, although in this case if there were two or more dependants, only one allowance could be paid (under the direction of the minister). Partial dependants were not awarded allowances but gratuities, granted in special circumstances (necessitous cases only and not exceeding £150 for relatives of an officer and £100 for a soldier's relatives).

Under the legislation, women were not envisaged as having financial dependants. As such, there was never any provision for the widower of a female casualty to receive an award. We know of one possible case in the Collection: Margaret Hartney who was killed by shell fire in Adare on 4 August 1922.[5] Her husband, Michael Hartney, stated that his wife was a Cumann na mBan member engaged in first-aid and kitchen duties in the Adare Arms Hotel (Dunraven Arms Hotel), which had been turned into a hospital by the IRA.[6] Michael Hartney, along with his references, claimed that on 4 August 1922 a sixteen- or eighteen-pound artillery shell fired by the National Army hit the hotel killing Margaret Hartney instantly.[7] He found out about his wife's death the following day. There is no more information for Margaret Hartney as her husband was never able to lodge a claim in respect of her death under the legislation. Another point which also speaks to the attitude of the time, is that if a widow remarried before April 1922, she was no longer entitled to any pension.

1 John Glynn, P.P., to Army Pensions Board, 12 Dec. 1924, MSPC, 2D451 Martin Moloney.

2 Figures as of January 2023.

3 Army Pensions Act, 1923 (https://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/1923/act/26/enacted/en/print.html) (accessed 17 Feb. 2023).

4 For relevant sections for dependency claims in APA, 1923, see sections 7 and 8 (allowances may be granted to dependants of deceased officers, soldiers and other persons) and section 11 (forfeiture).

5 Application submitted posthumously by subject's widower Michael Hartney, MSPC, MD1893 Margaret Hartney.

6 Sworn statement before the Advisory Committee by Michael Hartney, 10 Feb. 1937, MSPC, MSP34REF11113 Michael Hartney.

7 Statement of activities, 26 Apr. 1937 Michael Hartney to Secretary, Military Service Pensions Board, 31 May 1937, ibid.

The APA, 1923, also signalled the emergence of a new hierarchy as it set the dependants of the dead of the 1916 Rising apart. Under this Act, those wounded and killed in April and May 1916 (including death as 'an immediate result of refusing to take nourishment while detained in prison, and death by violence while a prisoner'[8]) were all deemed to hold the rank of officer. As such, widows were awarded an initial allowance of £90 per annum during widowhood, almost exactly double the rate of a weekly allowance provided for the widow of a volunteer killed during the War of Independence. Four years later, the gap would widen between the 1916 relatives and the dependants of the signatories of the Proclamation.[9] The verification process was also much more straightforward for them and 1916 widows rarely had to give much evidence. Their husbands were well known to the IRA leadership, although this did not mean that they were immune either to frustration with the process or to hardship.[10]

Payment to orphaned children could be awarded although it was mostly administered through trustees.[11] Pensions awarded to dependants could also be withdrawn if they were found to have been convicted of a crime or offence.[12] Additionally, it is clear that claimants were assessed and their behaviour and reputation judged prior to awarding them any financial compensation. Cases of alcoholism or re-marriage were reported and widows who allegedly had not lived with their husband for a time were also reported by local informants.[13]

Army Pensions Act, 1927[14]

This Act established the first official Army Pensions Board.[15] Its principal function was to assess the level of disablement of the wounded, if any, due to service in the forces and to report to the minister for defence.

The APA, 1927, extended the provisions of the 1923 Act for dependants of deceased members or ex-members of the Volunteers, Irish Citizen Army, National Army.[16] Extension of coverage would include the dependants of National Army members who died of disease attributable to service and who died before 1 October 1924, those who were discharged before 1 October 1924 and who died within four years; non-National Army members who died before 11 July 1925 due to disease attributable to service; Irish Volunteers who served in the National Army who died during service, who were discharged from the

8 APA, 1923, Section 8 (4).

9 APA, 1927, Section 4 (2).

10 See, for example, Richard Mulcahy's reaction to Lillie Connolly's application. Mentioning her 'very difficult circumstances' he noted that 'It should not take one day to get evidence that JAMES CONNOLLY was executed in 1916! It should not take one other day to verify that the applicant is his widow!' Richard Mulcahy to Army Finance Officer, 8 Feb. 1924, MSPC, 1D178 James Connolly.

11 See, for example, MSPC, 1D94 Patrick Joseph O'Flanagan.

12 APA, 1923, Section 11.

13 See, for example, the case of Catherine Whelan, MSPC, 3D37 Nicholas Whelan. For a further exploration of this aspect of the process see the essay by Fionnuala Walsh in this book.

14 Army Pensions Act, 1927 (https://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/1927/act/12/enacted/en/print.html) (accessed 17 Feb. 2023).

15 See 1/M/2013/2 and 1/M/2013/3 in the Administration series for the Army Pensions Board, 1923, MSPC, 1/M/1-2013.

16 APA, 1927, Sections 14 and 15, Allowances and gratuities to dependants.

National Army before 1 October 1924, and died within four years of disease attributable to service. Other extensions involved those in receipt of a disability pension before death due to disease.

One major change introduced by the APA, 1927, was the allowance to the widows of the signatories of the Proclamation, which doubled from £90 to £180 per annum.[17] Michael Mallin, although a 1916 leader and executed, was not a signatory of the Proclamation and therefore the clauses under the 1927 and 1937 Acts did not apply.[18]

The 1927 Act also established a provision of additional payments to 'married men'. If the man was married before the date of his discharge, he received increased rates for his pensions. There was no such provision for married women.

Army Pensions Act, 1932[19]

The biggest change introduced by APA, 1932, was the extension of the scope of APA, 1923, and APA, 1927, to include ex-members of Óglaigh na hÉireann, the Irish Volunteers, Na Fianna Éireann, the Hibernian Rifles, and Cumann na mBan, and their dependants. Allowances and gratuities were considered for widows of a deceased member of organisations covered by the Act who had not remarried before the passing of the Act.[20] There was no automatic reward from the Fianna Fáil government which brought in the Army Pensions Acts of 1932 and 1937 that facilitated most of the claims relating to the executed and to the republican dead generally. Firstly applicants had to prove they were eligible relatives under the legislation: mothers of the deceased; fathers of the deceased over sixty years of age; a widow of the deceased who had not since remarried; a son under the age of eighteen; an unmarried daughter under the age of twenty-one; a brother who was either under eighteen years of age or permanently invalided; a sister who was unmarried and under twenty-one years of age or unmarried and permanently invalided; and grandparents. Any other type of relative – stepmothers, aunts, uncles, cousins etc. – was not eligible. Where an applicant's invalidity was in question, the Army Pensions Board would oversee and organise the necessary medical investigations and examinations.

By establishing the Military Service Registration Board[21] the Act was effectively the start of a systematic verification process through which each claim would go and eligible relatives had further hurdles to clear beside proving their financial dependency on the deceased person.[22]

The Act also brought into consideration anyone killed during active service and killed in circumstances attributable to service; persons engaged in pre-Truce service only and who had received a wound pension attributable to service and who died within four years of receiving such wound (death due to wound only); persons engaged in pre-Truce military service only who died before 11 July 1925

17 APA, 1927, Section 4 (2).

18 E. Fahy to Una Mallin, 30 Oct. 1928, MSPC, 1D322 Michael Mallin.

19 Army Pensions Act, 1932 (https://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/1932/act/24/enacted/en/print.html) (accessed 17 Feb. 2023).

20 See second schedule of APA, 1932, for payments.

21 APA, 1932, Section 6. Other sections of relevance to dependants are Section 13 (Grant of allowances and gratuities to certain widows and children) and Section 14 (Prohibition of applications by certain persons).

22 See part II of this essay, The verification process.

and whose death was due to disease attributable to service; persons engaged in post-Truce military service (with in addition or without pre-Truce military service) who died from wounds or disease attributable to service.

No allowance would be paid if a person died from wounds or disease and had got married after receiving such wounds or if his death was due to disease, after 1 October 1928, or if a person died from wounds and was already in receipt of a wound pension.

Army Pensions Act, 1937[23]

The 1937 Act introduced many important provisions as regards dependency cases. One of the most striking clauses of the 1937 Act further extended the special provisions made for the relatives of the signatories of the 1916 Proclamation.[24] Widows of a signatory of the Proclamation were now entitled to a lifetime allowance of £500 per annum and each son and daughter received an annual allowance of £200 payable to the age of twenty-five. An annual allowance of £100 was given to each sister of a signatory during her lifetime.

The Act extended coverage to the dependants of all persons killed while engaged in military service and those killed in circumstances attributable to such military service, to dependants of all persons engaged in pre-Truce service only who had received a wound attributable to service and who died within four years of receiving such a wound, and to all persons who were engaged in post-Truce military service (with or without pre-Truce service) who died before the passing of the Act from a wound attributable to pre-Truce or post-Truce service or a disease attributable to pre- and/or post-Truce service.

As time passed, the definition of a ‘dependant’ needed to be reframed to redefine new applicants under the Act.[25] The category ‘dependent relative’ applied to a person who was either the mother, father (being over the age of sixty or incapacitated by ill-health), a permanently invalided brother or permanently invalided unmarried sister of such a deceased person. It also applied to a person who was either dependent on such a deceased person at the date of his death or should be treated as a dependant of such a deceased person, in the opinion of the minister for finance. This took into account all the circumstances surrounding the case.

Additionally, and for the first time, a means test for applicants was introduced. As such it was decided that a dependant’s allowance granted should not be equal or superior to £40 when added to the dependant’s yearly means. Allowances could be subject to periodic review (once a year at most and at the discretion of the minister for defence and minister for finance) if it appeared that the dependant’s yearly means had changed. Allowances could be readjusted or terminated but also increased if grounds

23 Army Pensions Act, 1937 (https://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/1937/act/15/enacted/en/print.html) (accessed 17 Feb. 2023). Relevant sections concerning dependants are contained in Part II, Section 3; Part III, Section 4; Part IV, Sections 18, 19, 20; Part VII.

24 The dependants concerned were: Ceannt (widow, son and sister) MSPC, 1D330; Clarke (widow, 2 sons and a sister) MSPC, 1D447; Connolly (widow, 5 daughters, 1 son) MSPC, 1D178; MacDonagh (2 children; trustee was John MacDonagh, brother of Thomas) MSPC, 1D341; Mac Diarmada (5 sisters) MSPC, DP9319; Pearse (mother, sister, and step-sister) MSPC, DP1910; Plunkett (widow and 3 sisters) MSPC, 1D249.

25 APA, 1937, Section 35.

were found. A dependant’s allowance was paid monthly in arrears (at the minister’s discretion). Deadlines to claims were also introduced.

Section 41 introduced a different group of claimants eligible for special gratuities of a maximum of £100. These gratuities were open to civilians who had received a wound between 1 April 1916 and 30 September 1923 due to the fact that they were keeping arms for any organisations covered in the Act or who got shot accidentally by a member of said organisations who was staying in the house and was evading arrest (the applicant could not be already in receipt of any pension, gratuity, or allowance under those Acts). Applicants under Section 41 are also represented in the MSP Collection.[26]

One of the most prominent cases in this particular series is the claim lodged by Thomas McKane.[27] McKane stated that during the retreat of the Volunteers from the General Post Office in 1916, some of them (including Thomas Clarke and Seán Mac Diarmada) sought shelter at his house. On their admittance, one of their guns discharged, and the bullet passed through McKane’s right shoulder and lung, killing his daughter who was behind him. The subject’s statement indicated that McKane claimed the gratuity for seven or eight wounds. A handwritten copy letter certified that McKane was admitted to the Mater Hospital on 29 April 1916. The Board recommended an award of £100.

II
The verification process

The verification process became more structured as the legislation evolved and special boards were established to deal with the registration of claims. The verification process in turn adapted to the legislation. While the first Act (1923) did not explicitly set up an *Army Pensions Board* (in those terms, in the Act), a ‘Board’ and sometimes a ‘Department’ was referred to while the cases bounced between the ‘Department’, the Department of Defence (Molesworth Street), the Office of the Adjutant General, and the Finance Department. Some cases became infinitely more complex if more than one family member applied, if different levels of dependency were claimed, if relatives lived in the ‘six-counties’, or if the recipient became a ward of court and/or confined to an institution.[28]

Some early claim forms used at the onset of the first APA disappeared as time went on. The dependency forms varied slightly depending on the nature of the relationship between claimant and deceased and were designed to collect basic information prior to further investigation such as the date of birth of the applicant, the circumstances of the death of their relative, whether the deceased was married, names of hospitals deceased was in and names of doctors who attended them prior to their death, level of dependency claimed (wholly or partially dependent), whether other compensations had been applied for (Criminal Injuries (Ireland) Acts or other), and whether payments had been made from

26 This is a small series of sixteen cases, MSPC, Sp.G.1-Sp.G.16.

27 See, for example, John Taylor to Secretary, Easter Week Men’s Association, 31 May 1938, MSPC, Sp.G.1 Thomas McKane.

28 In the case of applications from Northern Ireland, unsurprisingly, officers or employees of that state were bypassed. Sympathetic Roman Catholic clergymen or private citizens were instead approached to carry out the interviews/investigations.

army funds.[29] Widows were asked to indicate date of marriage, to produce a marriage certificate, and to list the names and ages of their children. It is not always clear whether the claimant was the person completing the forms personally (although discrepancies can be ascertained between the applicant's signature, or mark, and the rest of the application form). These forms were to be witnessed by trusted local representatives (generally national school teachers or parish priests). In general, a second form was produced by the Army Pensions Board in which responses to questions were typed, seemingly showing a desire for clarity. Application forms left no space for relatives to express their state of mind and grief but it is not uncommon to see some claimants being unaware of the exact date or location of death of their son or husband, their army number, or the name of their commanding officer.

Received claims were simultaneously registered (Army Pensions Board under the APA, 1927, and Army Pensions/Military Service Registration Board under the APA, 1932) to proceed to basic checks: membership, rank, date of wound/death, whether the deceased was on active service at the time of death, whether the death was the result of negligence as well as confirming all the circumstances surrounding their death.[30] Some apparently genuine claims failed due to the impossibility of ascertaining whether the deceased was a member of any forces recognised under the legislation at the time of their death. A first report addressed to the minister for defence was issued by the Office of the Adjutant General. The same checks applied for wound claims. Although not directly relevant for dependants at the time of wound, those claims could become relevant if the person wounded died within the time limits set by the legislation. If the basic information was verified, a full investigation into the claimed degrees of dependency was initiated.[31]

A detailed report was requested from and issued by An Garda Síochána (local superintendent), examining the living circumstances and lodgings, the income sources, the composition of the family (and whether other children participated in the upkeep of the claimant), quantity of land and turf, valuation, and any other information that could influence the issue of an award such as the occupation and wages of the deceased before joining the forces. Occasionally the Board would ask a local person for an additional statement regarding the character of the applicant or special circumstances that the authorities should know before issuing their recommendation. With time, reports of the police would be replaced by customs and excise reports and later, by the work of social welfare officers. Through this process, the material gathered in the files uncovers important and revealing information including living circumstances, indication of levels of poverty, class, dependency, family life, community network, and specific local dynamics.

Following full investigation, a recommendation for an award to be granted was issued by the minister for defence to the minister for finance and his department for final approval. Only then was the allowance or gratuity paid out. The private struggle of the claimants is visible throughout each file. First, the report produced by An Garda Síochána exposed, more often than not, cases of deep poverty and hardship, and personal misfortune. It is not uncommon to see cases of mothers claiming in respect

29 For a discussion of other sources of income for claimants see the essay by Fionnuala Walsh in this book.

30 These registrations and checks created many secondary file series in the Collection, 1RB, 2RB, 3MSRB, and others.

31 D series in MSPC (MSPC, 1D to 5D) as well as some files in the DP series.

of the loss of their son in the Civil War, having been widowed previously during the War of Independence or World War I. Many cases also show how much the loss of one wage impacts on the life of the whole household, including numerous young children still living in the family home.

Additionally, the correspondence on file is evidence that many struggled to acknowledge and accept the outcome of the verification process, generally showing disbelief following the rejection of their claim or, if their claim was successful, the level of their compensation. The approval of the Finance Department's approval was never a simple formality. Indeed, from the evidence on the files in the Collection generally, these politically sensitive and emotive dependants' applications were a source of much friction between the departments and their respective ministers in the 1930s and beyond.

III
Cases of note

The Collection contains many striking cases illustrating the dramatic aftermath of the Irish revolution. Applicants kept on writing to the Army Pensions Board in the midst of grief and disbelief facing a cold system designed to put the deceased and their living relatives in narrow categories. Many who genuinely 'helped the cause' or those grieving for the loss of husbands or children fell between those rigid boundaries as no provisions existed to recognise their contribution or their loss.

Margaret Moore and Mary Connolly were killed in the same incident on 23 July 1922 at Jonesborough, County Armagh, as they were making their way back from supplying food and clothing to their brother, Owen Moore, at Ravensdale Camp, County Louth.[32] The girls were shot by members of the Sussex Regiment who were stationed at Jonesborough RIC Barracks, County Armagh. Catherine Moore and Kate Connolly claimed in respect of their daughters but as the girls were not members of any organisations included under the legislation, there was no provision under the Army Pensions Acts to consider those claims.[33]

The issue of negligence is not uncommon in cases of accidental deaths. A blacksmith by trade, James McGuinness was accidentally killed by his son, at his home in Kiltegan, County Wicklow, on 2 December 1921 while cleaning a weapon which accidentally discharged. McGuinness was fifty-three at the time of his death.[34] McGuinness was a father of four, the youngest of whom was just eleven months. He had acted in the capacity of company intelligence officer and armourer. In the application from Michael McGuinness under the Army Pensions Act, 1923, it was revealed that:

> He was accidentally shot dead with a revolver by his own son, Michael (claimant). Deceased had cleaned the weapon when his son picked it up and began to examine it. The deceased, his father, told him to leave it down, and immediately a shot was discharged from it, striking the father in the chest and killing him.[35]

32 For details of his service see MSPC, MSP34REF20971 Owen Moore.

33 See MSPC, DP23924 Margaret Moore; MSPC, DP122 Mary (Minnie) Connolly.

34 Death certificate, 12 Sept. 1922; Claim for dependant's allowance or gratuity by Michael McGuinness, 13 May 1925, MSPC, 1D453 James McGuinness.

35 D. Ó Sulleabháin to Lieut. Tully, 14 July 1925, ibid.

James McGuinness's widow, Bridget, also made an application. The couple had married in November 1915 and Bridget was his second wife.[36] Bridget was awarded an allowance during widowhood and an allowance for her two children until they came of age. While the claim of Michael was initially rejected, numerous representations were made on his behalf and the case was reconsidered by the Army Pensions Board.[37] According to information in the file, Michael, who was thirty years of age, worked as a temporary postman and had 'defective development right upper limb … absence of forearm'.[38] This infirmity reduced his employment options and as a result he was deemed to be dependent on the deceased and awarded a gratuity of £100.[39] This case can be put in contrast with that of the claim lodged by Ellen Conway who accidentally shot her husband in Fermoy, County Cork, on 18 May 1923.[40]

The dependants' claims are littered with evidence of extreme poverty and destitution contrasting wildly with the banality of the bureaucratic process of the pension machinery. Margaret Mahony claimed in respect of the death of her husband; he was killed at Millstreet, County Cork, in January 1923. She had moved alone from Cork to south Wales with her three children, David (twelve), James (ten), and Patrick (eight). On 30 May 1924 she wrote:

> I am actually starving I have had no food with a week I have every bit of clothes I had soled to get a bit of food for the children and that was only dry bread and tea what in the name of God am I going to do I have no where to turn for food if I dont get some help from the Irish free state before many days I will have to go into the union with my three orphans…[41]

Her next letter, within the week, was written in despair: 'I am here amongst strangers without a bite to eat I feel more like comitting sucide this morning listening to three little orphins crying with the hunger'.[42]

On 11 June 1924 the secretary of the office of the minister for defence wrote to the adjutant general to request that the initial checks be made, and he appended a handwritten note: 'P.S. As this is a very necessitous case please furnish report with the least possible delay. The applicant is practically destitute with 3 little children depending on her.'[43] Glamorgan police issued the report of their investigation on 15 June, stating that Margaret Mahony was wholly dependent on her husband.[44] On 18 June, this report was sent to the Army Pensions Department. The administrative work continued in the background and an award was sanctioned and then issued. Mrs Mahony wrote to the Army Pensions Board on 10 October 1924:

36 Claim for dependant's allowance or gratuity by Bridget McGuinness, 3 Dec. 1925, ibid.

37 See, for example, Michael McGuinness to Dept. of Defence, 24 Mar. 1927; multiple signatories to W.T. Cosgrave, 21 Nov. 1928, ibid.

38 Report of examination of Michael McGuinness by Comdt. M.J. O'Connor and Dr C. Dickson, 13 Mar. 1929, ibid.

39 Claim for dependant's allowance or gratuity by Michael McGuinness, 3 Aug. 1929, ibid.

40 See the unsuccessful application of Ellen Conway, MSPC, 3D236 James Conway; see also the essay by Fionnuala Walsh in this book.

41 Margaret Mahony to Secretary, Pensions Dept., 30 May 1924, MSPC, 3D245 Jeremiah Mahony.

42 Margaret Mahony to 'Dear Sir', 4 June 1924, ibid.

43 Secretary, Ministry of Defence, Army Pensions Dept., to Adjutant General, 11 June 1924, ibid.

44 Report by P.C. Thos. Daviss[?], 15 June 1924, ibid.

> ... the allowance I am getting is not sufficent to keep myself and my three children … I am not spending a penny wrong only doing my best to keep them as good as I can. I would sooner part with them and put them into a home rather than see them in poverty.[45]

In response, she was informed that she was already receiving the maximum allowance rate applicable to her case.[46]

The struggle of some claimants was compounded by reports of local informants influencing administrative decisions. Bridget Moloney of Miltown Malbay, County Clare, applied for her deceased son, Martin (a National Army private, who died from his wounds in September 1922 in St John's Hospital, Limerick).[47] The Garda report revealed a difficult background:

> The claimant, Mrs Bridget Moloney, is very much addicted to drink and has been convicted several times during the past 12 months for drunkenness and disorderly behaviour. The local Sergeant reports that any award granted would be spent on drink. The award, if any, should be invested in Government Bonds for the benefit of the Surviving Children on their reaching maturity.

The same report revealed that Mrs Moloney was a widow, having lost her husband who drowned on the *SS Laurentic*, and had already lost another son, Michael, during World War I. Mrs Moloney had four surviving children. Patrick, the eldest, was contributing financially to the household. It was also reported that Martin was a fisherman before joining the National Army and his earnings averaged about 10*s*. a week: 'It is difficult to arrive at this however as the fishing lasts only for 4 months of the year, and the men have to live on their savings for the rest of the year.'[48] It is understood that Bridget Moloney had been somewhat dependent on her son Martin's earnings. A gratuity of £50 was recommended and sanctioned in October 1924, but the Army Pensions Department decided to consult the parish priest for additional information.[49] In his letter, Reverend J. Glynn stated that Bridget Moloney was

> a most degraded character. Drink, Immorality, Foulest invective, and depraved. I had her interned in a Borstal Institute, 6 years ago … To give her any money, especially a lump sum would be altogether undoing her. She has had from many sources 'tons'. Starves her children … If I can she'll be interned for a time next court. She was not depending on her son Martin.[50]

45 Margaret Mahony to Army Pensions Board, 10 Oct. 1924, ibid.

46 Army Pensions Board to Margaret Mahony, 23 Oct. 1924, ibid.

47 Claim for dependant's allowance or gratuity by Bridget Molony, 7 July 1924, MSPC, 2D451 Martin Moloney.

48 Chief Superintendent's office, Ennis, to the Commissioner, 4 Aug. 1924, ibid.

49 Recommendation of Army Pensions Board, Oct. 1924, ibid.

50 John Glynn, P.P., to Army Pensions Board, 12 Dec. 1924, ibid.

The recommended award of £50 was entirely withdrawn.[51] Some claims, influenced by local reports, could occasionally lead to contradictory positions as to the legitimacy of a dependant.[52]

Attitudes and assumptions about appropriate family constitution can be found in some claims. While unmarried wives 'could not be recognised as rightful dependents', equally, the army pensions legislation and the minister for finance could find no grounds for payments to children proven as 'illegitimate'.[53] Widows who had remarried were also reported on and their situation investigated and pensions, in some cases, were withdrawn.[54]

Cases of bigamy, if uncommon, can also be found in the dependants' claims. They also illustrate attitudes of the time as to who could be categorised as dependent but also how, in the process of making decisions, life-changing information could be left in the hands of third parties. For example, Edward O'Connor had married Mary Baine on 26 November 1920 at Drumcliffe Roman Catholic parish church having previously married Elizabeth Maloney at St George's Anglican church, Wigan, Lancashire, on 21 July 1917. Awards were originally made to both women and the child of Edward O'Connor and Mary O'Connor. However, the decision to grant an award to Mary Baine and her child was overturned in 1925, following the provision of legal advice in a similar case (unidentified in the file).[55] A typed copy letter of 14 March 1927 from the office of the army finance officer to the secretary, president's office, explained the original award of payments to Elizabeth O'Connor, Mary O'Connor, and the child of Edward and Mary O'Connor, and also the decision to end payments to the child of Mary O'Connor. A handwritten note on that letter stated that Mary O'Connor had not been officially informed of the reason(s) for ending the payments to her daughter but that Patrick Hogan, TD, who had been making representations on her behalf, had been informed of the situation and that 'it has been left to his discretion to inform Mrs. O'Connor if he considers it desirable to do so'.[56]

Other specific cases would also deserve a deeper examination and analysis. For instance, those concerning the mechanism of award or pension payment when dependants were confined to psychiatric institutions. Teresa Hogan applied under the Army Pensions Acts in respect of the death of her son James Hogan, a private in the National Army (machine gun corps), who was accidentally shot and killed at the Telephone Exchange, Cecil Street, Limerick, on 25 or 26 April 1923.[57] The Army Pensions Board recommended that Teresa Hogan be awarded a gratuity of £100. She had two daughters employed as domestic servants. Teresa Hogan became a patient in the Limerick Asylum on 4 January 1924.[58] The payment was postponed while investigations were undertaken into the payment of allowances to dependants who happened to be confined to an institution.[59] A degree of dependency was also considered for the sisters of the deceased. Teresa Hogan was later awarded a gratuity of £50.[60]

While army pension legislation may be challenging to examine at length, it is key in order to understand the claims lodged by the dependants of the deceased. It is obvious that the rigidities of the law ignored the very individual circumstances of the applicants, but those same very individual circumstances did sometimes force the authorities to bend those laws to suit the purpose of very specific cases. Although the interpretation of the regulations was generally on the stricter side, the system could be made to accommodate and expand not least as more applications were submitted and as the legislation changed. As the MSPC cataloguing continues, more cases to analyse and compare will emerge, offering an unparalleled source of information on pre-and post-war lives in Ireland and wherever families emigrated. As a whole they will undoubtedly afford unique opportunities for researchers to explore a rather intimate snapshot of the aftermath of war, which left so many families impoverished and destitute.

51 Army Finance Officer to Bridget Moloney, 13 Aug. 1925, ibid.

52 See in the case of an application by dependants of Cornelius O'Shea contradictory reports based on unreliable information (a sister of deceased is said incorrectly to be addicted to drink), Report by Superintendent J. McNulty 3 Mar. 1924, Superintendent J. McNulty to Commissioner, 12 Aug. 1924; Chief Superintendent James Hannigan to Commissioner, 15 Jan. 1925, MSPC, 2D132 Cornelius O'Shea.

53 Adjutant General to Army Finance Officer, 21 Oct. 1922, MSPC, 2D133 Patrick Perry. See also, MSPC, DP1837 Thomas Greehy. See the essay by Lindsey Earner-Byrne in this book.

54 For example, there was an investigation in Canada to ascertain whether the widow of James Montgomery had remarried there. It was implied that her pension could get restored if she came back to Ireland. See MSPC, 3D51 James Montgomery.

55 See MSPC, 2D125 Edward O'Connor.

56 J.J. H. to Secretary, President's Office, 14 Mar. 1927, ibid.

57 Claim for a dependant's allowance or gratuity by Teresa Hogan, 3 Dec. 1923, MSPC, 3D28 James Hogan.

58 Chief Superintendent Leahy, Limerick, to the Commissioner, 26 Jan. 1924, ibid.

59 The file includes a 'Memorandum on the payment by the British ministry of pensions of pension or allowances to insane dependants of deceased soldiers', received by the Army Pensions Board, 3 Dec. 1924, ibid.

60 Report on a claim for an allowance or gratuity, 7 May 1937, ibid.

Left

Cécile Chemin, Project Manager of the Military Service Pensions Collection, reviews files. Image courtesy of Fiona Morgan.

Reproduced courtesy of Fiona Morgan

Letter from Richard Mulcahy expressing disbelief at the time taken to verify details in Lillie/Lily Connolly's claim in respect of James Connolly's death stating, 'It should not take one day to get evidence that JAMES CONNOLLY was executed in 1916!'

Reference:
James Connolly 1D178.

Suéan 5149
(TELEPHONE

Uimhir Cáscéda
(REFERENCE NO.)

MINISTRY OF DEFENCE
FINANCE
RECEIVED
11 FEB 1924

AIREACT COSANTA,
(MINISTRY OF DEFENCE).
Dearraic Portobello,
Baile Áta Cliat.

8th February, 1924.

U R G E N T.

To:
ARMY FINANCE OFFICER.

Attached is one of the type of cases which I was speaking to you about, and one which it is utterly inexcusable has not been dealt with by us long ago :

1. It should not take one day to get evidence that JAMES CONNOLLY was executed in 1916!

2. It should not take one other day to verify that the Applicant is his widow!

and those dealing with the matter of such Pensions might have some appreciation that if a woman loses her husband and has a family that she has been through very difficult circumstances and is actually in very difficult circumstances at the present time - whatever bit of luck even may come her way.

Is there any chance of having a first payment of pension in this particular case made inside seven days, namely, before the 15th FEBRUARY, 1924?

Beir beannacht,

RMcMaDara

AIRE CHOSANTA.

AL

Report as to dependency of Applicant or of the motherless children upon Deceased at the time of his death.

The Civic Guard Report states that the applicant Mrs Bridget Moloney is widow of Martin Moloney who was drowned (aged 40 years) on the S/S. Laurentic during the European War, on which he was serving as A.B.

A son Michael Moloney (aged 18 years) was also killed in the European War while serving in the British Army.

It is stated locally that applicant has been in receipt of from £4 to £5 per week (from the White Star Shipping Co.) in respect of her husband's death (April 27th 1917)since 1919 and that she also received a (lump) gratuity in respect of her son's (Michael) death.

The applicant denies that she is in receipt of any pension in respect of either; but she has certainly money to spend freely. Her only visible means of support is hawking fish about the district It is estimated that she could not be in receipt of more than 10/- per week from this source. She is not in possession of any holding.

The surviving children of the claimant are:-

Patrick Moloney, aged 19 years, occupation fisherman, earnings varing, but averaging 10/- per week.

John Moloney, aged 15 years - no occupation.

Mary Moloney, aged 10 years, at school.

Teresa Moloney, aged 6 years , at school.

Patrick contributes all his earnings to support of claimant.

Deceased was a fisherman before joining National Army. His earnings averaged about 10/- per week. It is difficult to arrive at this however as the fishing lasts only for 4 months of the year, and the men have to live on their savings for the rest of the year. Claimant states that deceased contributed £4 per week. This would be possible in the Summer and Autumn months. His contributions in the Winter months would be nil.

Particulars of Claim made in respect of educational expenditure within the past 12 months.

GENERAL.

The claimant Mrs Bridget Moloney is very much addicted to drink and has been convicted several times during the past 12 months for drunkness and disorderly behaviour.

The local Sergeant reports that any award granted would be spent on drink.

The award, if any, should be invested in Government Bonds for the benefit of the surviving children on their reaching maturity.

Particulars of any Payment received in compensation from person responsible for the act which caused death of Deceased. (Section 13 (a) of The Army Pensions Act, 1923).

NIL.

EK/.

Left

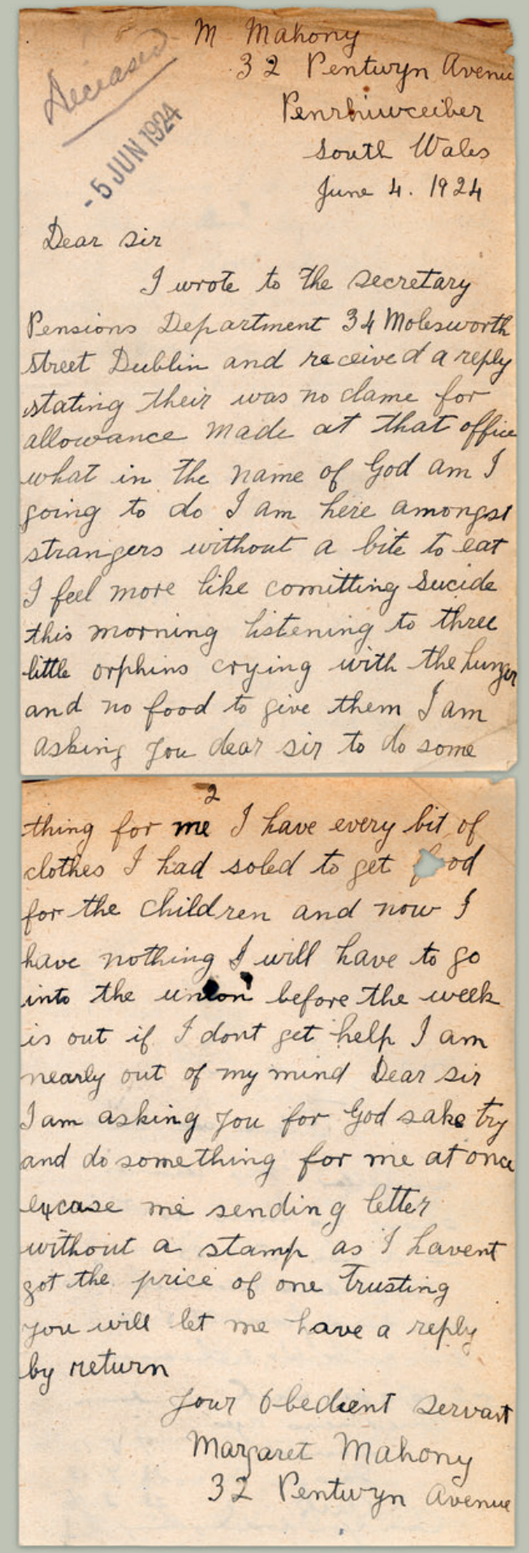
Report outlining the circumstances of Bridget Moloney following the death of her son Martin, shot by a sniper, on 15 September 1922. The report states her husband (also Martin) had drowned on the *SS Laurentic* and another son, Michael, was killed in the First World War. It also describes Bridget Moloney as 'very much addicted to drink'.

Reference:
Martin Moloney 2D451.

Right

Letter from Margaret Mahony desperately pleading for assistance for herself and her 'three little orphins'.

Reference:
Jeremiah Mahony 3D245.



Deceased
- 5 JUN 1924

M Mahony
32 Pentwyn Avenue
Penrhiwceiber
South Wales
June 4. 1924

Dear Sir

I wrote to the Secretary Pensions Department 34 Molesworth Street Dublin and received a reply stating their was no clame for allowance made at that office what in the name of God am I going to do I am here amongst strangers without a bite to eat I feel more like comitting Sucide this morning listening to three little orphins crying with the hunger and no food to give them I am asking you dear sir to do some

2

thing for me I have every bit of clothes I had soled to get food for the children and now I have nothing I will have to go into the union before the week is out if I dont get help I am nearly out of my mind Dear Sir I am asking you for God sake try and do something for me at once excuse me sending letter without a stamp as I havent got the price of one Trusting you will let me have a reply by return

Your Obedient Servant
Margaret Mahony
32 Pentwyn Avenue

'It was not a question of dropping out': the MSPC, personal circumstances, and the limits on participation in the Irish revolution[1]

Brian Hughes

Edward Moore was in the General Post Office for most of Easter week 1916. On Friday he assisted in carrying wounded to Jervis Street Hospital and was then arrested near McBirney's on Aston Quay on Saturday, before being released at the Mansion House and spending several months 'on the run' and working in Galway. Exciting enough, but that was more or less the extent of Edward Moore's Irish revolution. On 30 December 1939, he applied for a military service pension. As a summary of Moore's service contained in his file put it: 'On his return to Dublin he rejoined, but he dropped out in October 1917, when he was obliged to leave Dublin to seek employment elsewhere.' Moore's pension file is valuable in giving details of the experiences of a member of the GPO garrison that are not recorded elsewhere – that wounded were carried to Jervis Street Hospital, for instance – as Moore, a rank-and-file member of the Irish Volunteers, made no statement to the Bureau of Military History. The file is also important for what it tells us about the end of Edward Moore's participation in the revolution. When he stepped away from the movement in 1917, he did so not because he was wounded or afraid or overcome by a political or moral conversion, but simply because he needed to move to Belfast to earn a living. He does not even seem to have lost his job as a result of his participation in the Rising. Moore's employer had, in fact, fed and sheltered him after he left the Mansion House in 1916 and provided work for him in Galway.[2] What, then, can we learn about the revolutionary generation – or, at least, the Edward Moores of that generation – from the Military Service Pensions Collection?

In his 1979 memoir, C.S. 'Todd' Andrews described the men of E Company, 4th Battalion of the Dublin Brigade of the Irish Republican Army, which he had joined in 1917 as an enthusiastic fifteen-year-old:

> Without exception, the men in the Company were men of no property, except for what little furniture the married men had accumulated. Their houses or apartments were rented. But they were all in regular employment and even if their jobs were menial, very badly paid and rarely secure, none of them were destitute. They had a minimum of food, shelter and clothing.[3]

To Oscar Traynor, appointed O/C in November 1920, the Dublin Brigade 'was made up in the main of Dublin artisans, with a sprinkling of students from the National University as well as a few from Trinity College, and almost all the professions were represented'.[4] Joost Augusteijn, Peter Hart, and, more recently, Richard Grayson have compiled statistical data on the social and class backgrounds of members of the Dublin city IRA.[5] And just as the ongoing phased releases of material generated in the process of awarding Army and Military Service Pensions from 1923 is transforming many aspects of the scholarship on the Irish revolution, it has the potential to do so for our understanding of the social structure of the IRA, Irish Citizen Army, and Cumann na mBan – to tell us in more granular detail than ever before *who joined* those organisations.

In addition, there is unique and valuable material in the Collection on the *nature* of participation in the revolution – *what they did* – and on the limits of that participation. For all that might have been written about political or military or paramilitary activity, this has tended to focus on the most active or those involved in very specific sorts of activity. Almost no attention has yet been devoted to the 'ordinary' lives of 'ordinary' revolutionaries, to the less committed, to the Edward Moores who joined in with the revolution but, for whatever reason, stepped back or stepped aside altogether. This essay will touch on two related areas with a focus on the Dublin city and county IRA: the working lives of active members and the ways in which work and other family commitments could limit or put an end to their participation in military activity.

To illustrate what might be learned from the MSPC about working lives in revolutionary Ireland, the essay will first turn to a survey of a small sample of Dublin IRA men; specifically, forty-eight members of the Dublin and Fingal Brigades who died between 1919 and the end of 1921. In most of the forty-eight cases there are surviving applications by a parent, sibling, or spouse under army pensions legislation, distinct from military service pensions legislation and allowing for pensions or gratuities to be paid to families of deceased members of the IRA and other specified organisations.[6] As applicants had to prove full or partial dependency on the deceased (in the case of the latter they would receive a one-off gratuity rather than a pension), Garda reports and other correspondence provide rich new detail on the home and working lives of revolutionaries, and of their bereaved families in the years that followed. This is a small sample of men (and only men), but includes a brigade officer commanding and vice-O/C alongside ordinary rank and file, company officers, and members of the Dublin Active Service Unit. These men also died in a range of circumstances, from illness to ambushes, executions, and an accidental shooting.

The IRA was, to some extent at least, shaped by the demographics and socio-economic world around it, and this was very obviously the case in the capital. The forty-eight Dublin dead discussed here closely mirror Todd Andrews's depiction of his comrades, and if there was a typical member then he was young, single, not very wealthy or very poor, and confessionally Catholic. Their average age in 1917 was twenty-two; at least seventeen had Easter Rising service but as many as ten had only been born in the twentieth century. All were Catholic and while Thomas Traynor's wife was a member of the Church of Ireland, their ten children were raised as Catholics.[7]

1 Sworn statement made before Advisory Committee by Thomas Cullen, 5 Mar. 1938, MSPC, MSP34REF55431 Thomas Cullen.

2 Summary of service, 10 May 1940, MSPC, MSP34REF59230 Edward Moore. For full details of Moore's service see MSPC, MSP34REF59230 Edward Moore.

3 C.S. Andrews, *Dublin made me* (2nd ed., Dublin, 2001), p. 113.

4 Voice recording, BMH, S 1412 Oscar Traynor.

5 Joost Augusteijn, *From public defiance to guerrilla warfare: the experience of ordinary volunteers in the Irish War of Independence, 1916-1921* (Dublin, 1996), pp 353-67; Peter Hart, *The IRA at war, 1916-1923* (Oxford, 2003), pp 110-38; Richard S. Grayson, *Dublin's great wars: the First World War, the Easter Rising and the Irish revolution* (Cambridge, 2018), p. 369.

6 See Catriona Crowe (ed.), *Guide to the Military Service (1916-1923) Pensions Collection* (Dublin, 2012).

7 1911 census return, Thomas Traynor (http://census.nationalarchives.ie/) (accessed 28 June 2019). Discussion of IRA dead

This particular sample suggests less of a dependency on 'unskilled' workers than Peter Hart found in his study but, as in the country, heavy representation from skilled trades and from those who worked in shops.[8] Three-quarters of the men were either semi- or unskilled workers (usually labourers or motor drivers), shop assistants or clerks (primarily grocers' assistants), or skilled tradesmen – with an even distribution among the three categories. The next largest category were seven students or apprentices, again roughly evenly divided, with only three professionals (two electrical engineers and one journalist) and one merchant (an insurance agent). A small number of jobs were thus over-represented in the Dublin IRA. This was usually work that allowed just enough freedom (to some) to engage in revolutionary activity. It provided stable hours that suited the demands of company meetings or parades, or the opportunity to organise collectively around work. One company was made up primarily of workers in the licensed trade and another was formed from a large group of grocers' assistants who had late shifts. Going to university allowed young men like Todd Andrews, and others with no previous connection to Dublin, 'considerable freedom' to pursue activities in 'the Movement'. Students were particularly noticeable in the 3rd Battalion's C Company and in the Dublin Brigade's Engineers' Battalion.[9]

In the midst of a typically volatile Dublin housing market, it is perhaps no surprise that only one of the Dublin-based families surveyed here was a rated occupier in the same premises in 1924 as they had been in 1911.[10] Among the minority of married men, only William Breen's wife was the owner of a property in the 1920s.[11] For the remainder, the lists of addresses that appear in pension files, on census returns, and on birth, marriage, and death records testify to repeated upheaval and movement of families over decades. Wages recorded in dependants' applications (open to exaggeration but also usually verified), range from £1 16*s*. for an apprentice fitter to electrical engineer Breen's £310 a year. All of the unmarried volunteers working as shop assistants, clerks, or in semi-skilled or skilled positions who died in Dublin during the War of Independence appear to have been making some weekly financial contributions to parents or siblings before their deaths. Martin Savage was said to have 'sent money periodically to his father who', in the opinion of a Garda sergeant in Sligo, 'required financial aid'.[12] Even after he got married, Thomas Bryan's mother claimed that he 'was very good to her and her husband and would not see them in want'.[13] None of the relatives appeared any the better for the sacrifice they had made for Ireland. Michael Magee's father was given a £75 gratuity by the state but wrote to president of the Executive Council, W.T. Cosgrave, that 'what we received looks very small, he was a good son, and I would give a good many seventy-five Pounds to have him back again'.[14]

In country units the dominant profession, farming, was seriously under-represented in the IRA, but in Dublin city in particular the organisation closely reflected the employment environment. There were over 8,500 merchants and agents there in 1911, for instance, and while these men are hard to find in the IRA, their businesses attracted the shop assistants and managers who made up – by Hart's reckoning – almost one-third of officers and nearly twenty per cent of the active rank-and-file men in the Dublin IRA in 1920 and 1921.[15] Among the Dublin and Fingal Brigades' dead were six grocers' assistants and two grocers' managers; all but one had been born outside Dublin.[16] Patrick Moran, a company captain, had been elected president of the Irish National Union of Vintners', Grocers' and Allied Trades Association shortly before his death by hanging in March 1921.[17] Other major employers in the city, like Dublin Corporation, were also well represented.[18] Seán Doyle, the first Dublin IRA casualty by shooting since 1916, was an apprentice fitter with the corporation; Michael Magee had been a labourer for the corporation before he became a full-time volunteer and was killed in January 1921; one of the casualties at the Custom House in May 1921, John Doyle, had also left corporation employment to join the ASU.[19]

Magee and Doyle were, however, not typical. Only a relatively small elite ever left work to devote themselves to revolution. As the other examples cited above make clear, the vast majority remained part-time volunteers. Pension applications highlight the extent to which earning a living remained a priority – one often insurmountable when put up against the demands of revolution. Michael Lynch even turned down the position of director of munitions at GHQ in 1920 and was instead sent back to command the Fingal Brigade, where he could remain on paid leave from his position as abattoir superintendent with Dublin Corporation. As he declared to the Bureau of Military History, 'I was married; I had certain responsibilities; the only terms, upon which I could have held my post at G.H.Q., were by surrendering my years of service in the Corporation and going whole-time on to I.R.A. work; this I was

here and below is based on a range of sources, principally dependants' pension and gratuity applications; 1901 and 1911 census returns (http://census.nationalarchives.ie/); newspapers, especially *Evening Herald*, *Irish Independent*, *Irish Times*, and *Freeman's Journal*; birth, marriage, and death records (https://www.irishgenealogy.ie/en/). *The last post* (2nd ed., Dublin, 1976) is a useful list of republican dead, but contains many inaccuracies and omissions and includes some individuals killed by the Crown forces who were not members of the IRA.

8 Hart, *The IRA at war*, pp 118-19. See also, Augusteijn, *From public defiance*, pp 358-9.

9 BMH, WS 744 James Foley; BMH, WS 1154 Sean O'Neill; BMH, WS 1361 Gerald Davis; BMH, WS 563 Michael Cremin; Andrews, *Dublin made me*, pp 129, 138; 'The Third Battalion', in National Association of the Old IRA, *Iris drong Átha Cliath: Dublin Brigade review* (Dublin, 1939), p. 31.

10 Leo Fitzgerald's family at 173 Great Brunswick Street (Pearse Street) (https://databases.dublincity.ie/burgesses/search_new.php?searchtype=street&year=1914&address01=Brunswick%20Street,%20Great) (accessed 31 May 2022); MSPC, 1D320 Leo Fitzgerald.

11 Application form for widow's allowance, Mary Breen, n.d., MSPC, O4 William Breen.

12 Letter from Sergt Peter McHale, Sligo, 12 Feb. 1924, MSPC, 1D107 Martin Savage.

13 Report from Inspector James O'Connor, Bridewell Station, 24 Feb. 1924, MSPC, 1D142 Thomas Bryan.

14 Patrick Magee to W.T. Cosgrave, 13 Feb. 1925, MSPC, 1D73 Michael Magee.

15 *Census of Ireland, 1911. Areas, houses, and population: also the ages, civil or conjugal condition, occupations, birthplaces, religion, and education of the people. Province of Leinster. City of Dublin* [Cmd 6049-II], HC 1912, Table xix, p. 14; Hart, *The IRA at war*, p. 119.

16 Martin Savage, Thomas Dunne, Henry Kelly, James Murphy, Patrick Moran, Daniel Carew (assistants); Patrick Meaney, Terence McGlynn (managers). James Murphy was the only Dublin-born.

17 Padraig Yeates, *A city in turmoil: Dublin, 1919-1921* (Dublin, 2012), p. 233.

18 David Flood, 'Dublin Corporation employees involved in 1916 Rising: with biographical notes' in John Gibney (ed.), *Dublin City Council and the 1916 Rising* (Dublin, 2016), pp 219-94.

19 MSPC, 1D28 John Doyle; Michael Magee's death certificate (www.irishgenealogy.ie) lists his occupation as labourer and his father wrote in his dependant's allowance application that Magee worked with the Electricity Department in the Corporation. Patrick Magee to W.T. Cosgrave, 20 Oct. 1924, MSPC, 1D73 Michael Magee; Paddy O'Daly to Adjutant General, 17 Jan. 1923, MSPC, 1D27 John Doyle.

not prepared to do'.[20] If it suited his family life, Lynch's decision did not necessarily enhance his ability to lead or make him popular with his comrades in Fingal.[21]

For many others, it was working lives that ultimately defined their revolutionary activity. Even for those in Dublin who were unmarried or without children, there was very often a parent or sibling reliant to some extent or other on their income. Several of the Dublin IRA dead had gone or been sent to Dublin to earn a living in the first place, or to pursue a university degree with future prospects in mind. As Thomas Whelan's mother put it in 1924,

> his captains name I dont know & his rank in the army I don't know all I know is that he went to Dublin in 1917 to earen for me & his Brothers & Sisters & his father & evey one in Dublin knows that I am a Poor woman back here in the Poorest Part of connemara.

Whelan was one of the men executed in Mountjoy Prison in March 1921 and was later included among the so-called 'Forgotten Ten', though in the early 1920s his mother did not believe there was 'one in the Dail who dont know of me & my son RIP for his name went all over the world'.[22] If not all could claim a name that travelled 'all over the world', the Dublin IRA dead were, with the exception of a small number who died from illness, members who had stepped forward to join and were then willing to put themselves in harm's way by carrying arms, meeting others who carried arms, or firing those arms. They were also willing to do so in spite of other commitments. Most had continued to balance employment and military activism. But they are not wholly representative either.

An examination of men who were 'out' in 1916 but dropped out by 1919 is also illustrative. The need or desire to explain themselves when applying for a pension provides rich and sometimes unexpected material on those who might have been there at the start but failed to see the revolution out. Thomas Tormey has estimated that about sixty per cent of 1916 rebels in Dublin took some part in the War of Independence.[23] But there was also a very clear changing of the guard by 1919, influenced to some extent by the very different demands of a guerrilla war. A sample of 150 Dublin Brigade men who successfully applied for a military pension for Easter Rising service but either failed to apply or were not awarded service for 1919-21 gives an average age of thirty-one in 1919, with significant representation at a higher end of the social spectrum (merchants and professionals) and towards the bottom (unskilled workers) than Augusteijn or Hart found in their studies of active guerrillas during the War of Independence. They similarly stand apart from the Dublin and Fingal Brigade dead of 1919-21. This is thus an older cohort than the typical 'active' War of Independence man, but also a cohort who mostly took part in 1916 without holding any rank in the organisation.[24] A small number of the sample, which includes

20 Summary of sworn evidence given before interviewing officers by Michael Lynch, 24 Mar. 1941, MSPC, MSP34REF9462 Michael Lynch; BMH, WS 511 Michael Lynch.

21 BMH, WS 1043 Joseph V. Lawless.

22 Bridget Whelan to the Army Pensions Board, received 21 Feb. 1924, MSPC, 1D125 Thomas Whelan.

23 Thomas Tormey, 'Scotland's Easter Rising veterans and the Irish revolution' in *Studi Irlandesi: A Journal of Irish Studies*, ix, no. 9 (2019), p. 285.

24 This figure is based on 134 men whose year of birth is noted on their files. The average year of birth was 1888. 47 of 88 for whom a profession is listed on their pension file were either skilled workers (27), professionals (11), or merchants (9). The remainder were unskilled (32) and students (3). According to pension files, only 12 held any rank in 1916.

W.T. Cosgrave and Seán T. O'Kelly, moved to the political wing of the movement, but otherwise there was essentially a moving on or replacement of older men with little influence and greater commitments (or less financial freedom).[25]

Frank Henderson later acknowledged to the BMH that 'lack of employment forced a number to leave Dublin' after 1916 with 'some who had been born in the country returning to their native counties where their prestige and experience were of great value to the local units'.[26] Frank Shouldice, for instance, was dismissed from the civil service and became a full-time organiser in east Mayo; Peadar Dunne was first a battalion and then a brigade O/C in Limerick after losing his job with Guinness and taking a new one in the republican Daly family's bakery in Limerick city.[27] For these volunteers, employment dictated where they took part in the struggle. For others, it dictated how.

Robert Carroll was unable to return to learning cutting (part of his apprenticeship as a tailor) after he was released from internment in August 1916 and 'had to take up labouring work'. He spent four or five months in Glasgow in 1918 but returned and re-joined his company. Born in 1897, Carroll was unmarried and young enough to survive 'knocking around just casually until about 1924'. And while he did no real fighting, his casual employment gave Carroll the additional freedom to do 'intelligence work' and take part in armed patrols 'two and three times a week'.[28] For a similar reason, unemployed men were sometimes deliberately chosen to take part in attacks on Crown forces. The O/C of the 4th Battalion had argued that an ambush in Crumlin – ultimately carried out by the ASU – should be left to the unemployed men in his battalion as 'he considered it would be good for morale and prestige to have them take part in an operation of this nature'.[29]

Losing a job in 1916 could also mean that priorities turned elsewhere completely. For Martin Kavanagh, it meant emigration to England ('I was one of the men who was victimised in my job at Inchicore Works for taking part in the Rising of Easter Week 1916 and not being able to get a job in Dublin I had to go away to Derby in 1918').[30] And even for those who stayed in the city, the pressures of employment could be cited to explain periods of inactivity to the Pensions Board, or as a reason for dropping out altogether. Labourer Bernard Murphy claimed that his service after 1916 'was mostly unofficial as seldom free from work I could not attend official parades'.[31] Thomas Cullen, also a 1916 veteran, was 'working in Guinness' cross-channel boats and as he was not available for regular work with the IRA he ceased his activities some time early in 1920'. Cullen was clear that he had little choice in the matter.

25 See, for example, Christopher Byrne, who 'turned to the political side'. Sworn statement made before Advisory Committee by Christopher Byrne, 1 June 1938, MSPC, MSP34REF20479 Christopher Byrne.

26 BMH, WS 821 Frank Henderson.

27 Sworn statement made before Advisory Committee by Frank Shouldice, 8 Mar. 1937, MSPC, MSP34REF21841 Frank Shouldice; MSPC, MSP34REF2414 Peadar Dunne, passim.

28 Sworn statement made before Advisory Committee by Robert J. Carroll, 23 Oct. 1936, MSPC, MSP34REF21553 Robert J. Carroll.

29 BMH, WS 813 Pádraig Ó Conchubhair.

30 Application form, 25 Mar. 1935, MSPC, MSP34REF9981 Martin Kavanagh.

31 Application form, 27 Dec. 1935, MSPC, MSP34REF21471 Bernard Murphy.

When asked 'When did you drop out?', he replied that 'It was not a question of dropping out … My work would not allow me to carry on … my hours were very irregular, I had to work with the tide.'[32] Michael Kenny was one of at least seventeen men who were awarded pensionable service for 1916 but not for 1919-21 (during which time he left the city 'for various parts of Ireland') and subsequently joined the National Army in 1922 or 1923: a full-time, paid position.[33]

Even officers, who had usually gained rank based on commitment, or ability, or personality, were not immune to the pressures of daily life. J.J. Devoy, adjutant of the 2nd Battalion of the Dublin Brigade at the outset of the War of Independence, was first suspended and then resigned in September 1919 having failed to reply to communications from the battalion commandant for a fortnight. His explanation to his superior, Frank Henderson, was that 'For the past 3 weeks I have been very busy in the Office (Peadar being on holidays) & as all his work was put on me, it was necessary for me to work after 6 o.c. on almost every evening he was away.'[34] Devoy's pension file describes how he was in the Volunteers from the start – present at the Rotunda meeting, a participant in the Howth gun running, and even a stretcher bearer for James Connolly's evacuation from the GPO in 1916 – before being promoted to battalion adjutant by Henderson in June 1918. Devoy did not refer to his resignation and Henderson had either forgotten his 1919 correspondence or was kind enough not to mention it, incorrectly telling the Advisory Board that Devoy had been adjutant until June 1920 (though later noting Devoy had held the rank for around twelve months from June 1918). Henderson was unsure if there had been active service afterwards: 'I have an idea he had not. After June 1920 my personal association ended with him.' Oscar Traynor, who also provided a reference, was similarly silent on Devoy's reasons for stepping away. It might instead be reflected in the decision not to award active service for the period from 1917 to 1920, a reminder that the pensions files are used most effectively in tandem with contemporary records (such as they are extant).[35]

Work interfered elsewhere too and prevented volunteers from engaging in active service in ways that they might not have anticipated. While the risk of being wounded and kept out of work may have discouraged some, for others it was injuries sustained in work that kept them out of the IRA. Stephen O'Brien broke his right arm at work in 1918 and was 'unable to continue as an active Volunteer'; James Barrett 'met with a serious accident' while on 'light work' at the Dublin dockyard. The accident 'incapacitated' him and 'was of such a nature', he explained on his military service pension application form, 'that my offer to carry on with E Coy would not be considered by my O/C.' Barrett later joined the National Army and retired from the Defence Forces in the 1950s.[36]

32 Sworn statement made before Advisory Committee by Thomas Cullen, 5 Mar. 1938, MSPC, MSP34REF55431 Thomas Cullen.

33 Application form, 26 Feb. 1925, MSPC, 24SP11980 Michael Kenny. Kenny applied for the periods 1916-21 but was unsuccessful.

34 P. Mac Ionraic (Frank Henderson) to J.J. Devoy, 18 Sept. 1919; S.S. Ua Duibuidhe (J.J. Devoy) to O/C 2nd Battalion, 28 Sept. 1919, NLI, MS 901/72.

35 Extract from statement of Frank Henderson made before the Advisory Board, 2 Jan. 1935; Oscar Traynor to Secretary, Office of the Referee, 26 Jan. 1935, MSPC, MSP34REF81 James Joseph Devoy.

36 Application form, 2 Feb. 1935, MSPC, MSP34REF1596 Stephen L. O'Brien; Application form, 19 Feb. 1942, MSPC, 1924A21 James Barrett.

Most guerrillas were single. While in the 1st Battalion area married men were 'the backbone of the Company … the fellows that kept it together', it was deemed preferable not to send them on shooting 'jobs'.[37] The gendered expectations that came with marriage also impacted on women's participation. Margaret Martin was a member of the Colmcille branch of Cumann na mBan and out at Father Mathew Hall on Church Street in 1916. Following the Rising she was involved in fundraising, election work, and organising republican funerals among other things (none of which was recognised for pensionable service), but 'discontinued' her activity in March or April 1919: 'I married then, and I had no time to continue.'[38] Where there were exceptions, they could have tragic consequences – highlighted viscerally in dependants' pension claims. Thomas Traynor's execution in 1920 left Elizabeth Traynor to raise their ten children alone.[39] One of Patrick Doyle's infant twin daughters died two days before him.[40] Doyle had 'left his employment as a Carpenter, to join the A.S.U.' and 'was a very reliable soldier'; his wife Louise 'a splendid type of Irishwoman'.[41] Thomas Bryan, James Doyle, and John Doyle were all married between 1919 and their deaths in 1920 and 1921; the latter's first child was born in 1920.[42] James McIntosh might have taken the opportunity afforded by the Truce to marry his fiancée Kate Mooney but was killed in Dún Laoghaire in June 1921.[43]

From its initial launch, the MSPC has been used fruitfully by historians to describe what revolutionaries did, to uncover the contributions of individuals missed in the fighting stories or the traditional narratives of ambushes and assassinations – including the women without whom they could not have happened – and to document the struggles of the decades that followed, whether for recognition, compensation, or to make a living. There is more to be done here and the potential for much more besides. If the young men of the IRA were, by Todd Andrews's reckoning, the 'men of no property', they were not men of no responsibility. In depth unavailable in any other single collection, the pensions files depict the nature of working and family lives in revolutionary Ireland. As well as the economic migration, fluctuating wages, and insecure tenancies in the files of dependants and veterans, there is the keenly felt necessity of the weekly contributions made by a working son to a family home; a contribution to the economy not charted in the same way anywhere else.

Along with telling us who they were and what they did, the Collection can also tell us much about what they did not do and why – why they might have started but stopped, why some were more committed than others, why not all were willing or able to see the revolution through. It brings us the Edward Moores, J.J. Devoys, and Margaret Martins of the revolution, for whom the realities of daily life

37 Deputation consisting of Messrs Holohan, Seán O'Moore, P. O'Connor, and Michael Byrne, 1st Battalion, Dublin Brigade, heard on 9 Sept. 1940, Brigade Activity Report, 1st Battalion, Dublin Brigade, MSPC, A73.

38 Sworn statement made before Advisory Committee by Margaret Murnane, 22 May 1936, MSPC, MSP34REF11817.

39 Application form for widow's allowance, Elizabeth Traynor, 21 Dec. 1923, MSPC, 1D134 Thomas Traynor.

40 *Irish Independent*, 15 Mar. 1921.

41 P. Ua Dálaig (Paddy O'Daly) to Adjutant General, 17 Jan. 1923, MSPC, 1D26 Patrick Doyle.

42 Marriage certificates for John Doyle, 17 Aug. 1919; Thomas Bryan, 20 Nov. 1920; James Doyle, 18 Jan. 1921 (www.irishgenealogy.ie) (accessed 10 Jan. 2020); Application form for widow's allowance, Elizabeth Doyle, 7 Dec. 1923, MSPC, 1D27, John Doyle.

43 Application for interview, Kate Mooney, 14 Oct. 1932, MSPC, 1D75 James McIntosh.

ultimately trumped any idealism. The Collection thus serves to remind us that ideology or politics, or even personality, were not always enough to dictate who took up a gun and who did not. It was one thing to want to fight for Ireland, it was another to have the means to do so.

Further reading:

Joost Augusteijn, *From public defiance to guerrilla warfare: the experience of ordinary volunteers in the Irish War of Independence, 1916–1921* (Dublin, 1996)

Richard S. Grayson, *Dublin’s great wars: the First World War, the Easter Rising and the Irish revolution* (Cambridge, 2018)

Peter Hart, *The IRA at war, 1916–1923* (Oxford, 2003)

Eunan O’Halpin and Daithí Ó Corráin, *The dead of the Irish revolution* (Yale, 2021)

Right

Frank Henderson’s testimony regarding James Devoy’s active service and rank.

Reference:
James Joseph Devoy
MSP34REF81.

Ref 81.

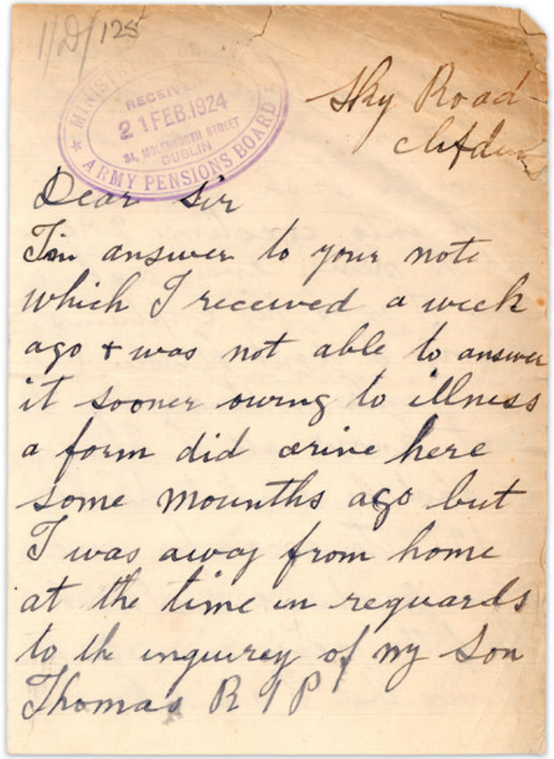
EXTRACT FROM Statement of Frank Henderson, O/C.,
2nd Battalion, Dublin Brigade, made before
the Advisory Board on 2nd January, 1935.

Q. What do you know of James Devoy?

A. He was Adjutant of the 2nd Battalion. He was very early on a member of the Volunteers from the initial meeting in the Rotunda. He served in 1916 and was one of the men who carried James Connolly out of the Post Office when he was wounded.

Q. Was he in Gaol?

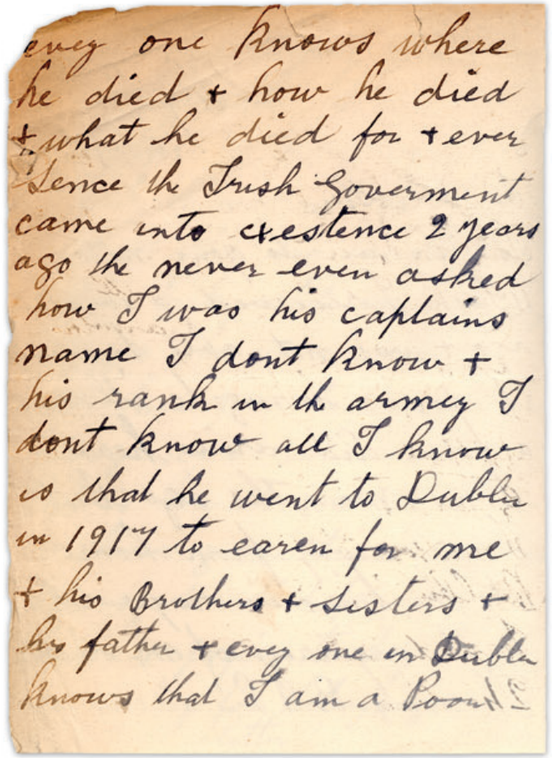
A. He was in the Castle, I believe. I believe he was afterwards in Frongoch. After that he was a member of "B" Coy. At one period he was made Adjutant of the 2nd Battalion up to about June 1920. Whether he had any activities after that I am not absolutely certain. I have an idea he had not. After June 1920 my personal association ended with him. I dont think he took any part in the Civil War.



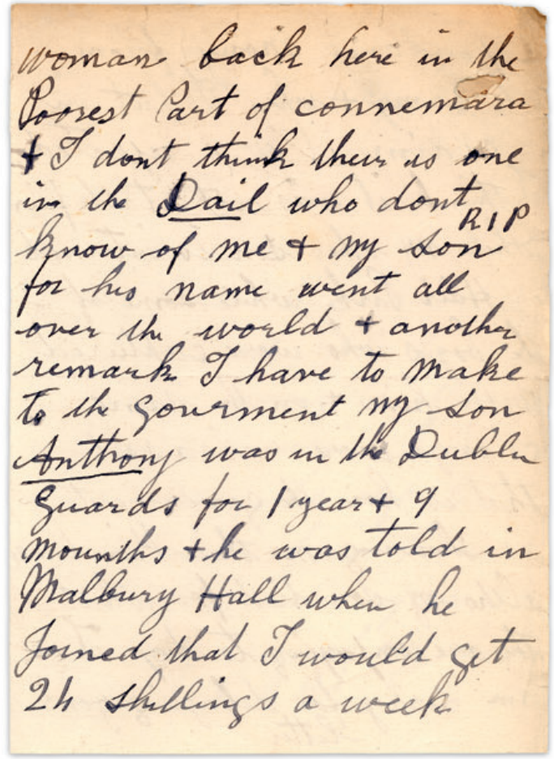
Sky Road
Clifden

Dear Sir

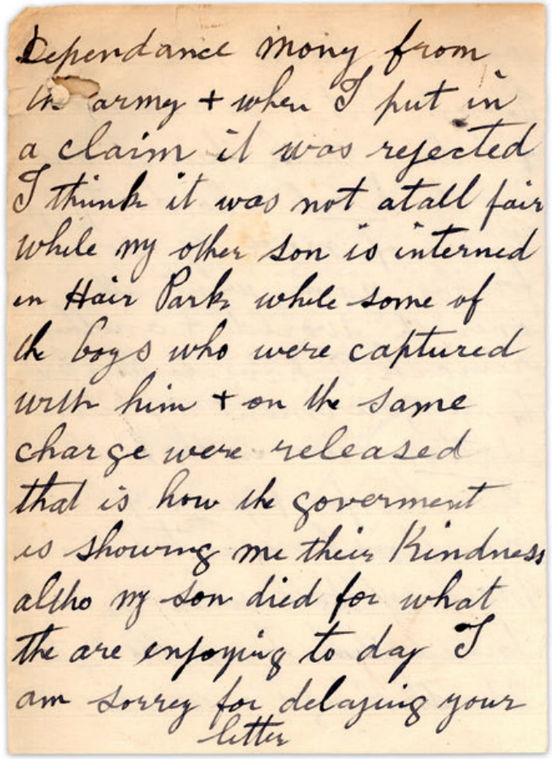
In answer to your note which I received a week ago + was not able to answer it sooner owing to illness a form did arive here some Months ago but I was away from home at the time in regards to the inquiry of my Son Thomas R I P



every one knows where he died + how he died + what he died for + ever since the Irish Goverment came into exestence 2 years ago he never even asked how I was his captains name I dont know + his rank in the armey I dont know all I know is that he went to Dublin in 1917 to earen for me + his Brothers + Sisters + his father + every one in Dublin knows that I am a Poor



woman back here in the Poorest Part of connemara + I dont think there is one in the Dail who dont RIP know of me + my Son for his name went all over the world + another remark I have to make to the Goverment my Son Anthony was in the Dublin Guards for 1 year + 9 Months + he was told in Malbury Hall when he Joined that I would get 24 shillings a week



Dependance Mony from the army + when I put in a claim it was rejected I think it was not atall fair while my other Son is interned in Hair Park while some of the boys who were captured with him + on the same charge were released that is how the goverment is showing me their kindness altho my Son died for what the are enjoying to day I am Sorrey for delaying your letter

Left

A letter from Bridget Whelan that captures the loss of her son, her frustration with those who promised to remember him, but also the hardships faced by a family that has lost its main financial support.

Reference:
Thomas Whelan 1D125.

Bridget Whelan, mother of Thomas Whelan, one of six men executed in Mountjoy Prison, Dublin, on 14 March 1921.

Image courtesy of the National Museum of Ireland (NMI-HE-EW-2038).

Experiencing the Irish revolution: pension records and the sensory and emotional impact of armed conflict

Marie Coleman

During the past decade historical enquiry has taken a number of turns. One of these has been the revisiting of established narratives of historical events to explore them from the perspective of how those alive at the time experienced them, a line of historical analysis espoused by the American historian Joan Wallach Scott in 1991.[1] One of the best ways of capturing the contemporaneous experience of past events is to seek evidence for how the human senses interacted with them – how people alive at the time saw, heard, smelled, tasted, and touched events or artefacts.[2] Writing in 2015 in search of an answer to the question of 'How did people experience the American Civil War?', Mark M. Smith noted the paucity of sensory histories of military engagements: 'relatively little sensory history has been written of wars generally'.[3] Wars and other military engagements, as events replete with the noise of bombardment and gunfire, the smell of gunpowder, the taste of poor-quality rations, the sight of post-battle carnage or the pain of gunshot wounds, are ideal subjects for sensory analysis.

While many wars and related phenomena such as revolutions have been scrutinised from perspectives such as 'politics, ideology, class and even symbolic practices', they are now, as Jan Plamper has shown most recently in the example of the 1917 Russian Revolutions, ideal subjects 'to see what can be gained from rereading sources through a sensory lens'.[4] A sensory stimulus can trigger an emotional reaction, and the recent 'sensory turn' in historical enquiry has taken place alongside the development of scholarship on the history of emotions.[5] War offers immense potential for exploring the history of emotions.[6] Neither sensory history, nor the history of emotions, are particularly well developed within Irish historical enquiry, though important new projects indicate the opportunity offered by these methodologies to expand our understanding of the past. This is especially the case in regard to the Irish revolution and the more recent Troubles in Northern Ireland, where the seminal work of Caoimhe Nic Dháibhéid and Roisín Higgins respectively is particularly noteworthy.[7]

1 Joan W. Scott, 'The evidence of experience' in *Critical Inquiry*, xvii, no. 4 (Summer 1991), pp 773-97.

2 Martin Jay, 'In the realm of the senses: an introduction' in *American Historical Review*, cxvi, no. 2 (April 2011), pp 307-15.

3 Mark M. Smith, *The smell of battle, the taste of siege: a sensory history of the Civil War* (Oxford, 2015), pp 1, 5.

4 Jan Plamper, 'Sounds of February, smells of October: the Russian Revolution as a sensory experience' in *American Historical Review*, cxxvi, no. 1 (March 2021), pp 140-65.

5 Rob Boddice, *The history of emotions* (Manchester 2018), see especially chapter 6: 'Experience, senses and the brain', pp 132-67.

6 See in particular Claire Langhamer, Lucy Noakes and Claudia Siebrecht (eds), *Total war: an emotional history* (Oxford, 2020)

7 Caoimhe Nic Dháibhéid, 'The Treaty debates: the politics of emotions (4 January 1922)' in Darragh Gannon and Fearghal McGarry (eds), *Ireland 1922: independence, partition, civil war* (Dublin, 2022), pp 3-8; Roisín Higgins, 'Sensing the Troubles: a critical reimaging of life in Northern Ireland' in *Leverhulme Trust Newsletter* (May 2021), p. 6 (https://www.flipsnack.com/leverhulmetrust/leverhulme-trust-newsletter-may-2021-dcjepj14ot/full-view.html) (accessed 20 Jan. 2023).

Seeing and hearing: the sights and sounds of the Irish revolution

The senses which combatants of the Irish revolution relied most heavily upon were those of sight and hearing. The nature of guerrilla warfare dictated that being unseen or unrecognisable by the enemy as an adversary, while simultaneously observing the movements of one's opponents, was crucial to the successful acquisition of intelligence or the evasion of capture. Gerrard Grannell, who because of his youth (he was born in 1902) was prohibited by Seán Heuston from taking an active part in the Rising as a member of Fianna Éireann, subsequently joined the Irish Volunteers in the interregnum between the Rising and the War of Independence. He referenced the vigilance of the Volunteers in this period of military inaction, 'keeping ears and eyes open at all times' to identify the actions of the Crown forces.[8]

This manner of observation was central to the activities of women in particular. As they were not assigned a combatant role, women members of Cumann na mBan and unaligned female spies who gathered intelligence needed to rely even more heavily on their ability to see and hear what went on around them. The McGuinness sisters – Margaret, Maureen, and Bridget – used the vantage point of their home on Main Street in Longford town to note the movement of troops from the local military barracks, a simple, unobtrusive, yet effective means of helping the local Volunteers to build up a picture of the habits and regular movements of their enemy in order to plan ambushes.[9] The success of intelligence gathering by Cumann na mBan members, and the younger ones in particular, exploited the fact that the senses of their adversaries were not as well attuned to their observers. May Maguire was not long out of school when she undertook the role of a despatch carrier; because of her relative youth (she was born in 1898) 'no one seemed to mind where or when I went. There being no suspicion, I had no trouble in getting around and contacting the IRA whenever there was work to be done.'[10]

Vital information was often overheard as well as observed visually. Effective eavesdropping, and the corresponding inability of those whose conversations were overheard to detect the subterfuge, are recounted in the pension applications of a number of female spies. In her day job as a typist in O'Carroll's bicycle shop in Tipperary, Nora Lonergan was privy to conversations with the local Royal Irish Constabulary, who were customers there. On one occasion the information which she gleaned alerted the local Volunteer leader, Dinny Lacey, to plans to arrest him, allowing him to evade capture.[11] The equally loose-tongued police and soldiers based at the RIC headquarters and Marlborough (now McKee) Barracks in the Phoenix Park, who frequented the West End Café on nearby Parkgate Street, were presumably completely oblivious to the extent to which their discussions were overheard and relayed to the IRA by its proprietor, Peg Flanagan. The summary of her evidence to the Pensions Advisory

8 Gerrard Denis Grannell to the Board of Assessors, 1 July 1926, MSPC, 24SP6668 Gerrard Denis Grannell.

9 Sworn statement made before Advisory Committee by Margaret Callanan (née McGuinness), 30 July 1940, MSPC, MSP34REF16157 Margaret Callanan. See also material relating to the pension applications of Maureen and Bridget McGuinness, UCDA, Seán MacEoin papers, P151/1440-1441.

10 Petition by May Maguire, 21 May 1951, MSPC, MSP34REF51341 May McGuire (Mary Ann Maguire); see also UCDA, Seán MacEoin papers, P151/1450.

11 Application form, 30 Apr. 1935; Summary of sworn evidence given before the interviewing officer by Nora Lonergan, 16 Jan. 1942, MSPC, MSP34REF5604 Nora Mary Lonergan.

Committee notes that 'The café was patronised by Tans from the British Military Hqrs. and the R.I.C. Depot. She got information from them frequently about raids, etc.'[12]

Sensory deprivation

Neutralising the sensory abilities of its adversaries was a crucial tactic in the success of the IRA's guerrilla warfare during the revolution. Successful ambushes required that preparations be undertaken undetected – through sight, sound, or otherwise – by the unsuspecting target. The maps of the Clonfin ambush produced by the Longford Brigade Committee in the late 1930s to assist the Referee and Advisory Committee in verifying military service pension claims illustrate how effectively the six flying column outposts encircling the site were concealed.[13] The resultant sense of shock experienced by the unsuspecting party of Auxiliaries arriving from Granard was clear from an account provided by one of the survivors immediately afterwards: 'intense rifle fire was opened upon us, from a ridge situated upon our left front. We vacated our Tenders at once, and took up all the available cover, which was very poor.'[14]

Apart from the effectiveness of the IRA in concealing themselves from sight, the Auxiliaries' failure to maximise their own sensory abilities contributed to their rout at Clonfin. Had the Auxiliaries heeded a number of warning signs on approach they would not have been taken so completely unawares. One Auxiliary cadet, Charles Maddox, later stated in evidence for a compensation claim that he had observed a disturbance to the road surface, presumably where there had been preparations to bury the mine, on approach: 'he observed a square patch on the road. It looked very peculiar.'[15] Perhaps the explanation for the failure to appreciate the importance of this sight lies in the admission from one of his comrades that significant amounts of alcohol had been consumed when they stopped for lunch in Granard: 'We had had our share of the "crather" in Granard'.[16] On this occasion the dulling of the senses through over-indulgence in alcohol had fatal consequences; three of the nineteen-strong contingent of the Auxiliary unit were killed at the scene of the ambush and a fourth died of injuries in a Dublin hospital two days later.[17]

The Military Service Pensions Collection contains much evidence of the detrimental impact of revolutionary violence on the senses, in particular the loss of ability to see and hear. The Army Pensions section of the Collection, which dealt with pensions for wounds, illness, and disability, is particularly informative in this regard. While serving as a private with the National Army during the Civil War, James Doyle lost his left eye when it was hit by a fragment of a bomb that was thrown into the tender in which he was travelling near New Ross in County Wexford on 25 November 1922. His right eye was also affected and his overall debility was rated at fifty-five per cent, entitling him to a pension. He was also provided with an artificial eye, which was replaced as required until his death in 1969, and regular eye tests and glasses.[18]

While loss of hearing and eyesight was usually the result of explosions or gunfire, the case of Joseph Downey is one of the more unusual examples of how sensory deprivation ensued. Having participated in the Rising in the Jameson's Distillery and Watkins' Brewery garrisons, Downey (one of the older combatants at the age of forty-nine) was taken to Richmond Barracks, where he consumed an adulterated tin of bully beef that led to him becoming critically ill from ptomaine poisoning. He was left for two days without medical treatment and subsequently spent eight weeks in hospital, on discharge from where he was 'a complete wreck, the eyesight being particularly affected'.[19]

Although his former comrades argued for him to receive compensation (according to Pádraig O'Connor 'Everyone acquainted with him is aware of the fact that the ill-health from which he suffers is due to the poisoning at Richmond Barracks in 1916'), his case was rejected by the Army Pensions Board under the 1923, 1927, and 1932 Army Pensions Acts on the grounds that his disability was 'not solely due to service', although 'it could be aggravated by service'. The Board added a rider to the effect that their hands were tied by the restrictions of the legislation: 'all the members of the Board were most sympathetic in this particular case and they were extremely sorry that they were unable to bring poor Downey in'. He did at least receive a military service pension, which amounted to £32 annually.[20]

The Downey decision highlighted weaknesses within the Army Pensions code. Initially, when the first Act was passed in 1923 it was restricted solely to visible physical wounds, excluding psychiatric cases and also illness, such as tuberculosis, contracted as a result of service. An amendment to the legislation in 1927 admitted these as eligible grounds, though a threshold of eighty percent disablement was required for those suffering from illness to qualify for a pension.[21] This differentiation between physical wounds (where any degree of disability entitled the victim of the injury to a pension or gratuity based on a sliding scale) and illness, produced a dilemma for the Army Pensions Board in the case of Andrew Dunne. Dunne had served with the Fianna and the Irish Citizen Army and during incarceration in Frongoch and Knutsford developed severe conjunctivitis which led to a level of sight loss judged to be a disablement of sixty per cent.

This finding, following a medical assessment carried out in 1936, constituted a rejection of his claim under the legislation in force at the time, as it fell below the threshold of eighty per cent. However, the outcome was not communicated to Dunne until January 1938, by which time new legislation had been passed the previous year, lowering the threshold to fifty per cent.[22] Although Dunne's case was technically still governed by the legislation in force at the time of his assessment, a sympathetic attitude

12 Summary of evidence, 27 Jan. 1939, MSPC, MSP34REF20537 Margaret O'Callaghan (Peg Flanagan).

13 Maps of Clonfin ambush, Longford Brigade Activity Report, MSPC, A70; UCDA, Seán MacEoin Papers, P151/1523.

14 Statement by T/Cadet W.F.P. Williamson concerning ambush of 2 Feb. 1921, TNA, HO35/142.

15 *Longford Leader*, 23 Apr. 1921.

16 Account of Clonfin ambush provided to Seán MacEoin by T.J. Wilford, 14 Dec. 1955, BMH, WS 1716 Seán MacEoin.

17 Eunan O'Halpin and Daithí Ó Corráin, *The dead of the Irish revolution* (New Haven, 2020), pp 287-8, 292 (deaths of John Aldridge Houghton, Francis Worthington Craven, George Bush and Harold Clayton).

18 Application for wound pension, 17 Apr. 1924, MSPC, 4P363 James Doyle.

19 Pádraig O'Connor to Richard O'Hegarty, 3 Nov. 1925, MSPC, MSP34REF1382 Joseph Downey.

20 Ibid.; J.J. Horgan to Secretary, Dept. of Defence, 20 July 1928; Army Pensions Board to E. Duggan, 13 Sept. 1928, MSPC, MSP34REF1382 Joseph Downey.

21 Marie Coleman, 'Privileged injuries: defining disability among veterans of the Irish revolution (1916-1923)' in *History: The Journal of the Historical Association*, cvii, no. 377 (Sept. 2022), pp 707-26.

22 Army Pensions Act (1937), Section 26 (1) (ii), Irish Statue Book https://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/1937/act/15/enacted/en/html (accessed 23 May 2022).

was taken by the Department of Defence and the attorney general as his case was deemed one of those which the amending legislation of 1937 was intended to cover. As a result, he received an annual pension of fifteen shillings.[23]

Not all those who served in the revolution in various guises and who suffered damage to their hearing or eyesight were treated as sympathetically as Dunne and the example of Joseph Downey appears to have been more common. The Army Pensions Board appears often to have made the same judgement as they did in Downey's case, that while an injury might have been aggravated by revolutionary activities, there was insufficient evidence to support an assertion that such service had been the cause of the injury in the first place. The hearing in Timothy Kerrisk's right ear was damaged while he was manufacturing explosives at a house in Molahiffe in County Kerry in October 1921, an incident that led to the death of one of his comrades, Maurice Casey.[24] Kerrisk was never able to resume his previous occupation as a blacksmith, but as the Army Pensions Board did not attribute his condition to service his claim for a wound pension was rejected, although he was recommended for a gratuity of £55 and following the introduction of special allowances he received one of these in 1946.[25] He also had a military service pension of £7 10*s.* and a state blind pension.[26]

Emotional reactions to the sensory experience of conflict

The sights and sounds of conflict often stayed with combatants after the event, triggering severe emotional and traumatic responses. One of the most illustrative descriptions of this to be found in the MSPC is contained in a letter written in 1941 by Seán Lemass (then minister for supplies) to Teresa Dalton regarding the impact of Bloody Sunday on her husband, Charlie Dalton. Dalton was a member of the IRA contingent which shot dead three men – Charles Cholmeley Dowling, Leonard Price, and Hugh Ferguson Montgomery – at 28 Upper Pembroke Street.[27] Anne Dolan has shown how Dalton played a central role in setting up his victims: 'Dalton had done most to find the information to condemn the men in the house in Pembroke Street. He had courted the maid there, got an IRA man employed as a porter; he watched until he knew that the two men he wanted slept in rooms on the third floor.'[28]

On the night of 20 November 1920 Dalton and Lemass were billeted together at the dispensary building in South William Street. It was clear to Lemass that Dalton was 'unnerved' by his experience that morning. The echoes of what he had seen and heard earlier in the day were brought to mind by other more mundane noises in their accommodation; Lemass recalled how a dripping tap that was causing a gurgling noise reminded Dalton 'of a similar noise he had heard when the four men were shot'.[29] At the time that Lemass provided this account, Charlie Dalton had been an in-patient of St Patrick's psychiatric hospital in Dublin for three years since 1938. His problematic mental health appears to have pre-dated his involvement in Bloody Sunday as his personal physician, Dr Hugh Barniville, attested that he had been treating him since 1919, when Dalton (b. 1903) was sixteen.[30] The medical superintendent in St Patrick's described his case in 1941 as 'very grave … He is acutely hallucinated – hearing voices which accuse him of murder'.[31] In his own account of his involvement in Bloody Sunday, written nine years after the events, Dalton recalled the tension he experienced prior to it: 'I was wrought up, thinking of what we had to do the next morning'.[32]

The recall of sights witnessed also haunted Patrick Flynn, who had served in the GPO garrison during the Rising, and was hospitalised intermittently during the 1920s in Grangegorman and Portrane psychiatric hospitals with a number of sensory-related traumatic symptoms. He was said to have suffered a head wound in 1916 and by the 1930s his hearing was affected by incurable tinnitus. He was also treated in various Dublin hospitals for 'head noises'.[33] In 1937 the deputy resident medical superintendent in Portrane, Dr Stanley Blake, assessed him as suffering 'from auditory hallucinations and is delusional'.[34] Aside from the impact of a physical wound (said to be a gunshot wound to the head) sustained in the Rising, his condition was destabilised further by a particularly traumatic experience in Glasnevin Cemetery during the Civil War. On being sent to deposit weapons in a vacant vault that was being used by the IRA as an arms dump, Flynn and his comrades 'made a mistake in the choice of vaults, and in depositing munitions opened the wrong coffin. Flynn put his hands into the putrid remains of the dead, and fainted. Ever since that time the recollection of this seems to have affected him, as he was known to speak of it with a shudder.'[35]

The ability of sensory or emotional experience to trigger a psychiatric condition emerges starkly in the case of Peter Collins, one of the few cases of an eating disorder to be found in the pension files. When Collins applied for a special allowance in 1949, when he was aged sixty-nine, a medical examination found that he had not worked for eighteen years due to ill-health, which included a bad stomach. His problems with digestion, which led to a weight loss of over two stone was diagnosed as 'anorexia' attributed to a 'fear of eating (lest he eat more than his stomach can manage)' and 'a feeling of fulness after meals'.[36]

Conflict(ed) emotions

A recent edited collection of essays addressing the emotional impact of total war, dealing with regular wars during the twentieth century has identified 'grief' and 'fear' as the most commonly recognised emotional

23 Award certificate, 16 Aug. 1938, MSPC, MSP34REF18903 Andrew Dunne.

24 O'Halpin and Ó Corráin, *The dead of the Irish revolution*, pp 534-5; MSPC, 1D158 Maurice Casey.

25 For an account of special allowances see Marie Coleman, 'Service medals and special allowances' in *The Military Service (1916-1923) Pensions Collection: the Medal Series* (Dublin, 2016), pp 18-20.

26 Award certificate, 25 Oct. 1938, MSPC, MSP34REF37676 Timothy Kerrisk.

27 O'Halpin and Ó Corráin, *The dead of the Irish revolution*, pp 226-7 and 252; BMH, WS 434 Charles Dalton.

28 Anne Dolan, 'Killing and Bloody Sunday, November 1920' in *Historical Journal*, xlix, no. 3 (Sept. 2006), p. 798.

29 Seán Lemass to Teresa Dalton, 12 May 1941, MSPC, 24SP1153 Charles Dalton.

30 Report by Dr H.L. Barniville, 22 Apr. 1941, ibid.

31 Report by Richard R. Leeper, Medical Superintendent, St Patrick's Hospital, 3 Apr. 1941, ibid.

32 Charles Dalton, *With the Dublin Brigade* (London, 1929), p. 104.

33 Application form for a wound pension, 24 Oct. 1933, MSPC, MSP34REF20776 Patrick Flynn.

34 Stanley Blake to Secretary, Dept. of Defence, 27 May 1937, ibid.

35 Seán Prendergast to Secretary, Military Service Pensions Board, 18 Jan. 1938, ibid.

36 Report by Dr M.S. Honan, 24 May 1949, MSPC, MSP34REF4207 Peter Collins.

responses to war, and notes the increasing visibility of 'love' and 'shame' in literature on the historical experience of war. The editors also make a case for scholars of military conflicts to pay due regard to the 'secondary emotions' of 'pride, jealousy, anger, and resentment'.[37] While this analysis relates to regular wars, the MSPC provides ample evidence for the centrality of these emotions to irregular or guerrilla conflicts also. The nature of the various schemes that come under the umbrella of the Collection also allow for the expression of such emotions in different contexts.

A part of the Army Pensions aspect of the Collection deals with gratuities and pensions applied for by the next of kin of those who died as a result of service. Not surprisingly these are the files where the emotion of grief is most easily identified. Referring to the death of her brother, Patrick Stenson, allegedly shot dead by the National Army after being taken prisoner in Sligo in March 1923, Maria (Stenson) Marren reported that her father subsequently 'died with grief' as a result.[38] The official cause of Michael Stenson's death, at the age of seventy-eight in 1926 was 'old age'.[39] The shock of losing a son in violent circumstances was more immediate in the case of Daniel O'Connor, whose son Patrick was killed during the Easter Rising in Dublin on 28 April 1916.[40] While the official cause of O'Connor senior's death was bronchitis and heart failure, his daughter, Mary Buckley, attributed it to hearing the news of her brother's death: 'His father … when he heard of his death died the following day'.[41]

Grief is the most obvious emotional response to death but in the context of war and revolution, where death is both incurred and inflicted, related emotions involve the anger that can motivate fatal assaults and remorse at causing the death of another. James Marron, who took part in the Altnaveigh killings had no compunctions about killing an armed opponent, but his involvement in one of the most controversial sectarian incidents of the revolution that led to the death of six Protestant civilians, one of whom was a woman, clearly engendered remorse in the years which followed: 'Had it been an engagement against armed forces I would not have cared, seeing that it was a murder job, it got on my nerves and nocked me up a lot with worry', leaving him unable to continue active service in its aftermath: 'for a long time I could not sleep thinking of the woman and the others we shot'.[42]

Fear – its presence and absence, and the ability to instil it – are referenced in many of the reflective accounts of service provided by those claiming service pensions. Arrest or capture by the enemy emerges as one of the potential effects of active service that concerned a number of activists, both male and female.[43] The absence of such fear was an admirable characteristic in the eyes of former comrades who commended the service of their fellow erstwhile comrades to the pension assessors.[44] More astute witnesses recognised that the absence of visible signs of fear did not necessarily mean it was not felt, as in the case of the Dublin volunteer, Anthony O'Reilly, who, if he 'was ever afraid … never showed any signs of fear under any circumstances'.[45]

Volunteers were themselves often the cause of fear among others, including their adversaries and civilians whose own safety was endangered by association with revolutionaries. The Monaghan butcher, Maurice Moen, was attested by a local Garda sergeant as having been 'much feared' and considered a 'very dangerous man by the RIC and Tans', based no doubt on experiences such as that of the local RIC sergeant who was the victim of a 'good beating' administered by Moen who assaulted and disarmed him in an incident in November 1920.[46] Civilians feared harbouring republicans as seen in the case of William Goodwin who broke his ankle while taking part in an attempted ambush of a troop train in Kildare early in July 1921; the residents of a nearby cottage were 'so scared that they left him out in a field all night by himself'.[47]

Even years after the conflict ended, some IRA men experienced the fear of their neighbours due to their past associations. This was especially the case in Northern Ireland, where William Duddy lost his job in Black's shoe shop in Derry in 1928 after his previous service in the IRA in Derry and later the National Army in Kerry during the Civil War became known. The 'stigma of been a member of the I.R.A.' in such a hostile environment meant that his neighbours and friends 'are afraid to acknowledge me in the street in case they would be suspected'.[48] When giving their initial evidence to the pension assessors, James Marron and Mick Fearon agreed not to make any reference to their involvement in the Altnaveigh killings for fear that 'if it was ever known, that our lives would be in danger' as they remained living in the region.[49]

The significance of service pensions and medals as recognition for having played a part in the revolutionary movement that led to Irish independence generated a sense of pride among recipients. Cornelius ('Con') Carr served with the pre-Truce IRA in Donegal during the War of Independence and was active on the anti-Treaty side during the Civil War, including serving a term of internment in the Curragh, before emigrating to the USA. Writing from Ohio in 1989 to inform the Irish Department of Defence of her father's death, his daughter stated that her 'father was very proud of his contribution to the independence of Ireland'.[50]

37 Langhamer, Noakes and Siebrecht, 'Introduction', in *Total* war, pp 1-2.

38 Application form, Mar. 1954, MSPC, MSP34REF64176 Maria Marren (née Stenson); see also MSPC, DP7025 Patrick Stenson.

39 Death certificate for Michael Stenson, Tubbercurry, 8 Oct. 1926 (https://civilrecords.irishgenealogy.ie/churchrecords/images/deaths_returns/deaths_1926/04984/4358930.pdf) (accessed 27 Apr. 2022).

40 O'Halpin and Ó Corráin, *The dead of the Irish revolution*, p. 65.

41 Death certificate for Daniel O'Connor, Rathmore, 2 May 1916 (https://civilrecords.irishgenealogy.ie/churchrecords/images/deaths_returns/deaths_1916/05240/4451860.pdf) (accessed 27 Apr. 2022); Mary Buckley to Dept. of Defence, received 28 Nov. 1934, MPSC, 1D316 Patrick O'Connor.

42 James Marron to Dept. of Defence, 16 Jan. 1941; Statement by James Marron, 9 Dec. 1940, MSPC, MSP34REF318 James Marron.

43 See, for example, MSPC, MSP34REF29610 Jane Mulcahy (née Ross), MSPC, MSP34REF59573 Martin Ludden, MSPC, 24SP2930 Thomas Shanahan and MSPC, MSP34REF8766 James J. McNamara who all refer to their fear of being arrested.

44 For example, MSPC, MSP34REF20613 James McEnaney, MSPC, 24SP10553 Thomas Bentley, MSPC, MSP34REF14823 Patrick Hogan and MSPC, MSP34REF45912 Margaret Murray where 'fearlessness' was singled out for merit by those writing in support of their claims.

45 Reference by J. O'Connor, 8 Feb. 1938, MSPC, MSP34REF21478 Anthony O'Reilly.

46 Form testifying to service of Maurice Moen, Sergeant Anthony Daly, 5 Dec. 1925, MSPC, 24SP10354 Maurice Moen.

47 Summary of sworn statement, 10 Nov. 1937, MSPC, MSP34REF43878 William Goodwin.

48 Hugh Shiels and William Duddy to Secretary, Dept. of Defence, 15 Jan. 1940, MSPC, MSP34REF53893 William Duddy.

49 James Marron to Dept. of Defence, 16 Jan. 1941, MSPC, MSP34REF318 James Marron.

50 See catalogue, daughter of Con Carr to Dept. of Defence, 14 Feb. 1989, MSPC, MSP34REF18796 Con Carr.

Feelings of pride and satisfaction at achieving recognition felt by successful pension claimants are matched by those of anger, jealousy, resentment, and envy among those whose claims were rejected, especially when comparing their failures to the success of former comrades whose service they saw as no less meritorious than their own. Many veterans who applied for military service pensions did so as much for recognition of their contribution to achieving Irish independence as they did for financial benefit, as the pension payments were often not very substantial. The feeling that rejection of a claim or part of one, or the award of service not comparable to that of others who the applicant saw as less deserving, is a common refrain in a number of pension claims.

Elizabeth Corr was decidedly unimpressed that Ina Connolly Heron received greater recognition for their similar roles in Easter week; writing in 1942 she decided to appeal the decision not to award her service for the Rising upon hearing that she had been treated less favourably than James Connolly's younger daughter: 'I have just learned that Ina Connolly (Mrs Heron) has received a pension for her work during Easter Week. If she is considered entitled to a pension, then so am I.'[51] Many revolutionaries lived the remainder of their lives in the same localities in which they had been active and as such having their service recognised, and being seen to be so recognised, carried important local bragging rights, so differential awards created tensions and exposed local jealousies. Patrick Ramsbottom complained that the service awarded to him, which was less than that of Patrick Muldowney, in spite of Ramsbottom's higher rank in the Laois Volunteers, represented a 'serious reflection on his record and character'.[52]

Conclusion

Clare Makepeace has posed an important question relating to wartime emotions: 'How were these emotions expressed?'[53] James Marron's admission to the pension assessors that he and Mick Fearon initially sought to suppress mention of their activities suggests that in the case of some Irish revolutionary veterans these feelings about what they witnessed, experienced, or did during the conflict rarely emerged in any forum. Indeed, the evidence given in written pension claims and oral evidence to the Referee and Board of Assessors might well have been the only occasion on which some of these witnesses ever voiced their thoughts or feelings, possibly in the cases of some providing what Richard Kearney identifies as an example of the 'ways in which narrative retelling and remembering might provide cathartic release for sufferers of trauma'.[54] This is an example of the unique nature of the Military Service Pensions Collection, from the perspectives of those who applied for pensions and for scholars of the revolution.

The MSPC provides a window into how revolutionaries experienced a revolution. Approaching the Irish revolution through the lens of the human senses the significance of seeing and hearing in a guerrilla conflict emerges clearly. The inter-section between gender and the senses was central to women activists' experience, as the senses were a more significant weapon in the arsenal of this group which did not employ conventional weapons during the military engagements of the Rising, the War of Independence, or the Civil War. Because of the breadth of the Collection, including applications for both service and disability pensions, sensory loss, or damage due to violence can also be explored. As the army pensions could be awarded for psychiatric illness ensuing from conflict as well as the more conventionally recognised visible physical injuries, the MSPC is allowing historians to begin exploring what was in effect Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder among revolutionary veterans, reflecting the emotional impact of intense sensory experiences during the revolution.

Further reading:

Síobhra Aiken, *Spiritual wounds: trauma, testimony and the Irish Civil War* (Newbridge, 2022)
Marie Coleman, *County Longford and the Irish revolution, 1910-1923* (Dublin, 2003)
Linda Connolly (ed.), *Women and the Irish revolution: feminism, activism, violence* (Newbridge, 2020)
Charles Dalton, *With the Dublin Brigade* (London, 1929)
Claire Langhamer, Lucy Noakes and Claudia Siebrecht (eds), *Total war: an emotional history* (Oxford, 2020).

51 Elizabeth Corr to Secretary, Office of Referee, March 1942, MSPC, MSP34REF10854 Elizabeth Corr.

52 John F. Murtagh, solicitor, on behalf of Patrick Ramsbottom, to Secretary, Military Service Pensions Board, 31 Oct. 1953, MSPC, MSP34REF22571 Patrick Joseph Ramsbottom.

53 Clare Makepeace, 'Emotions in war' (https://www.warfarehistorian.org/emotions-in-war/) (accessed 24 May 2022).

54 Richard Kearney, 'Narrating pain: the power of catharsis' in *Paragraph*, xxx. No. 1 (2007), p. 51.

In May or June 22. We raided Altkeveigh, which is on the outskirts of Newry. we Burned down every house and shot Dead 8 person in all, 7 males, members of the B. Force murder gang in Newry, at that time, the other person was a woman. Had it been an engagement against armed forces I would not have cared, seeing that it was a murder Job, it got on my nerves and rocked me up a lot with worry, the Result of which I had to go to another Doctor in 1923 (early) with my nerves. The Disability Board are aware of this, as the Late Dr. Hoods certificate for that period.

What I want to make clear is this, that this Job up set my nerves so much at the time, that it left me unfit to continue active service from June 22 till the cease fire in Sept: 1923. I am now of the opinion that I am entitled to an increase in my service for the above mentioned periods. June 22 – sept 23 inclusive.

I am making this Declaration On oath, and is as truthful as I can make it. Mick Leahon, is in America, and so are all the other men who took part in it, as I haven't seen one of them these years.

I am yours Faithfully
James marron.
Squad Leader.
I. D. F. Carlingford.
Section.

Mr. Griffin

It is now three years since I appeared before the Examiners of the Pensions Board, and answered all the questions asked me, to the best of my ability, and as far as my memory took me.

Since then I have not had a single word about my claim, and I did not intend to open the matter again, but that I have just learned that Ina Connolly (Mrs. Heron) has received a pension for her work during Easter Week. If she is considered entitled to a pension, then so am I, as she was one of six girls, of which I was another, who accompanied a contingent of Volunteers to Tyrone on the Saturday before Easter, and afterwards went to Dublin; there we received orders to return North, which we did; she went on to find Dr. McCartan and the rest of us remained in Tyrone until another order came from Belfast that we were to return home.

My activities for the following six years were given in detail in the statement which I handed to the Examiners who questioned me, and it is not necessary to repeat them here, but I am of the opinion that even without the Easter Week work I am entitled to a pension.

Elizabeth Corr.
(Belfast).

Left

James Marron recounts the mental anguish he states he suffered following his participation in the Altnaveigh killings.

Reference:
James Marron
MSP34REF318.

Above

Elizabeth Corr expresses her dissatisfaction with the pace of the pension process. Knowing Ina Heron (née Connolly, daughter of James Connolly) had already received a pension may have added to Corr's frustration.

Reference:
Elizabeth Corr
MSP34REF10854.

Oifig an Aire Soláthairtí,
(Office of the Minister for Supplies),
Baile Átha Cliath.
(Dublin).

was an undesirable and risky thing to do and might have drawn attention to the Bullet. It did not improve his condition and during that night he was, on occasions, inclined to be hysterical. I recollect that a tap in the lavatory was leaking and making a gurgling noise. This noise apparently reminded your husband of a similar noise he had heard when the four men were shot. He several times asked me to stop the noise of the tap and it was with difficulty that he was quietened.

At this period your husband was very young and his experiences could not but have left a permanent mark on him. I recollect speaking to some of his senior officers subsequently and urging that he should get a

Left

Extract from a letter from Seán Lemass to Teresa Dalton (wife of Charles Dalton) regarding Dalton's extreme distress following his participation in the events of Bloody Sunday morning, 21 November 1920. The letter references the 'gurgling' of a tap which reminded Dalton of a noise 'he had heard when the four men were shot'.

Reference:
Charles Dalton 24SP1153.

Above

Charles Dalton (extreme right) photographed with members of the squad possibly during the Truce.

Image courtesy of the National Museum of Ireland (NMI-HE-EWL-404).

Republican policing and the Irish revolution

Brian Hanley

When applying for his military service pension, Dublin IRA veteran, Joseph Kinsella, explained in some detail how he and his comrades as part of their volunteer work had apprehended three men who 'at the time were a terror in the Crumlin area'. The trio had allegedly stolen £84, the life savings of an elderly woman, Roseanne Shea. The majority of this money was recovered and 'Reilly', the leader of the gang, was placed on parole by a Volunteer tribunal. However Reilly was later arrested again for stealing cattle (the property of a farmer at Harold's Cross), given '12 strokes of the cat' (flogged) and forced to leave Ireland. Kinsella and the local Volunteer police force also arrested men who were carrying out robberies of shops in Rathmines.[1] Kinsella's application is one of a large number which reflect the extent to which issues of policing were to the fore during the revolutionary period. Frank Freyne's pension application offers a different perspective. A Kilkenny native, Freyne had extensive War of Independence service with the Dublin Brigade, taking part in operations on Bloody Sunday and ultimately being captured in the Custom House attack. Freyne was in jail until December 1921, and then served with the National Army, gaining the rank of commandant, until November 1923. However Freyne's first pension application was made from Maryboro (Portlaoise) prison as on 12 December 1923 he and two other National Army officers had held up and robbed a man of £50.[2] His was not an isolated case. The rich detail in the MSPC and the Bureau of Military History witness statements allows us new perspectives on the tensions between policing and waging a war and on social conditions in Ireland more generally. That an Irish Republican Police force existed has certainly been noted in histories of the period, but the extent of its activities has not been chronicled in detail.[3] Indeed, during September 1920 *An tÓglách* actually complained that in certain areas IRA units were using police work to avoid military conflict. It asserted that

> in some places which are almost blank on the war map a great deal of arresting criminals, closing public houses, suppressing poitín stills and the like by Volunteers is reported. This is all good and necessary work; but it looks as though in such places Volunteers were allowing police work, which is only a secondary duty, to monopolize their attention and divert them from what is their primary work and the real object of their existence – to wage war against the enemy…[4]

Investigating crime had not been a consideration when republicans launched their armed campaign and initiated a boycott of the Royal Irish Constabulary during 1919. But these actions meant that soon 'large tracts of country were not policed'.[5] Republicans noticed that as 'no police duties, as these are understood in other countries, were being performed … criminals were free to carry on their depredations against society'.[6] Joseph O'Connor noted that as the Dublin Metropolitan Police were becoming inactive, there was a 'great danger that the criminally inclined element of the city would take advantage'.[7] Indeed the Volunteers soon had to tackle 'armed cycle thieves' who operated in the south inner-city.[8] They were also mobilised, on 'instructions from the G.A.A.' to 'police Croke Park' and 'to put down betting' by force if necessary.[9] Republicans later explained how 'the neglect by the R.I.C. of ordinary police work had given to the criminal elements which exist in all societies a large measure of immunity'.[10] By January 1920 there indeed appeared to be an upsurge in crime, with press reports of 'many more daring robberies' on a daily basis. The British press claimed that 'many of these outrages [were] entirely unconnected with Sinn Féin' with 'organised bands committing burglaries and highway robberies'. Shops and post offices were held up and vehicles and livestock stolen.[11] During 1920, bank raids started to become commonplace. In Britain, which also saw an apparent upsurge in violent crime, many blamed the 'thousands of neurotics … created by the war'.[12] Certainly war veterans featured in many incidents in Ireland as well, but the success of republicans in isolating the police through boycott was also relevant. One judge, noting what he called the 'immunity enjoyed by the criminal class', blamed the 'withdrawal by a large section of the community of that support of the law and its ministers which every citizen was morally and legally bound to afford'.[13]

As the IRA's armed campaign escalated, republicans noted that the withdrawal of the police had created a situation where 'undesirable persons' took advantage of the 'position that maintained' for 'looting and robbery'.[14] The IRA felt forced to respond. Throughout 1919 local units began to undertake a policing role. This worked in tandem with the Dáil's construction of an alternative legal system, with Dáil courts established.[15] IRA officer Simon Donnelly explained how 'Decrees given in Republican Courts had to be enforced. In some cases, this entailed seizing of goods for non-payment of fines and so forth … decrees of Dail Eireann also had to be enforced, as also many English laws retained for expediency.' These included dealing with 'illegal fishing, making of poteen, seizing of illegal stills, control of emigration, school attendance and cattle driving, all of which got somewhat out of hand'.[16] In reality,

1 Affidavit of applicant, 19 July 1927, MSPC, 24SP4685 Joseph Kinsella.

2 Application form, 10 Nov. 1925, MSPC, 1924A1 James Francis Freyne (Frank Freyne, James Freeney).

3 An exception has been a series of articles on the *Come here to me* blog (https://comeheretome.com) (accessed 9 Feb. 2023). See also Brian Hanley, *Republicanism, crime and paramilitary policing in Ireland, 1916-2020* (Cork, 2022).

4 *An t-Óglach*, 1 Sept. 1920.

5 BMH, WS 481 Simon Donnelly.

6 *Irish Bulletin*, 28 Nov. 1921.

7 BMH, WS 487 Joseph O'Connor.

8 Major General Aodh Mac Neill to Secretary, Military Service Pensions Board, 3 Nov. 1936, MSPC, MSP34REF21701 Francis Sanfey; Sworn statement made before Advisory Committee by Dermot MacNeill, 11 Dec. 1936, MSPC, MSP34REF13712 Dermot John MacNeill.

9 BMH, WS 387 Patrick O'Daly.

10 From Erskine Childers, *The constructive work of Dáil Éireann* (Dublin, 1921), quoted in BMH, WS 1770 Kevin O'Shiel.

11 *Daily Mail* articles quoted in *Irish Independent*, 20, 24 Jan. 1920.

12 *Freeman's Journal*, 1, 26 Jan. 1920.

13 Ibid., 3 Dec. 1919.

14 Nicholas Condon to Secretary, Office of the Referee, 17 Jan. 1938, MSPC, MSP34REF12417 Nicholas Condon.

15 Michael Laffan, *The resurrection of Ireland: the Sinn Féin party 1916–1923* (Cambridge, 2005), pp 313-18.

16 BMH, WS 481 Simon Donnelly.

IRA members were often reluctant to become policemen. One volunteer admitted that he 'had no idea how to investigate crime'.[17] Some welcomed the opportunity policing gave volunteers, Walter Brown asserting that 'it was good for them. It gave them work to do and was a decided change from the monotony of parading and drilling and helped to build up an esprit de corps.'[18] Sometimes, however, only men 'unsuitable for military duties for one reason or another' were tasked with police work.[19] Indeed, once the IRA became more militarily active some volunteers felt that a public policing role was 'unwise and unnecessary' for wanted men.[20]

It was not until the summer of 1920, however, that a formal Irish Republican Police force, that included (in theory at least) non-IRA members, was established. From June 1920 each IRA unit was supposed to allocate a number of men in each area to this work.[21] In Dublin members of the Irish Citizen Army also undertook policing under the auspices of this force. Among other activities, their men captured a gang of 'common robbers' who had held up a shop in Sheriff Street.[22] Prior to the formal establishment of the IRP, volunteers engaged with police work themselves. In Charleville, for example, the IRA set up a local 'Town Vigilance Committee' which had 'many encounters with would-be robbers before and after midnight' until the majority of these crimes ceased.[23] In County Cork volunteers tracked and arrested cattle thieves.[24] A pattern soon developed whereby 'Parties of Volunteers used to arrest law breakers, take them to "unknown destinations" and impose fines after the case had been properly investigated.'[25] These 'unknown destinations' included isolated mountainside cottages, unoccupied 'big houses', and even an abandoned prison in Mullingar.[26] Conditions for prisoners were rudimentary but do not seem to have been excessively harsh. John Quinn, a seventeen-year-old Tyrone man accused by the IRA of stealing cash from a woman in Cookstown, was 'jailed' in a mountainside cottage. He recalled being 'well treated but we had to cook our own food; we got tea, bread, milk, potatoes and salt but had no butter or meat'.[27] Annie Deignan, a Sligo Cumann na mBan activist, recalled that 'cooking was practically continuous' for both guards and prisoners being held near her home.[28] Bridget Buckley had a similar experience during a long-running IRA investigation in north Cork.[29] However having to guard prisoners also put strain on the IRA and the 'inmates' themselves became 'pests' who wasted time and resources.[30]

The extent to which IRA units embraced this policing role differed from area to area. In Mayo the IRA received £600 from the Fishery Conservation Board for preventing poaching. The same unit also fined people for not having lights on their bicycles.[31] In many areas, pubs were issued with strict instructions on their opening hours and ordered not to serve drink on Sundays or church holidays.[32] The IRA boasted of the suppression of poitín-making in Donegal, Mayo, Galway, and Clare.[33] Threats of violence seem to have been more common than the use of force by volunteers. James Drew questioned three youths accused of stealing in Innishannon, County Cork, asserting that 'we did not use the third degree – they were not touched, but night after night they were examined'.[34] In the case of what Simon Donnelly called 'incorrigible criminals … we adopted the practice of deporting them and issuing a warning that if they returned they would be shot'.[35] Donnelly complained that a request to allow flogging was turned down by the republican leadership as it was considered barbarous, but some units did flog miscreants believing that it was the 'only effective means of keeping serious crime in check'.[36]

Punishments for petty offences varied. A tramp found guilty of stealing from a church collection box in Carlow was left alone on top of Mount Leinster.[37] In Arklow, worshippers leaving mass observed a 'boy' tied to the chapel gates. Around the neck of the youth who was 'crying loudly' was a card bearing the words 'Caught by the I.R.P. stealing potatoes from the Convent garden'.[38] In Killygordon, County Donegal, Patrick McGlichey was fined 7*s*. 6*d*. for assaulting a local farmer, while in Monasterevin, County Kildare, a labourer was fined 5*s*. and barred from the vicinity of the local railway station after being accused of robbing bags of coal from there.[39]

One significant issue around the rise in crime was that much of it was 'perpetrated allegedly in the name of the I.R.A., the robbers claiming association with the I.R.A. and in many instances getting away with it and the booty as well'.[40] In Waterford, loyalist homes, which had been raided for arms by the IRA,

17 John Dorney, 'Policing revolutionary Dublin', *The Irish Story*, 21 June 2016, (https://www.theirishstory.com/2016/06/21/policing-revolutionary-dublin-1919-1923/#.Y-e-ki-l30o) (accessed 10 Feb. 2023).

18 BMH, WS 1436 Walter Brown.

19 John O'Callaghan, *Limerick: the Irish revolution 1912–23* (Dublin, 2018), p. 63.

20 BMH, WS 1741 Michael O'Donoghue.

21 Charles Townshend, *The Republic: the fight for Irish independence* (London, 2014), p. 133.

22 Sworn statement made before the Advisory Committee by Christopher Crothers 27 June 1935, MSPC, MSP34REF210 Christopher Crothers.

23 BMH, WS 754 Richard Smith.

24 Application form, 10 Apr. 1935, MSPC, MSP34REF8215 Michael Kelly.

25 BMH, WS 1040 Francis Carty.

26 BMH, WS 1017 Patrick Cassidy; BMH, WS 1610 Michael McCoy; BMH, WS 507 Joseph O'Higgins.

27 RIC report, 7 Dec. 1921, PRONI, HA 5/716. I am very grateful to Patrick Mulroe for this reference.

28 Annie Deignan to Secretary, Military Service Pensions Board, 2 June 1941, MSPC, MSP34REF55766 Annie Deignan.

29 Sworn statement made before the Advisory Committee by Bridget Buckley, 4 Feb. 1938, MSPC, MSP34REF30035 Bridget Buckley.

30 Description of service, 14 Aug. 1941, MSPC, MSP34REF32183 Martin Kelly. Also, see MSPC, MSP34REF34034 Denis Quane.

31 Account of service with application form, n.d.; Sworn statement made before the Advisory Committee by Thomas Carney, 13 May 1936, MSPC, MSP34REF4491 Thomas Carney.

32 *Freeman's Journal*, 8 July 1920.

33 *Irish Bulletin*, 28 Nov. 1921.

34 Liam Deasy's evidence on behalf of Frank Drew, 31 July 1936, MSPC, MSP34REF194 James Francis Drew.

35 BMH, WS 481 Simon Donnelly.

36 BMH, WS 601 Henry S. Murray.

37 BMH, WS 1443 Michael Fitzpatrick.

38 *Wicklow Newsletter*, 6 Nov. 1920.

39 *Strabane Chronicle*, 14 Aug. 1920; *Nationalist and Leinster Times*, 4 Sept. 1920.

40 BMH, WS 755 Seán Prendergast. See also MSPC, MSP34REF34015 Laurence Dineen; MSPC, MSP34REF496 Christopher Lynch.

were subsequently robbed by a gang posing as republicans.[41] At the same time that the IRA was catching and punishing criminals, the British authorities charged republicans with criminal activity. Part of the republican policing effort involved countering these allegations by solving crimes. One of the most notable examples occurred in Millstreet, north Cork, during November 1919 when staff carrying £18,000 to the town's banks were held up and robbed.[42] The robbery was a nationwide sensation and many people assumed the IRA was responsible, a belief the British authorities encouraged. After carrying out their own investigation, a large IRA force occupied Millstreet during April 1920. After interrogating several suspects, they managed to secure £10,000 of the stolen money, which was returned to the banks. The culprits were forced to leave Ireland.[43] Áine Ceannt boasted that 'The British authorities were rather astounded at the success of this "illegal" police force.'[44] (The IRA also received a cash reward from the bank.[45]) There were similar, if smaller scale, cases across the country. There was much positive local comment when the IRA in Roscommon returned £70 which had been stolen by thieves from a post office in Knockvicar during July 1920.[46] The IRA also recovered over £1,700 taken in a train robbery in Limerick that year and returned it to the railway company.[47] In south inner city Dublin republicans 'captured Armed Thieves Robbing Cork St Post Office'.[48]

There was particular kudos attached to winning the confidence of those who were hostile to republicanism. During 1920 an armed gang looted the home of the aristocratic Duc de Stacpoole in Longwood, County Meath. IRA commander Seán Boylan assured de Stacpoole the raiders were not his men and promised to track down those responsible. The IRA captured the culprits, two of whom were stripped and flogged, and forced them to do farm work for a period. De Stacpoole's property was returned and he publicly thanked the IRA. Michael Collins told Boylan that de Stacpoole's statement had won favourable publicity for republicans internationally.[49] In Kilkenny a number of unionist businessmen and landowners praised republican police efforts on their behalf and contrasted them favourably with the RIC.[50] Bishop Cohalan of Cork, often critical of the IRA, stated in December 1920 that the 'Volunteer police are now universally and deservedly popular and esteemed'.[51] The Dublin IRA were asked by Woolworths department store to keep their premises under observation in order to counteract a gang called the 'Sons of Dawn'.[52] Comprising young men from the inner city, the gang had robbed a number of shops around the centre of Dublin. Several of them were captured by the IRA, tried, and forced to leave Ireland.[53]

There is no doubt that as part of the wider effort to create a counter-state, republican policing enjoyed popular support among a broad section of the population.[54] In its dealings with employers and landowners, the IRA was often very anxious to be perceived as even-handed. This also reflected a strong sense of respectability that could make republicans intolerant of social outsiders such as tramps or 'tinkers'.[55] Whether such perceptions affected their views on those who made up the 'lawless element of the population' deserves consideration.[56] As John O'Callaghan has observed, 'IRA justice was not blind and not everyone was equal before IRA law'.[57] One account suggests that the IRA in Cork city rounded up a number of women involved in prostitution and brought them to a Magdalene Laundry.[58] During 1920, the Volunteers also won much praise for forcing 'tramps and undesirables' to 'retire early' from fairs.[59] The *Tralee Liberator* also asserted that 'it is not easy to frighten a tinker especially when he is surrounded by his pals who usually carry with them soldering irons', but the Volunteers in Killarney 'quietened them in a short time … when they realised that the Volunteers would not have any of their antics, the tinkers became almost lamb-like and followed out the instructions to leave the town peacefully'.[60] Roscommon IRA officer Thomas Lavin reflected that 'members of the Tramp or Tinker class, who often gave a bit of trouble … became very quiet. They knew what to expect when arrested by the R.I.C. but what happened when arrested by the I.R.A. was an unexplored region to them and they were not taking any chances.'[61] The IRA raided 'a tinkers' camp in Cork city searching for stolen goods'.[62] In Dublin's Inchicore they arrested 'a few tinkers who knocked the brains out of one another'.[63] Republicans generally saw crime as being caused by 'unruly elements and certain evilly disposed persons'.[64]

41 Description of service, 14 Aug. 1941, MSPC, MSP34REF32183 Martin Kelly.

42 *Irish Times*, 22 Nov. 1919.

43 Arthur Mitchell, *Revolutionary government in Ireland: Dáil Éireann 1919–1922* (Dublin, 1995), pp 150-4. See MSPC, MSP34REF1806 Cornelius Barrett; MSPC, MSP34REF9380 Bartholomew Walsh.

44 BMH, WS 264 Áine Ceannt.

45 Sworn statement made before the Advisory Committee by Jeremiah Galvin, 23 Sept. 1936, MSPC, MSP34REF26252 Jeremiah Galvin.

46 Sworn statement made before the Advisory Committee by Charles Zemmitt, 25 July 1938, MSPC, MSP34REF1773 Charles Zemmitt.

47 *Old Ireland*, 7 Aug. 1920. They retained £28 for 'expenses incurred in tracing the thieves'. My thanks to Peter Rigney for this information.

48 Thomas J. McCarthy to Oscar Traynor, 18 Feb. 1945, MSPC, MSP34REF59994 Thomas J. McCarthy.

49 BMH, WS 1715 Seán Boylan.

50 BMH, WS 1093 Thomas Treacy.

51 Mitchell, *Revolutionary government in Ireland*, p. 152.

52 BMH, WS 594 Liam O'Carroll; *Evening Herald*, 14 Oct. 1920.

53 Sam McGrath, 'The Sons of Dawn – Dublin's "Midnight Crawlers"', *Come Here to Me*, 12 Sept. 2017, (https://comeheretome.com) (accessed 9 Feb. 2023); See Sworn statement made before the Advisory Committee by Michael Douglas, 28 Jan. 1935, MSPC, MSP34REF950 Michael Douglas; Reference by Peadar McNulty, 16 Oct. 1938, MSPC, MSP34REF9243 Patrick Croke.

54 Townshend, *The Republic*, pp 130-4.

55 Peter Hart, *The IRA and its enemies: violence and community in Cork 1916-1923* (Oxford, 1998), pp 148-52.

56 BMH, WS 787 Con Meany.

57 O'Callaghan, *Limerick*, p. 93.

58 Stan Barry, interviewed by Ernie O'Malley, UCDA, Ernie O'Malley notebooks, P17b/111, pp 65-6. I am grateful to Mark Bulik for this reference.

59 *Limerick Leader*, 2 July 1920. See also *Irish Bulletin*, 7 Aug. 1920.

60 Sinéad Joy, *The IRA in Kerry 1916-1921* (Cork, 2005), p. 44; *The Kerryman*, 19 June 1920.

61 BMH, WS 1001 Thomas Lavin. Aoife Breathnach makes the point that terms such as 'tramp' and 'tinker' were often used interchangeably but referred to distinct groups of people: Aoife Breathnach, *Becoming conspicuous: Irish Travellers, society and the state, 1922-70* (Dublin, 2006), pp 38-9.

62 Joseph G. O'Sullivan to Office of the Referee, 9 Sept. 1939, MSPC, MSP34REF627 Joseph G. O'Sullivan.

63 Sworn statement made before the Advisory Committee by James Morrissey, 19 June 1936, MSPC, MSP34REF1214 James Morrissey.

The widespread agrarian and sectarian tensions that were evident across Ireland appear not to have influenced this view, but attitudes based on social class surely affected their responses.

John Borgonovo has shown that while the IRA was prepared to use deadly violence against informers (killing nearly 200 suspected spies), it rarely seems to have employed it against criminals.[65] Nevertheless there were exceptions. In the case of the Millstreet robbers, a number returned to Ireland despite being deported. A 'difficult and dangerous' struggle ensued as the gang had a 'wide circle of relatives' in the area, ensuring them some local support.[66] The group's leader, Daniel Buckley, a publican and ex-soldier, even threatened the life of IRA commander Seán Moylan. Buckley was recaptured, tried and executed by the IRA, while several members of the gang were again forced out of Ireland.[67] Buckley's killing, however, was not publicised.[68] In Laois a labourer named Geoffrey McDonald was found guilty by a Dáil court of stealing horse harnesses and sentenced to deportation. But McDonald refused to leave the area and in January 1921 was shot dead by republicans during a raid on his home.[69] In Meath during May 1920, IRA volunteer Mark Clinton was shot and killed while working on his uncle's farm. Local republicans alleged a criminal gang known as 'The Black Hand' was responsible.[70] William Gordon, a war veteran, was arrested by the RIC in connection with the shooting, tried but acquitted. After his release he was abducted by the Meath IRA, re-tried, found guilty, and shot.[71] However, a rival republican account asserted that there was no 'Black Hand' gang and that Clinton was actually killed by Cavan IRA members who were in conflict with his family over land; tension between smallholders and large farmers was the actual cause. Gordon, as an ex-soldier (and Presbyterian) was simply a convenient scapegoat.[72]

Funding the IRA was always problematic and the organisation constantly struggled to adequately arm itself. In May 1921 British intelligence speculated that the IRA was short of finance and that recent bank robberies were 'highly significant as indicating the necessity for obtaining money at all costs to continue the struggle'.[73] While some Dáil funds went towards weapons procurement, the majority of IRA units were expected to buy their own guns. But while robberies might seem an obvious way of doing this, the Volunteer journal, *An t-Óglách*, would later claim that 'the IRA never resorted to this method of obtaining funds … because they realised that the road to Irish freedom did not lie through the bankruptcy of the Irish people'.[74] Instead levies were imposed on local communities, though with mixed results.[75] Some local units *did* then carry out fundraising robberies, but usually in a very piecemeal and uncoordinated fashion. Michael Lynch recalled a 'really brilliant officer' in Ennis (Michael Brennan), who organised a post office robbery and

> took this money, believing it to be British Government money, for the sole purpose of buying arms for his Brigade. There was not one penny of it used for any other purpose, but I remember the consternation in G.H.Q. when this was announced. The officer was suspended and threatened with very severe penalties for this breach of regulations.[76]

Citizen Army member Laurence Corbally and his father Richard were involved in several robberies of Dublin banks during May 1921, but it is not clear if these were authorised by their superiors.[77]

Examples of IRA members carrying out robberies for personal benefit are more common than cases where the proceeds reached headquarters. In early February 1918, two Volunteer officers robbed the manager of a bank in Ennistymon, County Clare, of £6,000. The men then took to wearing 'flashy outfits' and 'swaggered about the area from pub to pub, more often than not under the influence of drink'. The failure of the local IRA to discipline them caused much bad feeling.[78] In Schull, two volunteers were court martialled as they 'carried out a robbery on their own'.[79] The homes of several Protestants were robbed by armed men in west Cork. The 'terrified' victims were told that the IRA was responsible and there would be retribution if they complained. It was some time, therefore, before one of the homeowners contacted local republicans. Inquiries were made and it was discovered that a group of IRA members *were* responsible. These men were dismissed and punished.[80] In Charlestown, County Mayo, the IRA robbed nearly £5,000 from a bank in April 1921. This money was supposed to be used to purchase arms, but was instead divided up among the men involved.[81] James Redican, a 1916 veteran attached to the Volunteers in Mullingar, robbed at least three banks in Dublin during the winter of 1920. Though Redican's comrades considered him a man with 'plenty of guts and courage [who] would be an asset to the Volunteers anywhere', the raids, carried out with his brother Thomas, were for his personal benefit.[82] While there were numerous robberies carried out by criminals, or members of the Crown forces during 1920-1, it seems clear that republicans were responsible for comparatively few of these. Indeed,

64 BMH, WS 1436 Walter Brown.

65 John Borgonovo, 'Republican courts, ordinary crime, and the Irish revolution, 1919-21' in Margo de Koster, Hervé Leuwers, Dirk Luyten and Xavier Rousseaux (eds), *Justice in wartime and revolutions. Europe, 1795-1950* (Brussels, 2012), pp 49-65.

66 BMH, WS 787 Con Meany; Donal Ó Drisceoil, 'Storm centre: the Brigade Activity Reports from Cork' in *The Military Service (1916–1923) Pensions Collection: the Brigade Activity Reports* (Dublin, 2018), pp 108-15.

67 BMH, WS 761 Christopher O'Keeffe.

68 *Irish Bulletin*, 14, 16 June 1920.

69 *Leinster Express*, 12 Feb. 1921. I am grateful to Terry Dunne for this reference.

70 BMH, WS 1734 Seán Farrelly. See also Myles Dungan, *Four killings: land hunger, murder and a family in the Irish revolution* (London, 2021).

71 BMH, WS 1060 Seamus Finn; BMH, WS 1624 Patrick Loughran; MSPC, 24SP10148 Peter O'Reilly; MSPC, 24SP5146 Charles Conaty; MSPC, MSP34REF43878 William Goodwin.

72 Michael Finnegan, 'Four killings', unpublished manuscript (Dublin, 2021). I am grateful to Scott Millar for access to this account.

73 Directorate of Intelligence, Report on revolutionary organisations in the United Kingdom, 12 May 1921, TNA, CAB 24/123/43.

74 *An t-Óglách*, 6 May 1922.

75 Brian Hughes, *Defying the IRA? Intimidation, coercion, and communities during the Irish revolution* (Liverpool, 2016), pp 91-100.

76 BMH, WS 511 Michael Lynch.

77 Application form, 30 Jan. 1935, MSPC, MSP34REF1390 Laurence Corbally; *Irish Independent*, 25 Mar. 1922.

78 BMH, WS 976 Seamus Connelly.

79 Sworn statement made before the Advisory Committee by Edward O'Sullivan, 8 Mar. 1935, MSPC, MSP34REF1824 Edward O'Sullivan.

80 BMH, WS 1529 Patrick Wilcox.

81 Cormac O'Malley and Vincent Keane (eds), *The men will talk to me: Mayo interviews by Ernie O'Malley* (Cork, 2014), p. 315.

82 Ciarán Murray, 'The Bolsheviki bookies', *Come Here to Me*, 29 Mar. 2017 (https://comeheretome.com) (accessed 9 Feb. 2023). See also MSPC, MSP34REF521 James Redican.

in the midst of an upsurge in attacks on British personnel in Dublin, James Perry's unit was still tasked with raiding lodging houses in 'search of armed men who were carrying out robberies around the city'.[83]

There is little evidence too of interaction between the IRA and the Irish criminal underworld. But republican activity abroad presented more opportunities for such interaction. Local units in Ireland often had to make these foreign contacts independently of HQ. They found themselves having 'to frequent very dangerous places patronised by a rough element of society' and dealing with 'East End crooks' on occasion.[84] In London, James Delaney recounted how an Irish bookie with criminal connections introduced him to a 'Jewman' bookmaker named Ginger Barnett and a mixed-race gang leader known as 'Darby the Coon'. With them he developed a network for moving guns to the IRA in his native Kilkenny.[85] Another London IRA member, Denis Carr, with the aid of funds from Ireland,

> was in a position to negotiate with such criminal gangs as 'the Titanics' in the 'Nile', London, the 'Sabinis' of Clerkenwell, an Italian mob, and the Birmingham mob. Through these, I made contact with a crook arms dealer in the Hackney Road, and through him was able to tap an unlimited source of ammunition and guns from revolvers to machine guns.[86]

Denis Kelleher of the Cork IRA said that their best London contact was 'a Jew named "Ginger" [who] lived near Whitechapel station … He was our main source of supply and he would deal only with myself. I had to go there 2 or 3 times a week, and we paid £2 or £3 a weapon'.[87] A London policeman, Denis Sugrue, operated as an intelligence officer for the IRA. He recruited three 'underworld agents' (identified as Herb Friday, P. Dunsford, and 'Curley' Collins) from criminal contacts to help him source arms.[88] James Cunningham, a Birmingham IRA member who had been held in Winson Green prison, recalled how 'The knowledge which I gained of the underworld stood me in good stead, as it was a great source of "stuff".'[89] Entering this world brought dangers, however. Richard Walsh estimated that of the money allocated for arms purchases in Britain, a 'large sum', perhaps '£10,000 to £12,000', went unaccounted for.[90]

Police work featured far more in the routine workings of the IRA between 1919 and 1921 than is usually imagined.[91] Indeed, filling the vacuum left by the retreat of the RIC was a significant part of the republican effort to establish a counter-state. Crucially, in many areas the IRA had the 'sympathy of the public, which is a great asset, and something the R.I.C. never possessed'.[92] Further reorganisation took place in June 1921 when it was decided that a 'police force to the number of ten in each Company area' be detached from the Volunteers. New general orders to re-organise a distinct republican force were issued in November 1921, by which time a truce had been in place for several months.[93]

That period saw an upsurge in almost all varieties of crime. During August 1922, Michael Collins wrote to Richard Mulcahy to complain about 'the wretched Irish Republican Police system [and] the awful personnel that was attracted to its ranks … the lack of construction and the lack of control in this force have been responsible for many of the outrageous things which have occurred throughout Ireland'.[94] Collins was indulging in revisionism regarding what, until recently, had been a highly praiseworthy force. The republican police had been kept busy throughout the Truce. In Youghal they were based in the former RIC barracks. As well as recovering stolen goods and guarding the local banks, they also punished a 'bunch known as The Black Hand gang' by chaining them to the railings of the local church.[95] Republican police made a major effort in Dublin to track down a gang of 'gentlemen cracksmen', largely made up of British army deserters (but including at least one republican), who carried out two armed wages raids in the winter of 1921. Investigations into their activities found that 'Claude Gunner's gang' had planned robberies of, among others, Thomas Cook's travel agency and the Tedcastle McCormick payroll. The gang was tracked down, apprehended by the IRP and held in the Columkille Hall in Blackhall Street (one of a number of premises used by republicans for holding criminal suspects during this period) before being handed over to the British military.[96] Patrick Yorke recalled capturing 'three armed criminals who had escaped from Mountjoy' during the Truce.[97] Owen Donnelly successfully infiltrated a gang of professional motor thieves operating in Dublin during this period and allowed himself to be arrested with them in order to have them brought before a republican court.[98]

The IRP was also increasingly given a public order role. They were praised for the way they 'exercised a salutary control over the rowdy element in Sligo on Christmas Eve'.[99] However, the use of republican police during strikes drew criticism from labour activists, who alleged that they had acted for employers in Dublin and Kilkenny. One left-wing newspaper contended that the 'function of the I.R.P.

83 Affidavit of applicant, 18 Aug. 1926, MSPC, 24SP12348 James Perry.

84 BMH, WS 1093 Thomas Treacy; S. Lanigan to Michael Collins, 21 June 1919, UCDA, Richard Mulcahy papers, P7/A1.

85 BMH, WS 1360 James Delaney. 'Darby' may in fact have been 'Darkie the Coon' (Isaac Bogard), a Jewish gang leader in the East End; James Morton, *East End gangland* (London, 2000), pp 126-9.

86 Account of activities, 30 Dec. 1937, MSPC, MSP34REF27243 Denis Carr. I am very grateful to Sam McGrath for this reference. For a discussion of these gangs see Heather Shore, *London's criminal underworlds c. 1720-c. 1930* (London, 2015).

87 Notes of interview with Denis Kelleher, UCDA, Ernie O'Malley notebooks, P17b/107; Sworn statement made before the Advisory Committee by Denis Kelleher, 19 July 1937, MSPC, MSP34REF19466 Denis Kelleher.

88 Account of activities, n.d. [?1934], MSPC, MSP34REF64446 Denis Sugrue.

89 BMH, WS 922 James W. Cunningham.

90 BMH, WS 400 Richard Walsh.

91 See, for example, MSPC, MSP34REF25163 William Hogan; MSPC, MSP34REF11517 John Peyton; MSPC, MSP34REF134 Peter Fox; MSPC, MSP34REF34016 William Dwane; MSPC, MSP34REF3879 David Curtin; MSPC, MSP34REF7519 Sean O'Driscoll; MSPC, 24SP2560 Christopher Moriarty.

92 *Sligo Champion*, 7 Jan. 1922.

93 General Orders, Republican Police, MAI, Michael Collins papers, IE/MA/CP/05/O1/27.

94 Quoted in Michael Hopkinson, *Green against green: the Irish Civil War* (Dublin, 1989), p. 91.

95 Account of activities with application form, 11 Dec. 1934, MSPC, MSP34REF791 John Gleeson.

96 Sam McGrath, 'Claude Gunner's gang', *Come Here to Me*, 23 July 2018 (https://comeheretome.com) (accessed 9 Feb. 2023); see also MSPC, MSP34REF10143 Michael Oman; MSPC, MSP34REF2287 Joseph Dodd. An outfit known as the 'Anderson Gang' were held at 144 Great Brunswick Street. Sworn statement made before the Advisory Committee by Ernest F. Piggot, 1 May 1936, MSPC, MSP34REF4137 Ernest Francis Piggot.

97 Sworn statement made before the Advisory Committee by Patrick Yorke, 16 Mar. 1936, MSPC, MSP34REF18144 Patrick Yorke.

98 Sworn statement made before the Advisory Committee by Owen Donnelly, 26 June 1937, MSPC, MSP34REF20115 Owen Donnelly; *Freeman's Journal*, 14 June 1922.

99 Michael Farry, *The aftermath of revolution: Sligo 1921–23* (Dublin, 2000), p. 158.

is that of all Capitalist police forces, to protect property'.[100] By February 1922, routine policing activities for the IRP included: guarding the Bank of Ireland at Elphin on market day; guarding a bank at Abbeyfeale for a week; investigating a spate of robberies of Drogheda shops; investigating the theft of a car at Kilmallock; arresting four Limerick men over a bank robbery in Croom; arresting two men in Castleblayney over the robbery of a salesman and searching for 'marauders' who were raiding farmhouses around Ballybofey.[101] Nevertheless, crime seemed to flourish. In Cork, 'large-scale armed robberies became common … though they had previously been extremely rare'.[102] Dublin saw 479 armed robberies during that year.[103] Belfast, wracked by violent sectarian conflict for two years, saw almost 'daily' armed robberies of shops and pubs, which contributed to the city's sense of 'lawlessness'.[104]

As the split over the Treaty became increasingly bitter, Collins and his allies placed the blame for this on their republican opponents.[105] The reality was more complex. Collins would describe some anti-Treaty activity as 'largely mere brigandage' carried out by 'criminal riff-raff, robbers and cut-throats'.[106] In fact members of both factions were taking advantage of the unsettled conditions. In early February 1922, £5,195 was taken from the Hibernian Bank at Charlestown, County Mayo.[107] When the IRA investigated, they found that the raid had been carried out by their own men, who had also robbed a bank in the town the previous year. The group, which included some of the 'head men' in the local IRA, claimed that they had forwarded £1,000 to GHQ but received no arms in return. One of those involved subsequently joined the National Army and hence 'got away' without further punishment. (£3,097 was recovered and returned to the bank.[108]) East Waterford was plagued by gangs claiming to be republican police, who entered homes and stole valuables. One set of bank robberies was found to have been carried out by senior IRA officers in the region. The men were tried at Stradbally and sentenced to ten years' deportation. Some, instead, went to Dublin and joined the new National Army, among them Michael Bishop, serving as a commandant with Free State forces in Kerry.[109] John Cox, a republican policeman, was shot dead during a robbery in Lanesborough in April 1922. The raiders, all Free State soldiers, were captured in nearby Roscommon. After the onset of civil war, the men were released and 'assisted the National [Army] during hostilities'.[110] Patrick and Thomas Dunleavy had been senior IRA officers in east Galway. They were suspected of a series of bank and post office raids in the Tuam area in the spring of 1922, but both men joined the National Army in September that year, leading to suspicion that they 'joined the Army with a view to a continuance of [this] policy under the protection of the uniform of a soldier of the State'.[111]

The anti-Treaty IRA were also certainly involved in some of the raids. One of their volunteers, John Bergin, a labourer from Templemore, County Tipperary, was killed after a robbery, supposedly following a dispute among the raiders.[112] But the section of the anti-Treaty forces did not *formally* authorise bank raids until May 1922. On 1 May a co-ordinated series of robberies was undertaken on the Bank of Ireland, which netted more than £50,000. By breaking with the new administration, the anti-Treatyites no longer had any access to funds, while Free State soldiers were now receiving a wage and had food and lodgings. The robberies, ordered by those in occupation of the Four Courts

> precipitated … the first serious clash between the rival groups in the army … The Bank of Ireland was the official treasurer of the Treaty party and the raids were all carried out in daylight … Those raids were undoubtedly the first operations of what we can describe as the Civil War.[113]

The pro-Treatyites roundly condemned the robbery of the 'property of the people of Ireland' and stressed that this had never been a tactic resorted to by the IRA prior to the Truce.[114] There was also a human cost. A woman, Mary Ellen Kavanagh, and a child, Esther Fletcher, were shot dead in crossfire between raiders and Free State troops in Buncrana after a bank robbery there.[115]

The IRA also carried out fundraising robberies in Britain during the spring and summer of 1922.[116] Just £244 was taken in a raid at Prestwich in July, with one of those involved, a miner called Bartley Igoe, asserting that the '"dough" was taken … to Dublin'.[117] However, Igoe and a comrade were captured, while two other raiders were deported back to Britain from the Free State. The four men served seven years in prison.[118] The anti-Treaty rationale for bank raids was to regard them as part of a well-ordered military effort. But by the time the Civil War began there was often little indication of who was doing the robberies or why they were being carried out. Occasionally, they appeared to take place in tandem with the war, as when £2,000 was stolen from banks in Monaghan in July 1922, coinciding with attacks on Free State positions in the town in which a soldier was killed.[119] But following an investigation ordered

100 *Workers' Republic*, 19, 26 Nov. 1921.

101 Ibid., 22 Feb. 1922.

102 Borgonovo, 'Republican courts', p. 63.

103 John Dorney, *The Civil War in Dublin: the fight for the Irish capital 1922–24* (Newbridge, 2017), p. 46.

104 *Belfast News Letter*, 15 Apr. 1922.

105 Townshend, *The Republic*, pp 423-7.

106 Gavin M. Foster, *The Irish Civil War and society: politics, class, and conflict* (Basingstoke, 2015), pp 38-9.

107 *Irish Independent*, 17 Feb. 1922.

108 Sworn statement made before the Advisory Committee by John Peyton, 6 Mar. 1936, MSPC, MSP34REF11517 John Peyton; Sworn statement made before the Advisory Committee by Gerald Feeney, 3 July 1937, MSPC, MSP34REF41725 Gerald Feeney; Account of service with application form, n.d.; Sworn statement made before the Advisory Committee by Thomas Carney, 13 May 1936, MSPC, MSP34REF4491 Thomas Carney.

109 Pat McCarthy, *The Irish revolution: Waterford 1912-23* (Dublin, 2015), p. 92; See also MSPC, 24SP11719 Michael Bishop; MSPC, MSP34REF16364 Sean Hyde.

110 M.F. Reynolds to Assistant Adjutant General, 25 Oct. 1926, MSPC, 2D496 John Joseph Cox. See also MSPC, MSP34REF3941 Maggie Egan (née Cox).

111 Thomas Gorman to Minister for Defence, 30 Mar. 1926, MSPC, 24SP1721 Patrick Dunleavy.

112 Adjutant, Southern Command, Cork, to Adjutant General, GHQ, 6 Jan. 1925, MSPC, 2D12 John Bergin.

113 BMH, WS 400 Richard Walsh.

114 *An t-Óglách*, 6 May 1922.

115 *Belfast News Letter*, 5 May 1922.

116 Gerard Noonan, *The IRA in Britain, 1919-1923: 'in the heart of enemy lines'* (Liverpool, 2014), p. 260.

117 Sworn statement made before the Advisory Committee by Bartley Igoe, 7 Dec. 1939, MSPC, MSP34REF54160 Bartley Igoe.

118 Uinseann MacEoin, *The IRA in the twilight years, 1923-1948* (Dublin, 1997), p. 179.

119 *Irish Times*, 30 July 1924.

by anti-Treaty commander, Frank Aiken, it was discovered that the robberies had been unauthorised. While £130 was returned to the Ulster Bank, some of the men involved fled the country with the rest of the money.[120]

In early January 1923 an anti-Treaty column, based in the Arigna mountains and short of food and resources, carried out a raid on Ballyconnell, County Cavan. One IRA volunteer, Michael Cull, was shot dead while robbing the town's post office. Cull had been killed by a Free State intelligence officer, but his comrades blamed townspeople.[121] They returned a month later, robbing £200 from the Ulster Bank branch and stealing cash and goods from several shops. But their motivation was also revenge, and a shop assistant called William Ryan was shot dead while the owner of a department store was wounded. Three shops were destroyed and homes associated with Free State supporters attacked.[122] Such attacks only reinforced the Free State's assertions that the anti-Treatyites were criminals. Those convicted of taking part in armed robberies could face a death sentence under draconian security legislation. In March 1923, IRA volunteers Luke Burke and Michael Grealy were executed in Mullingar. They had been involved in the robbery of two banks at Oldcastle, County Meath. But because the robberies were unauthorised, neither man was included in the IRA's roll of honour.[123] In contrast, three young Offaly IRA men, William Conroy, Patrick Cunningham, and Columb Kelly, who were executed at Tullamore in January 1923, received official recognition from their organisation. But they had actually been suspended from the IRA at the time for participation in 'minor robberies' including burglaries.[124]

Non-political criminals and opportunists continued to take advantage of the chaos. In east Donegal there had been a wave of robberies in the early stages of the war and the area remained disturbed. In March 1923, soldiers arrested a number of drunk men at a market fair in Creeslough. Later that night shots were fired at their barracks, killing Captain Bernard Cannon. Assuming that it had been an IRA attack, four republican prisoners were executed at Drumboe in reprisal. In fact, the Creeslough shootings were most likely carried out by friends of the arrested drunks.[125] Meanwhile, the anti-Treatyites blamed a 'gang of robbers' led by an ex-IRA officer for terrorising people 'particularly the Unionist classes' in the Glen of Aherlow. When the IRA broke up this gang, the robbers supplied information to Free State forces which led to the death of senior officer Denis Lacey in February 1923.[126] But the IRA could also utilise criminal contacts, with Stephen Davoren claiming that a 'large amount' of cash was stolen in Dublin because of assistance received from 'two characters of the underworld'.[127]

The Civil War saw a campaign by the pro-Treaty side to label their opponents as criminals. Indeed, accusations of banditry were also made against those taking part in strikes and land disputes. Anti-Treaty IRA members did carry out robberies for their own purposes. In October 1922 an active service unit in Dublin was disbanded because of its co-operation with a civilian 'robber gang'.[128] But members of the state forces were often as likely as republicans to engage in crime. In the post-Civil War period over 900 army veterans were convicted of offences varying from murder to fraud and running brothels.[129] Indeed, two army officers strongly suspected of the murders of two Jewish men in Dublin during the winter of 1923 had also carried out armed robberies in the city earlier that year.[130] Untangling responsibility for the myriad of such activities during the revolution is very difficult. However, the MSPC is giving us access to far more detail than ever before.[131] Anyone studying crime, policing, and social conditions more generally will find them a vital resource.[132] They will also find much that allows a better understanding of republican views about 'respectability', how class influenced perceptions of criminality, and how punishment was administered to those regarded as guilty. The MSPC may also provide pointers as to how republicans thought justice would be administered after they had overturned British rule.

Further reading:

Linda Connolly, 'Sexual violence in the Irish Civil War: a forgotten war crime?' in *Women's History Review*, xxx, no. 1 (2021), pp 126-43

John Dorney, *The Civil War in Dublin: the fight for the Irish capital 1922-1924* (Newbridge, 2017)

Thomas Earls Fitzgerald, *Combatants and civilians in revolutionary Ireland, 1918-1923* (Abington, 2021)

Brian Hanley, *Republicanism, crime and paramilitary policing in Ireland, 1916-2020* (Cork, 2022)

Eunan O'Halpin and Daithí Ó Corráin, *The dead of the Irish revolution* (Yale, 2020)

120 Terence Dooley, *Monaghan: the Irish revolution, 1912-23* (Dublin, 2017), p. 107.

121 See MSPC, DP2370 Michael Cull; MSPC, 24SP39 Frank Dolphin.

122 *Anglo-Celt*, 10 Feb. 1923; John Dorney, 'The tragedies of Ballyconnell', *The Irish Story*, 19 June 2014 (https://www.theirishstory.com/2014/06/19/the-tragedies-of-ballyconnell/#.Y-kgSC-l30o) (accessed 9 Feb. 2023). The attacks are remembered by Fermanagh unionists as sectarian in nature, but both Catholics and Protestants in Ballyconnell were targeted; Edward Burke, *An army of tribes: British army cohesion, deviancy and murder in Northern Ireland* (Liverpool, 2018), pp 240-1.

123 See MSPC, DP903 Luke Burke (who used the name Henry Keenan); MSPC, DP1835 Michael Grealy; Breen Murphy, 'The government's executions policy during the Irish Civil War 1922-23' (PhD thesis, NUI Maynooth, 2010), p. 267.

124 Michael Keane, 'Dependency claims for the Civil War executed in the Military Service (1916–1923) Pensions Collection' in *History Ireland,* xxvi, no. 2 (2018), pp 42-5.

125 Kieran Glennon, *From pogrom to civil war: Tom Glennon and the Belfast IRA* (Cork, 2013), pp 228-9.

126 *Éire*, 3 Mar. 1923.

127 Stephen Davoren to the Office of the Referee, 7 Apr. 1936, MSPC, MSP34REF16828 Stephen Davoren.

128 Anne Dolan and Cormac K.H. O'Malley (eds), *'No surrender here!' The Civil War papers of Ernie O'Malley 1922-24* (Dublin, 2007), p. 299.

129 Report on five cases, June 1950, MSPC, 24SP11738 Hugh Martin.

130 Murder of Emmanuel Khan at Stamer Street, Dublin, 14 Nov. 1923, James Conroy wanted on warrant, 18 July 1932, NAI, Dept. of Justice, 2007/56/153.

131 There is also some information on rape and other forms of violence in the files, see Linda Connolly, 'Sexual violence in the Irish Civil War: a forgotten war crime?' in *Women's History Review*, xxx, no. 1 (2021), pp 126-43.

132 The substantial number of IRA veterans who became Gardaí, whether after the Treaty, or after 1932 are now also increasingly traceable through the MSPC and through sources such as the Civic Guard Temporary Register, (http://digital.ucd.ie/view-media/ucdlib:53466/canvas/ucdlib:53468) (accessed 23 Feb. 2023). See also Patrick Mulroe, 'The Civic Guard 1922', *Stories from a border kitchen* (https://theborderkitchen.blog/the-civic-guard-1922/) (accessed 23 Feb. 2023).

Q. You took part in raids for arms in Buckingham Street area, Glasnevin and Drumcondra?
A. Yes.

Q. How many altogether; was it three houses you visited?
A. One house in Glasnevin, one house in Drumcondra and a whole district down in Buckingham Street.

Q. Were these the dens down in Buckingham Street you were raiding?
A. They were.

Q. Was this part of the general operation to clear out robbers?
A. There was a lot of Fianna boys doing queer things we went down and routed them out.

Q. Was that before the Truce?
A. Yes.

Q. No shooting on these raids?
A. No.

Above

Sworn statement in which Owen Donnelly refers to how he 'routed' out criminals operating within the Fianna.

Reference:
Owen Donnelly
MSP34REF20115.

Right

IRA court in session in Westport Town Hall.

Image courtesy of the National Museum of Ireland (NMI-EW-2705).

(c) Continuous service from 1st April, 1918, to 31st March, 1919.

About the beginning of this period the Volunteer Police were brought into being. I was then selected by my Battalion Comdt. (Ted O'Kelly) to organise a Battalion Police force. this force was to ~~consist~~ be made up by selecting 4 men from each Company making a total of 28 men (7 companys in the Battalion) of whom I was in sole charge I was personally responsible for the capture of Reilly. Fairbanks & Coleman. who at this time were a terror in the Crumlin Area. having broken into the house of one Rose anne Shea Crumlin, & stole these from her life savings. consisting of approximately £84. These men were brought before a Volunteer Tribunal & put on parole until the money was refund I got £54. & some silver on Reilly when arrested & returned same to owner. These men were afterwards arrested by me for stealing a head of cattle. value £56. property of John Woody Harolds Cross they were tried by Volunteer Tribunal, and were given. 12 strokes of the Cat: and deported, this cleared Crumlin of one of its worst gangs of criminals. I also arrested Murphy. Lambert & Darley. Rathmines Area, they were tried by Vol. Ct. marshal & one Murphy deported. these men were responsible for hundreds of pounds worth of property stolen from shops in above district. there are numerous other cases which I must leave out. (d) Continuous service from 1st April, 1919, to 31st March, 1920. owing to space limit

At the beginning of this period I was ordered to increase the strength of the Battalion Police. (which then consisted of four men to each Coy Area) to seven men and one Sergt. in charge of each Company area. It was early in this period that I was appointed Battalion Intelligence Officer. (a position I held until after the passing of the Treaty) with instructions to select A few of the best men in each Coy & train them in Intelligence work. Whilst training these men I had to carry on Police duties until about May 1919. when I had to confine my activities solely to Intelligence work. by this time I had charge of 60 men all on Intelligence work. I was at this time appointed

Above

Joseph Kinsella's statement regarding the police work he carried out as part of his military service. He claims the 'Volunteer Police' were able to clear Crumlin 'of one of its worst gangs of criminals'.

Reference:
Joseph Kinsella 24SP4685.

Right

Denis Carr's account of his connections with criminal gangs which he used to obtain firearms and ammunition for the IRA.

Reference:
Denis Carr MSP34REF27243.

adelphi
3, ~~Adam~~ St., Strand, London. At this meeting was formed an I.R.B. circle on the lines of a Milit. Council, which subsequently controlled both the open military campaign and the more important Intelligence and Supply Service, The personnel of this circle ~~which~~ was Sam Maguire, Joe Cassidy, Fintan Murphy, Art O'Brien, Seán McGrath, Reggie Dunne, Seán Golden ~~Goulding~~, my brother J.J. Carr, and myself. I might mention that Reggie Dunne was not enrolled in the I.R.B. at this meeting, but remained outside the room, receiving his instructions afterwards.

It was decided at this conference

(1) to organise an open I.R.A. body under the direction of Dunne as O.C., and Golden ~~Goulding~~ as Quarter-Master,

(2) to expand the organisation for the purchase and transport of arms under my brother and me, I being in direct control.

Prior to this meeting, owing to lack of resources, I had only been able to pick up guns and ammunition in small quantities from returned soldiers. With the greater financial backing, I was in a position to negotiate with such criminal gangs as "the Titanics" in the "Nile", London, the "Sabinis" of Clerkenwell, an Italian mob, and the Birmingham mob. Through these, I made contact with a crook arms dealer in the Hackney Road, and through him was able to tap an unlimited source of ammunition and guns from revolvers to machine guns.

The method of transhipment of arms prior to the meeting referred to above was purely haphazard, and the responsibility of putting it on a regular and reliable basis was delegated to me. My first action in this connection was to make contact with the various stevedores who superintended the loading of the B. & I. vessels for Dublin. Through these I was able to despatch consignments of arms mixed with the regular cargoes on the B. & I. vessels. My method was to obtain from these stevedores the exact location of the arms cases in the holds, passing the information on to the sailors, whose reliability I had previously tested, and who were members of the

'This strike … was of the utmost importance, and met with the approval of the IRA Executive': the munitions strike of 1920[1]

Pádraig Yeates

The munitions strike of 1920 is now generally recognised as being one of the most successful campaigns of civil disobedience against British rule during Ireland's War of Independence. It was particularly effective at disrupting British army operations between May 1920 and the end of the year. While the British army introduced extra motor transport and armoured cars to offset the disruption, the GOC, Sir Neville Macready, admitted that planned offensive operations against the IRA that year had been delayed as a result.[2]

However, not only has the significance of the strike been lost on many historians of the period but its military impact often failed to register fully with participants.[3] The Military Service Pensions Collection seems to bear this out. Altogether there are eighty applications released to date from railway workers for pensions, of which sixty proffer some detail of how their occupation was relevant, to a greater or lesser degree, to their military activity. But just five applicants included their participation in the munitions strike among the reasons why their application should be accepted; the same number as those involved in hunger strikes, of whom two were also munitions strikers.

Of course not every railway worker participated in the munitions strike but over 1,000 of them did, as did 500 dockers. The scarcity of information in the MSPC on this form of resistance to British rule would seem to indicate that railway workers took a very narrow and traditional view of what constituted 'military' activity, and were therefore reluctant to include it in their applications, and the referees appointed to assess the eligibility of claimants shared this outlook. By contrast, activities such as carrying despatches, facilitating the transport of IRA and Cumman na mBan couriers, monitoring troop movements, collecting and transmitting 'intelligence', and smuggling weapons were accepted as legitimate forms of military action. Such activities even extended to less obvious candidates for consideration, such as enforcers of the Belfast boycott and involvement in the IRB's Labour Board, whose primary objective was to undermine British-based unions, including the National Union of Railwaymen, the main union whose members were involved in the rail dispute.[4]

1 Sworn statement made before the Advisory Committee by Michael Donnelly, 28 June 1935, MSPC, MSP34REF291 Michael Donnelly.

2 Peter Rigney, *How railwaymen and dockers defied an empire: the Irish munitions embargo of 1920* (Dublin, 2021), is the definitive account. See also, Charles Townshend, *The British campaign in Ireland, 1919-1921: the development of political and military policies* (Oxford, 1975), pp 69-72. W.H. Kautt, *Ambushes and armour: the Irish rebellion 1919-1921* (Dublin, 2010), pp 57-88.

3 An exception was Martin O'Sullivan a locomotive driver from Athlone, who wrote a two-part series in the *Irish Independent* in 1967, reprinted in Rigney, *How railwaymen and dockers defied an empire*.

4 The IRB's project to create a special unit of trade union activists within the IRA to subvert members of 'amalgamated' or British-based unions is referred to in a number of MSPC files. See, for example, MSPC, MSP34REF21715 Joseph Toomey.

How dangerous some of these activities were would have varied greatly and their military value was in many cases highly questionable, whereas involvement in the munitions strike had very real immediate consequences not only for the British war effort but for the strikers. For the latter these included suspension or dismissal, threats from the military and also from loyalist elements on the Great Northern Line, as well as actual assaults on staff who refused to operate trains. The disruption to British military operations by the munitions strike would seem to be of more obvious benefit to the Irish war effort than many activities accepted as being of a legitimate military nature, such as the destruction of British newspapers or alcoholic beverages produced in Belfast. However, these activities were undertaken under the auspices of Dáil Éireann, not the Labour Party and Trade Union Congress, and therefore bore the imprimatur of the revolutionary state. They were also a blessing to many IRA commanders at a loss for finding ways of keeping members active in the war effort due to a lack of munitions of their own.

It is clear that the vast majority of railway workers who applied for pensions shared the prevailing outlook of the Free State's political and military hierarchy. The application forms themselves reinforced this hierarchy of the military virtues. The definition of what constituted military service was restrictive and more appropriate to the British armed forces in the Victorian era, when they constituted a colonial police force rather than the realities of European warfare in the early twentieth century. Applicants had to be members of one of six formally approved paramilitary organisations. These were the Irish Volunteers, the IRA, the Irish Citizen Army, Na Fianna Éireann, the Hibernian Rifles, and Cumann na mBan. Active Service was narrowly defined as applying to a series of discreet defined periods with a hierarchy of values, including financial ones. For instance, participants in Easter week 1916, the only phase of the struggle for independence that approximated with conventional warfare, entitled participants to a pension premium, with each day of active service counting as a year for pension purposes. The most active period during the height of the War of Independence, from 1 April 1921 to the Truce on 11 July 1921, entitled successful applicants to a pension of two months for every month served. Other periods were worth much less.

During every period special emphasis was put on 'military operations' and 'engagements'. Such terms were more reminiscent of the Peninsular War or the North-West Frontier than a paramilitary-led insurgency in twentieth-century Europe. The more closely an applicant's activities approximated to conventional views of what constituted 'military' activity, the greater their chances of being awarded a pension. Being able to prove you had shot someone was the best recommendation of all.

It was not until the Second World War that public attitudes changed because there were no 'front lines' and warfare permeated every aspect of life. Hero cities were baptised in the Soviet Union, many of them in Ukraine. The people of Malta were awarded a collective George Cross, the highest gallantry award after the Victoria Cross in the British military hierarchy. (So, incidentally was the RUC in 1999 for its role in the Troubles, which did not prevent its disbandment in 2001. It was both a very generous and cheap way for the British state to acknowledge a significant collective sacrifice.) Elsewhere, activities such as crewing the Murmansk convoys, firefighting in the Blitz, passive resistance to occupying forces, or helping fugitives avoid imprisonment and death were seen as worthy of being recognised and rewarded in various ways by belligerents. As it happens, one of the groups from the

Second World War which fell into this category were the *cheminots*, or French rail workers, for disrupting the German war effort.[5]

Eligibility for a pension in the context of the Irish conflict was determined by the referees, who themselves usually had mindsets framed in the previous century, as well as individual agendas. The latter were often as much about settling scores, rewarding friends and supporters or, if politicians, securing votes in forthcoming elections than anything remotely approaching objective criteria. Establishing fair criteria for the awarding of pensions or medals has always been a fraught exercise in every army, let alone one where politicians such as Oscar Traynor, who was minister for defence in the Emergency, were among referees.

Reluctance to even mention the munitions strike in their pension applications seems to have included IRA members such as Christopher Moran, whom Peter Rigney has identified as playing 'a key role' in the dispute.[6] Moran had already suffered severely for his involvement in the struggle for independence. A solicitor's clerk in Swords, he was widely regarded as a founder of the Irish Volunteers in north County Dublin. He was one of two delegates who represented the 5th Fingal Battalion of the Irish Volunteers at the organisation's 1915 convention. He was also acting quarter master for an unspecified period, but never seems to have held any other rank than volunteer or 'Private'.[7]

He had participated in the operations of the Fingal flying column commanded by Thomas Ashe and Richard Mulcahy in 1916 before falling seriously ill and being sent home to recuperate. Arrested in the immediate aftermath of the Rising, his subsequent internment further undermined his health, according to statements given by leading members of the IRA and Sinn Féin in Fingal in support of his subsequent pension application.[8] On his release from Frongoch on health grounds he was dismissed from his position as a solicitor's clerk and, in his own words, remained 'a sick man, as well as a man without a job' for many months.[9]

It was not until the following year, 1917, that he succeeded in obtaining work on the construction of the military aerodrome at Collinstown, from which he later said that he was 'sacked for no apparent reason. My comrades on the job wanted to call a strike, but I would not let them do so.'[10] His subsequent jobs with the Swedish consul and Great Northern Railway were also terminated abruptly, apparently because the RIC visited his employers to warn them of his subversive activities. It was not until late 1918 that he finally managed to secure a more permanent position as a porter with the Dublin South-Eastern Railway in Westland Row. It was a long fall socially as well as economically for a former solicitor's clerk with a young wife to support.

5 See, for example, Ludivine Broch, 'Rescue, railways and the righteous: French railway workers and the question of rescue during the Holocaust' in *Diasporas*, 25 (2015), pp 147-67. As is often the case, the claims of the *cheminots'* champions have been questioned by Broch and others for seeking to exaggerate the role of these workers. The opposite problem to that in the Irish case.

6 MSPC, 24SP1355 Christopher Moran; Rigney, *How railwaymen and dockers defied an empire*, p. 11.

7 Application form, 9 Nov. 1924, MSPC, 24SP1355 Christopher Moran.

8 See, for example, James Crenigan to the Board of Assessors, 8 Nov. 1927, ibid.

9 BMH, WS 1438 Christopher Moran.

10 Ibid.

Because of his previous employment experiences, Moran's first step on his appointment with the DSER was to notify the station master, Mr Rennicks, of his past history rather than wait for the police to do so. Like most railway supervisory and management staff Rennicks was a Protestant, but unlike previous managers he kept Moran on, so that he was in situ when the strike began.[11]

However it was an Irish Citizen Army docker and 1916 veteran in Dublin port, Michael Donnelly, who would initiate the action. On 20 May 1920, his gang refused to unload British army munitions on the North Wall. Donnelly then walked up the quays to Liberty Hall and asked the ITGWU's general treasurer, William O'Brien, if the union would back his gang if they continued to black British army munitions. Donnelly cited the precedent set by London dockers, who had refused to load munitions on the *SS Jolly George* for use against the Red Army earlier in the month. After a brief phone call to the ITGWU general president, Tom Foran, O'Brien sanctioned the action and members of the Royal Engineers had to unload the army's supplies.

O'Brien immediately appreciated the significance of Donnelly's action. Not only was he a leading figure in Ireland's largest trade union and a member of the executive of the Irish Labour Party and Trade Union Congress, but he was also in the IRB and one of the drafters of the Democratic Programme of the first Dáil. The literary executor of the 1916 martyr, James Connolly, O'Brien subscribed to the latter's dictum that the cause of Ireland was the cause of labour.

He had taken a keen interest in the *SS Jolly George* dispute while on hunger strike in Wormwood Scrubs only a few weeks earlier in protest at his own detention. For him Donnelly's initiative presented an opportunity, much like the threat of conscription in 1918, to align labour with the militant nationalist cause.[12]

The one danger was that the British unions would not co-operate with the strike. Earlier in the year they had made a settlement with Dublin Castle over the heads of their local members and the ITUC to end the motor permits dispute on the grounds that it was a 'political strike'. Jimmy Thomas, the leader of the National Union of Railwaymen, was one of the leading right wingers in the TUC but on this occasion he regarded the munitions strike not as a political one but a health and safety issue. He was perhaps mindful of the efforts the IRB was making to seduce his members into the newly established Irish Engineering, Shipbuilding, and Foundry Workers' Trade Union. The latter did indeed succeed in recruiting the bulk of Irish engineering workers in what would become the Irish Free State from other occupations but not on the railways.[13]

Yet, if Donnelly had initiated the blacking of munitions, it was the decision of Moran and his colleagues in the DSER that ensured the dispute would develop into a major confrontation between transport workers and the British government. Unlike the dockers, who were casual workers easily redeployed to unload other vessels, the railway men were permanent employees of their companies and once Moran and his colleagues decided to follow the dockers' example a major industrial dispute was unavoidable.

11 Ibid.

12 William O'Brien, *Forth the banners go* (Dublin, 1969), pp 194-7.

13 Pádraig Yeates, *Irish craft workers in a time of revolution* (Dublin, 2016).

The opportunity arose on Sunday, 23 May, when the *SS Poolbeg* berthed at Kingstown (Dún Laoghaire) with a consignment of ammunition. Moran was ordered to load it for transportation to the Great Southern and Western Railway at Kingsbridge. In his witness statement to the Bureau of Military History, Moran said, 'I began to think that, if the British dockers refused to handle munitions for their troops to kill Russians, why should I handle munitions for British forces to kill my own countrymen.'[14] He reflected on his dilemma while at mass and found that his workmates felt as strongly about the issue as he did, including a former British soldier who had been ordered to collect the ammunition but had also refused. Moran cycled over to the National Union of Railwaymen's offices and the other unions which would be affected by the situation and, on being given assurances of support, he returned to Westland Row to notify the traffic manager, George McDonald, of the situation.

McDonald was at a loss to know what to do but he did not dismiss or suspend Moran who, by his early morning perambulations had secured sanction for the men's actions by their respective unions, at least at local level. While Moran had immediately grasped the wider implications of the dispute he made no reference to it in his military service pension application.[15] Presumably he anticipated that it would be considered irrelevant, but he did recount the incident in detail later to the Bureau of Military History.[16] Clearly he understood the military dimensions of the issue far better than the expert referees appointed to assess pension applications.

The reasons for Moran's reluctance in drawing attention to his role in initiating the munitions strike are hard to ascertain at this stage. When he applied for a military service pension in 1924 he was vague in his references to activities undertaken after 1916 and it was one of his referees, Lieutenant Ben McAllister, who claimed that he was 'on the shooting of two Black and Tans' and the burning of Rush police barracks in the qualifying period from 1 April 1920 to 31 March 1921. McAllister also said that Moran was involved in similar arson attacks on Malahide, Donabate, and Rogerstown coastguard stations from 1 April to 11 July 1921, as well as 'several ambushes'.[17] Perhaps because of the vagueness of McAllister's claims and his relatively junior standing in the military and revolutionary hierarchy, his opinions were not considered particularly relevant. Whatever the reasons, the referees disallowed any service for Moran except for Easter week and a brief period in 1922, when he was in the National Army.

There is no doubt but that Moran was regarded sympathetically by his former colleagues. But given the tight-knit veterans' community in Fingal, Moran's poor physical health was well known and he was himself scrupulously honest in his own dealings with the Department. This meant that he admitted to being in need of a pension, but would not claim for military activities he was not actually engaged in.

As he makes clear in the statement he gave to the Bureau of Military History in 1956, the only activity he claimed to have undertaken during the War of Independence was transmitting despatches received from Wexford, Waterford, and south Tipperary to a safe drop on the North Strand, presumably on his way home from the DSER. In a characteristically candid statement he admitted that 'Although I carried on this sort or work right up to the Truce, and was trusted, I was not actually a member of the Volunteers after the 1916 Rising, nor was I ever arrested by the British after that.'[18] In effect he was engaging in an act of self-censorship with regard to the munitions strike so that, like almost all of his fellow railway employees, he did not regard the strike as legitimate military activity.

The truth was that his health never fully recovered after his collapse on active service with Thomas Ashe's column in Fingal during Easter week. He did attempt to serve briefly in the National Army in February and March 1922 but once more ill-health led to his discharge on medical grounds. Subsequently he filed reports on anti-Treaty IRA activity in the area, at some risk to himself. Eventually he was awarded five years for 1916 and one-sixth of a year for his National Army service. That he managed to commute every day from Swords to do a day's work with the DSER was probably deserving of a medal in its own right.

By contrast, Michael Donnelly had no inhibitions about highlighting his role in the dispute. In the section of his military service pension application referring to the sixth period of service, from 1 April 1920 to 31 March 1921, Donnelly wrote, 'I wish to say that I was the man responsible for organising the strike against unloading the munitions. Senator Foran or William O'Brien can vouch for this. This strike, which lasted for six months, was of the utmost importance, and met with the approval of the I.R.A. Executive.'[19] Unfortunately for Donnelly the decision on whether to accept his claim lay not with Foran or O'Brien, but with the appointed referees who, in this case, included fellow ICA member John Hanratty.

Hanratty's decision to disregard the munitions strike in his assessment of Donnelly's application no doubt reflected the prevailing Edwardian attitudes of what constituted the manly military virtues, but it was also almost certainly influenced by a history of personal antagonism with Donnelly within the ICA. An indication of this was Hanratty's grudging acknowledgement of Donnelly's more conventional military activities, such as his service in 1916 and subsequently in the War of Independence. But he flatly rejected Donnelly's claim to have served as adjutant general of the ICA. Hanratty relegated Donnelly's status at ICA Army Council meetings to note taker, thus scuppering any hopes that Donnelly had of securing a pension on the officers' scales rather than that of a 'Private'.[20]

Other references to the munitions strike in military service pension applications from railway workers, and how they were treated, indicate that similar attitudes to the dispute prevailed across the IRA as well as the ICA and, subsequently, the Free State military establishment. One example is Arthur John Murphy, a porter like Moran in the DSER, where he too was involved in the munitions strike. Like Moran he failed to reference his involvement in the munitions dispute in support of his claim for a military service pension.[21]

A case where it could be argued that going on strike was detrimental to his military effectiveness was Daniel Hickey, a railway guard in the GSWR, who was based in Kingsbridge. He was unpopular

14 BMH, WS 1438 Christopher Moran.

15 MSPC, 24SP1355 Christopher Moran.

16 BMH, WS 1438 Christopher Moran.

17 Reference by Lieut. Ben McAllister, 18 Feb. 1925, MSPC, 24SP1355 Christopher Moran.

18 BMH, WS 1438 Christopher Moran.

19 Sworn statement made before the Advisory Committee by Michael Donnelly, 28 June 1935, MSPC, MSP34REF291 Michael Donnelly.

20 Sworn statement made before the Advisory Committee by John Hanratty, 22 Oct. 1936, ibid.

21 MSPC, 24SP228 Arthur John Murphy.

with his workmates because he passed strike pickets in 1911. By the same token, management regarded him as reliable and trustworthy, a view shared by the military. This allowed him to carry dispatches and parcels between the IRA GHQ in Dublin and the 1st and 2nd Southern Divisions. This mission was considered sufficiently important for him to report directly on occasion to Liam Mellows and Michael Collins, rather than his immediate superiors in the GSWR's IRA network at Kingsbridge. However his usefulness came to an end when he was suspended from the railway for refusing to transport British troops in Dundrum, County Tipperary, and he was subsequently out of work until December 1920.[22]

He was only allowed a third of the year on 'active service' for pension purposes in the period from 1 April 1920 until 31 March 1921, as opposed to a full year for 1 April 1921 until 11 July 1921 when the Truce came into force. This lower rate of pension entitlement reflected the attitude that not only did strike action rate far below other forms of legitimate activity by volunteers but was not to be taken into consideration for military service pension purposes.[23]

Another volunteer who sought recognition of his time on the railways was James Ginger McKee, a Tyrone volunteer who 'stood to' in Easter week but received no pension credits for this or subsequent periods until he moved to Derry and began working for the GNR as a porter and guard. In this period he transported ammunition for the IRA, including during the Derry riots of June 1920 that preceded the outbreak of largescale communal conflict in Belfast. Through British army contacts he was able to obtain valuable information, such as plans to arrest Peadar O'Donnell on his arrival by train in Derry. O'Donnell was able to evade capture by leaving the train at an earlier stop. However, once McKee refused to work on a British troop train at Bundoran Junction he was dismissed.[24] As in other cases, the period from his dismissal in July 1920 to his joining an IRA ASU in December 1920 (under O'Donnell's command), was disregarded for pension purposes. He was subsequently captured but released under the British amnesty of 1922. This meant that for the year from 1 April 1920 to 31 March 1921 he was credited with three months on active service, which equated with six months for pension purposes, but his time on strike was not worth anything.[25]

Michael O'Leary was even less fortunate. He claimed that he was involved in organising the general strike in the Kerry area in support of republican prisoners on hunger strike in April 1920 and was dismissed from his job as a railway fireman for refusing to work on a munitions train later that year. He also took part in various engagements with Crown forces and helped implement the Belfast boycott. In the Civil War he took the anti-Treaty side and was taken prisoner in an engagement with the National Army at Two Mile Borris. He was subsequently detained at the Curragh until December 1923. He provided a very detailed account of his activities and had references from former commanding officers to verify his activities, but these availed him nothing because he failed to attend for interview in Dublin, deterred by the travel costs he would incur. It proved a costly false economy. By the time he decided to appeal the case in 1950 his witnesses were all dead.[26]

Munitions strikers cannot be considered too hard done by financially because of the levy imposed by the Irish Labour Party and Trade Union Congress on affiliated unions. In total, £118,926 9*s.* 11*d*. was raised for strike pay. While some men at the top of the ladder, such as locomotive drivers were slightly worse off, the £3 a week would have meant an improvement in income for some lower grades. But even for the latter, it did have an impact in areas such as service for pension purposes and some of them did not return, or were not accepted back into their old employments.[27]

However, the main reason for the strike being called off in December was that by then the disruption caused to social and economic life exceeded that to the British forces. Many urban centres, including Dublin, were experiencing food shortages, the distribution of post, including old age pensions, was breaking down and there was a realisation that ultimately the British forces could rely on their own transport and logistical services if the railways came to a halt, but civil society could not. As the ILP&TUC's secretary, Tom Johnson, told a special delegate conference of the organisation on 16 November 1920, if the strike lasted much longer 'it would mean throwing back the social life of Ireland … perhaps for 100 years'.[28] On 14 December, the national executive of the ILP&TUC advised railway workers 'to offer to carry everything that the British Military Authorities are willing to risk on the trains'.[29]

The strike, like the campaign against conscription that saw the Irish labour movement align itself closely with nationalism caused tension with members in the north who were unionists. This was evident from the lack of support for the munitions dispute in Belfast where potential strikers were deterred by intimidation. Some unionists among the workforce even offered to 'rescue' trains stranded at the other end of the GNR line in Amiens Street (now Connolly) Station, Dublin. The British military authorities declined their offer as they considered the cost of deploying protection for these volunteers and the danger of escalating the situation far outweighed the possible advantages.

One important, if largely subliminal, role that the strike played was that it demonstrated the limits of syndicalism as a political weapon to a generation of activists in a labour movement still strongly influenced by the ideological legacy of its leading Irish exponents, Jim Larkin and James Connolly.[30]

The new Irish state was almost unique in Europe, in awarding pensions to former combatants. In Britain and other major belligerents military service was seen as an obligation of citizenship and pensions were only awarded to those who suffered from long-term disabilities as a result. The other outlier was France, where the strength of veterans' organisations with two-and-a-half million members, or almost

22 Application form, 28 Dec. 1934, MSPC, MSP34REF203 Daniel Hickey.

23 Details of acknowledged periods of active service, 5 Oct. 1939, ibid.

24 Application form, 27 Dec. 1935, MSPC, MSP34REF51356 James Ginger McKee.

25 Details of acknowledged periods of active service, 22 Mar. 1939, ibid.

26 MSPC, MSP34REF473 Michael O'Leary.

27 Irish Labour Party and Trade Union Congress, *Official report of the proceedings of the twenty-seventh annual meeting* (Dublin, 1921), pp 64-8.

28 *Irish Independent*, 18 Nov. 1920.

29 Irish Labour Party and Trade Union Congress, *Official report*, p. 11.

30 Pádraig Yeates, *A city in turmoil, Dublin 1919-1921* (Dublin, 2015), pp 186-7.

half of the six million veterans who had survived the Great War, meant that their demands could not be ignored.[31]

This is not to deny that pay and other financial benefits were of no account elsewhere. A major grievance among servicemen in both World Wars was how poorly paid soldiers, sailors, and airmen were compared with civilians. Even unskilled workers had basic pay rates worth more per hour than a soldier could earn in a day, plus overtime, shift premia, and productivity bonuses. In the Second World War there were furlough strikes in New Zealand and among British soldiers in India. Men threatened to stay at home, where they could earn more as civilians than return to the front. In the United States the government had to give a commitment that combatants would spend no more than eighteen months on active service overseas. When the War ended gratuities and benefits on discharge were often bitterly contested and varied enormously. For instance, British army rates for the lower ranks were well under £100 while their Canadian counterparts would receive £1,000. To that extent, most states at war did put a monetary value on military service. That value varied, was almost always disputed, and depended ultimately on a government's other political priorities, as well as its capacity to pay.[32]

It may be that the relatively low levels of military activity in the Irish conflict made it all the more highly prized and in need of elevation to underpin the credentials of the nation, especially given the emphasis on the tradition of blood sacrifice in the writings of leading ideologues such as Patrick Pearse and John Mitchell. Certainly there was no shortage of claimants. The Easter Rising and subsequent events generated applications for pensions from 82,000 people, of whom 15,700 were successful, and it would subsequently grow to 18,000 awards by 1960.[33]

One of the more positive, if unintended consequences of the Civil War was that it prevented the emergence of a large united front among former combatants dissatisfied with the outcome of the struggle for national independence in the way such movements plagued politics in post-war states of southern, central, and eastern Europe. Large scale emigration, particularly from some of the areas most affected by the conflict was another factor in reducing the potential for trouble from disillusioned veterans, as was the relative speed with which the new government introduced a pension scheme. It was up and running by 1924.

While it restricted eligibility largely to male participants in the Easter Rising, War of Independence, and those who served in the National Army during the Civil War, the scheme's very existence became the primary focal point for all those with an interest in the issue. If those who supported the Treaty or remained neutral in the Civil War could console themselves with albeit modest emoluments, its opponents by and large put their faith in receiving fair play from Fianna Fáil and were ultimately rewarded.

31 I am grateful to John Horne for his emails on the international dimensions of military service pensions after both World Wars. He also pointed out that the United States was another outlier, again in large part because of the political lobbying strength of the American Legion.

32 There is a large literature on this with regard to Britain and the Commonwealth countries. See, for instance, chapter 10, Jonathan Fennell, *Fighting the people's war: the British and Commonwealth armies and the Second World War* (Cambridge, 2019).

33 See chapter 14, Diarmaid Ferriter, *Between two hells: the Irish Civil War* (London, 2021).

Perhaps the last word should go to Michael Donnelly, whose views probably reflect those of many former combatants in the conflicts of the first half of the twentieth century. In an appeal against the decision to disregard much of his service from 1916 to 1921, and the refusal to accept what he regarded as his real rank of adjutant within the ICA, he went on to state that,

> I and my Comrades of the Irish Citizen Army served the Cause not for a Pension but to demand Justice and Liberty for the Irish People. We did not think of Payment or ask a Pension but when the Government volunteered a Pension we expected something more than a miserable eight shillings per week for eight or nine years' service and even this miserable allowance is to be cut if at any time we are unfortunate enough to have to apply for home assistance.[34]

One unintended legacy of the dispute was that when the ITGWU split in 1924, Donnelly was a leading figure in taking the bulk of Dublin dockers into Jim Larkin's new Workers' Union of Ireland. He was subsequently an executive member of the Marine Port and General Workers' Union. The MPGWU eventually re-joined the ITGWU and the WUI in their reconstitution as the major affiliates of SIPTU, Ireland's largest trade union in the 1990s. The negotiations on the MPGWU's merger with the other constituent unions of SIPTU were led by its president, Michael Donnelly, the son of the munitions striker.[35]

Further reading:

Ludivine Broch, 'Rescue, railways and the righteous: French railway workers and the question of rescue during the Holocaust' in *Diasporas*, 25 (2015)
William O'Brien, *Forth the banners go* (Dublin, 1969)
Peter Rigney, *How railwaymen and dockers defied an empire: the Irish munitions embargo of 1920* (Dublin, 2021)
Pádraig Yeates, '"Was it because my husband lived five years longer to fight for his country that I was treated so badly?" The Military Pensions Board and the widows' in *Saothar*, xliv (2019)
Pádraig Yeates, *Irish craft workers in a time of revolution* (Dublin, 2016)

34 Michael Donnelly to Dept. of Defence, 8 Dec. 1936, MSPC, MSP34REF291 Michael Donnelly.

35 Conversations with Michael Donnelly junior, Seamus Redmond and Paddy Nevin. See also, Francis Devine, *Organising history: a centenary of SIPTU, 1909-2009* (Dublin, 2009), pp 775, 805.

was a member of an Intelligence, or Secret Service Unit in Dublin under the control of the Chief Intelligence Officer, the late Michael Collins. This Dublin Unit was under the direction of Martin Conlon. What was called a Labour Board was formed under this Unit; and about the Autumn of 1919, I was detailed for special duty on this Labour Board by orders of the Army Council.

Our duty was to use our influence in our various Trade Unions, and in the Labour Movement generally on behalf the Republic; to get hold of men in important key positions, such as Power Stations, Railways, and Transport Dockworkers, etc; and most important of all, to undermine the Amalgamated or Cross Channel Unions, and where possible to organise a breakaway from these Unions, and establish purely Irish Unions instead; manned, and controlled by men with Republican and National tendencies, in other words we were Republican Agents within the Trade Union Movement. This was regarded as very important work both by the Army Council and the Dail at the time.

We were in direct communication with the late Michael Collins, both as Minister of Finance, and Chief Intelligence Officer of the Army, and on different occasions were supplied with financial assistance to carry on the work. As members of the I.R.A., our work wasdirected on those lines, and under orders the same as ordinary members though more rigidly controlled. We worked under active service conditions, and our Company Officers! were instructed to excuse us from ordinary parades, while still retaining us on the Roll of the Company, and were thus liable for mobilisation at any time.

(Signed) ....Joseph Toomey.....
....38 Clontuskert Park....
Drumcondra, Dublin.....

Left

Joseph Toomey explains his intelligence role: ‘to use our influence in our various Trade Unions, and in the Labour Movement generally on behalf of the Republic’ and to ‘undermine the Amalgamated or Cross Channel Unions’.

Reference:
Joseph Toomey
MSP34REF21715.

Above

Wagon loads of military stores, including guns and ammunition, held up in the Goods Department, Kingsbridge, Dublin, as a result of the railway strike 1921. Armed British soldiers guard the wagons.

Image courtesy of the National Museum of Ireland (NMI-HE-EWP-161).

Q. You carried out all orders and resisted attack by police at Stephens Green in which the police were wounded, June 1919, were you armed that night?
A. Yes. That was in Dawson Street.

Q. Did you fire on the police that night?
A. Yes.

6th Period.

Q. Removal of I.R.A. dump from Bridge Street to Fairview, whose house did you remove it from?
A. I do not know the exact house.

Q. Were you armed that night?
A. Yes.

I wish to say that I was the man responsible for organising the strike against unloading munitions. Senator Foran or William O'Brien can vouch for this. This strike, which lasted for six months, was of the utmost importance, and met with the approval of the I.R.A. Executive.

7th Period.

Q. Mobilised for attack on Sydney Lodge, was there a fight there?
A. No.

8th Period.

Q. Training and military instruction?
A. Yes.

9th Period.

Q. Were you fighting during the Civil War?
A. We were in disagreement to a certain extent with the Civil War; of course we were not in agreement with the Treaty. We occupied the Head Offices of the Union. We co-operated with Paddy Houlihan, and allowed the Irregulars to pass through.

Q. You had no fighting there?
A. No.

Q. You did not take any part in the Civil War?
A. No, but we were armed in that house. We would have fired on the Free State troops if the occasion had arisen.

Q. On the 1st critical date you were a Private?
A. Yes.

Q. You were Adjutant on the 2nd critical date?
A. The time I was Adjutant was when the men were in Frongoch, and later on again. During my time as Adjutant to Army Council, I was working on the north Wall as a docker, and at that time used to work day and night without break, and I often had to leave my work to attend Council, leaving a whole nights work, which paid more than the day, and taking the chance of losing my job when next boat came along, and the Council met twice a week, and often if necessary. SIGNED:-

~~Sworn before me on~~ Michael Donnelly

2/7/35

CB. REFEREE.

SWORN STATEMENT MADE BEFORE ADVISORY COMMITTEE BY J. HANRATTY ON THE 22. 10. 1936 ON BEHALF OF MICHAEL DONNELLY - NO. 291.

Q. This is an appeal case.
Letter of appeal read.
".....I was on active service for the full week prior to Easter Monday '16 and the second point I was Adjutant of the Army for a considerable period entailing loss of employment. This position I hold is entitled to a commissioned rank. I have not been allowed such rank and I have not been allowed for the week previous to Easter 1916."

Evidence re Easter Week read.
He was released on the 1st August and he has got his week before Easter.
He has got 1/12th of Four for raiding the boats and he is getting nothing else.
What does he mean by Adjutant of the Army? Was he Adjutant General?
A. He was secretary to the Army Council.

Q. You gave us a return of the officers?
A. Ours was rather a peculiar organisation. We did not have properly speaking what was known as an Adjutant; there was a secretary to the Council and the work he did would be ~~would-would~~ work that would be done by an Adjutant.

Q. A Captain had no company?
A. Exactly.

Q. In the Volunteers a Captain had always a certain number of men under him.
A certain number of your senior officers would get commissioned rank. Would he be one of your commissioned officers?
A. No. He is not among them. I merely mention how he seems to arrive at the conclusion that he held the rank of Adjutant. His conclusions are based on the fact that he was Secretary to the Council.

Q. He had no responsibility except his clerical work?
A. That is all.

Q. He would have the minutes of the meetings and that sort of thing?
A. Yes.

Q. He was just a clerk to the council?
A. Yes.

Q. You don't think there is anything in his appeal?
A. I think in comparison with the rest of the claimants he has nothing to complain about - in comparison with the rest of the claimants that have been dealt with.

Q. We are only concerned with the strictly military end of it and it seems to me his position, taken from the military point of view, was not of any great importance at all.

Left

Michael Donnelly's account of his role in the munitions strike and the strike's significance for the IRA does not seem to garner much interest from the Board.

Reference:
Michael Donnelly
MSP34REF291.

In his statement before the Advisory Committee, Jack Hanratty of the ICA, did not consider Michael Donnelly's labour and strike work on the same level as direct engagement with enemy forces.

Reference:
Michael Donnelly
MSP34REF291.

Logistics, everyday life, and the Kilmichael ambush

Eve Morrison

'Amateurs think about tactics, but professionals think about logistics'.
General Robert H. Barrow

IRA flying columns and active service units operating during the War of Independence (1919-21) and Civil War (1922-3) were buttressed by wider, covert support networks utilising the structures, assumptions, norms, and relationships of everyday life. Historians have long been aware that they existed but until recently few detailed accounts of how they operated were accessible.[1] Primary sources for the IRA (pre- and post-Truce) generally document the perspective of GHQ, brigade, and battalion officers.[2] Similarly, 'fighting stories' and published memoirs by famous IRA commanders make only passing references to the rank and file, male or female, and women are especially marginalised.[3] The Bureau of Military History (available since 2003) and the Military Service Pensions Collection (subject to ongoing, staggered release since 2014) have had a radical and transformative impact on the situation. Both are online, word-searchable, and free to access. This essay outlines the main characteristics of the two collections before focussing on how they, and MSPC records in particular, contribute to what is known about the Kilmichael ambush (28 November 1920) in west Cork, one of the most famous IRA actions of the War of Independence.

The BMH and the MSPC

Both the BMH and the MSPC collections contain personal testimony, biographical details relating to individuals, and information about the organisational structures and personnel of the Irish Volunteers, IRA, Cumann na mBan, Fianna Éireann, and Irish Citizen Army. The BMH, a government funded public history project, collected 1,773 witness statements and over 300 documents collections from these cohorts between 1947 and 1957. The MSPC is the Department of Defence's vast revolutionary archive amassed while adjudicating and administering the pensions for military service and disability to veterans of these organisations or their dependants. Defence managed both initiatives, and the BMH represents the first use of the MSPC for historical research. The majority of BMH witnesses were successful pension applicants, and BMH staff were also given full access to MSPC records. They used brigade activity reports and nominal rolls to locate potential interviewees and identify topics for discussion, and often consulted BMH contributors' MSP claim files. The BMH was primarily interested in taking statements from former IRA officers and key fighting men, and the project's official chronological guidelines ended at the July 1921 Truce. Witness statements are especially valuable for documenting the experiences of the IRA's Dublin and provincial cadre during the Easter Rising and the War of Independence but contain much less information about female activists, rank-and-file volunteers, and the Civil War.[4] The pensioning process operated on a vastly bigger scale and covered the entire 1916-23 period. Only a minority of claimants were successful but over 80,000 men and women applied.[5] Consequently, the MSPC contains a wealth of new information relating to a far wider group of activists than has ever been available before. There are few detailed narratives, but the Collection is the most comprehensive assemblage of information relating to Ireland's revolutionary generation that is ever likely to become available.

The material in both the BMH and MSPC is heavily mediated, retrospective, and influenced by the circumstances in which it was created. Most of the information was compiled and supplied from memory by veterans of radical nationalist military organisations a decade or more after the events described in them took place. The nominal rolls of membership and brigade activity files compiled by veterans' committees are invaluable but not entirely reliable or comprehensive.[6] The claims of many individuals active during the period were rejected due to difficulties verifying their service or because it was felt that they had not done enough to qualify.[7] Conversely, some high-profile veterans (like Tom Barry and Ernie O'Malley) who gave misleading accounts of aspects of their service were awarded pensions regardless.[8] By the 1930s, many veterans had emigrated or died, Civil War animosities still festered and irredentist republicans frequently refused to cooperate with the pensioning process on political grounds. Some individuals did not apply for a pension at all because there was no-one available to verify their service.[9] For all these reasons, the success or failure of a pension claim, the information given in that claim, finding or not finding a particular name on a nominal roll or an activity report should be assessed against a range of other source material, just like witness statement testimony. Nevertheless,

1 David Fitzpatrick, *Politics and Irish life, 1913-1921: provincial experience of war and revolution* (Cork, 1998), p. 180.

2 Among the most important are the extended runs of contemporary IRA GHQ brigade and battalion correspondence and other material in the personal papers of Richard Mulcahy, Éamon de Valera, Ernie O'Malley, and Moss Twomey in UCDA (https://www.ucd.ie/archives/collections/depositedcollections/). The NLI holds Florence O'Donoghue's papers (https://catalogue.nli.ie/Collection/vtls000041592) and another set of O'Malley's (https://catalogue.nli.ie/Collection/vtls000268722). Several other important collections are held by the MAI (https://www.militaryarchives.ie/en/collections) (accessed 27 Mar. 2023).

3 Marie Coleman, 'Compensating Irish female revolutionaries,1916-1923' in *Women's History Review*, xxvi, no. 6 (2017), pp 915-34, p. 917; Louise Ryan, 'Splendidly silent: representing Irish republican women, 1919-1923' in Ann-Marie Gallagher, Cathy Lubelska and Louise Ryan (eds), *Re-presenting the past: women and history* (Harlow, 2001), pp 23-43; Dan Breen, *My fight for Irish freedom* (Dublin, 1924); Ernie O'Malley, *On another man's wound* (London, 1936); Tom Barry, *Guerilla days in Ireland* (Dublin, 1949).

4 Eve Morrison, 'Case study: the Bureau of Military History' in Donal Ó Drisceoil, John Crowley and Mike Murphy (eds), *Atlas of the Irish revolution* (Cork, 2017), pp 876-80. Ernie O'Malley's interviews with IRA veterans conducted in the 1940s and 1950s are another important source for the Civil War (https://www.ucd.ie/archives/t4media/p0017b-omalley-notebooks-name-index.pdf) (accessed 27 Mar. 2023).

5 Marie Coleman, 'Military service pensions for veterans of the Irish revolution, 1916-1923', *War in History*, xx, no. 2 (2013), p. 221.

6 Eve Morrison, 'Military history from the street', *History Workshop Journal*, xc (Autumn 2020), pp 311-19, 313-14; Marie Coleman, 'The Longford Brigade Activity Report and the reliability of archival evidence' in *The Military Service (1916–1923) Pensions Collection: the Brigade Activity Reports* (Dublin, 2018), pp 124-49.

7 Coleman, 'Compensating Irish female revolutionaries', p. 926.

8 Eve Morrison, *Kilmichael: the life and afterlife of an ambush* (Newbridge, 2022), pp 67-9.

9 Interview, Dr James 'Laddy' Donnelly, 2 Sept. 1965, Cardinal Ó Fiaich Library and Archive, Louis O'Kane interviews, IV. A01A, box 0009.

collectively the two archives contain unprecedented amounts of new information relating to aspects of the IRA's military campaign that are otherwise undocumented.

The IRA and everyday life

The war against British rule was largely dependent on materials supplied and strategies improvised by the membership on the ground. IRA units raided for arms, ammunition, and equipment, bought or stole guns from British soldiers, imposed levies on local civilians to raise funds, commandeered goods and forced local 'loyalists' to feed and shelter flying columns, but these tactics were risky, disliked by local communities, and sometimes resisted.[10] The IRA relied heavily on assistance provided by their families, trusted local supporters, and rank-and-file volunteers. Sometimes entire families were involved in supporting local IRA units, and siblings often worked together. Women played a central role in creating and maintaining 'key' or 'call houses', turning their residences and shops into safehouses, IRA brigade, battalion, and company HQs, arms dumps, canteens, dispatch centres, and hospitals.[11] Crown forces made regular and mostly unsuccessful attempts to intercept and shut down other logistical networks operated by clandestine activists via the pre-existing lines of communication and supply where they worked.[12] Even the most active revolutionaries remained in their jobs unless or until they were forced to go on the run. Those employed on ships, ferries, railways, and in post offices – male and female – utilised the facilities available to send and receive dispatches, smuggle arms, and gather intelligence. Pension adjudicators developed a special category of description for this layer of activists, 'key men'. Volunteers who, 'though not handing lethal weapons, rendered extremely valuable service without which units could not have functioned'.[13] Female applicants, likewise, had to prove they had been 'key' women.[14] However, it was more difficult for ordinary volunteers to qualify generally, and assessors struggled to evaluate women's claims in particular.[15] The officers and strength of Cumann na mBan in several areas were never established and Cumann na Saoirse, the pro-Treaty women's organisation founded in 1922, was not included in the 1934 Military Service Pensions Act.[16]

Over 1920-1, Cumann na mBan was restructured along military lines with each branch assigned to an Irish Volunteer company but the dominant assumptions of gender barred women from taking part directly in military actions.[17] However, female operatives were much less likely to be suspected by the authorities and this worked to their advantage when gathering intelligence, carrying dispatches, or transporting arms. Most women, particularly in rural areas, had familial or fraternal connections with local volunteers although not all of them were formally members of Cumann na mBan.[18] Agnes O'Donoghue, the sister of Florence 'Florrie' O'Donoghue, former adjutant of Cork 1 Brigade, kept his IRA papers and his personal arms (when not carrying them himself) and acted as dispatch carrier and scout: 'All the intelligence material of the Brigade was in her hands for over two years.' Florrie was reluctant to verify his own sister's MSP application but did so because 'her service is unknown to anybody except myself'.[19] It was more difficult for women who had no high-status veterans to call on.

All these circumstances and issues are reflected in BMH and MSPC records relating to the Kilmichael ambush.

The Kilmichael ambush

On the 28 November 1920 an IRA flying column in west Cork led by Great War veteran Tom Barry wiped out almost an entire eighteen-strong detachment of Auxiliary police. Kilmichael was among the most famous and most controversial events of the War of Independence. Before 2003, publicly accessible information about what had occurred was limited to contemporary press reports and rival, retrospective accounts by ambush veterans published in newspapers, popular histories, and memoirs.[20] BMH and MSPC records have added much new information to the mix. To date, the MSPC has released seventy-two claim files from individuals who were involved in some way. The records identify previously unknown participants and make it possible, for the first time, to establish the webs of local logistical support in operation before, during, and/or after the ambush. Neither Tom Barry's witness statement (a letter criticising the BMH) nor his MSP claim file discuss Kilmichael, but six witness statements from other ambush veterans do. All reflect the long-standing differences with Barry over what had occurred during the fight.[21]

Twenty-four MSP applications related to men who had been attached to the flying column, including a claim submitted by the family of a previously unknown volunteer, John Condon, who suffered a nervous breakdown after the attack.[22] Both witness statements and brigade activity files also confirm the participation of several other individuals who had been publicly named as Kilmichael veterans but were not always included on participant lists. Another forty-seven MSP claims from individuals engaged in supporting activities are also available.[23] These nine men and thirty-eight women between them pro-

10 Brian Hughes, *Defying the IRA? Intimidation, coercion, and communities during the Irish revolution* (Liverpool, 2016).

11 Special Deasy note, n.d., UCDA, Mulcahy papers, P7/D/45.

12 See 'Raids on Channels of Communication Employed by the IRA', TNA, WO 35/86b.

13 Memorandum on the procedure, examination of, certification and assessment of claims under the Military Service Pensions Act, 1934, n.d. [1940s], NAI, Dept. of the Taoiseach, S9243.

14 Ibid.

15 Ibid.

16 Ibid; Mary McAuliffe, '"An idea has gone abroad that all the women were against the Treaty": Cumann na Saoirse and pro-Treaty women, 1922-1923' in Mícheál Ó Fathartaigh and Liam Weeks (eds), *The Treaty: debating and establishing the Irish state* (Newbridge, 2018), pp 160-79.

17 Eve Morrison, 'The Bureau of Military History and female republican activism, 1913-23' in Maryann Gialanella Valiulis (ed.), *Gender and power in Irish history* (Dublin, 2009), p. 62. Countess Constance Markievicz and women in the Irish Citizen Army were exceptions to the rule.

18 Cal McCarthy, *Cumann na mBan and the Irish revolution: revised edition* (Cork, 2014), pp 229-30.

19 Florence O'Donoghue to the Pensions Board, 23 Aug. 1945, MSPC, MSP34REF60655 Agnes McCarthy (née O'Donoghue).

20 For a detailed discussion of the various accounts given over the years as well as the ferocious debate about whether or not a 'false surrender' occurred see Morrison, *Kilmichael*.

21 BMH, WS 1402 Ned Young; BMH, WS 812 Paddy O'Brien; BMH, WS 1234 Jack Hennessy; BMH, WS 1295 Timothy Keohane; BMH, WS 1297 Michael O'Driscoll; BMH, WS 1684 James 'Spud' Murphy.

22 Application for an allowance or a gratuity, 13 Nov. 1933, MSPC, DP3798 John Condon.

23 Other BMH statements make brief references to preparations for the ambush, including one man who tried unsuccessfully to deliver a dispatch to the flying column. BMH, WS 1654 Cornelius Kelleher.

vided safe houses and provisions, carried dispatches, transported weaponry, acted as scouts and guides, cooked, administered first aid, buried bodies, organised funerals, sourced supplies, prepared billets, and dug up roads. If they are counted as participants (and they certainly should be) over one hundred individuals took part in the ambush. The majority of claims come from local IRA companies and Cumann na mBan branches attached to the Bandon, Clonakilty, and Dunmanway Battalions of the West Cork Brigade. This suggests that these battalions provided the bulk of logistical support. The activity files also list many more men from IRA companies across the locality who acted as scouts, guards, and runners for the column after the ambush.[24]

Cumann na mBan was especially well organised in County Cork during the revolutionary period. The female claimants were mainly farmers' daughters whose families were closely associated with the movement, the Corcorans (Newcestown), O'Neills (Kilbrittain), Crowleys (Kilmeen), Farrells (Clogher), Hurleys (Cooranig), and Mannings (Glenbanoo, Bantry). Mary O'Neill and her sister Margaret catered for and administered first aid to members of the Kilmichael column. They were, respectively, captain and a member of Kilbrittain branch, South Bandon District Council, Cumann na mBan. Their brothers Jeremiah, Daniel, Michael, John, and Denis 'Sonny' O'Neill were prominent local volunteers.[25] The shop and pub of the 'Misses Nyhan' in Castletown Kenneigh was another covert centre of operations.[26] The local IRA used Julia Hurley's home located 'away up in the lonely mountains 6 miles to the North of Dunmanway' as a 'clearing house'.[27] She cooked and scouted for the Kilmichael flying column and gave them one hundred rounds of ammunition.

In Clonakilty, IRA officers and ambush participants congregated in the home of Ello and Mary Crowley before the fight and returned there afterwards.[28] Kattie Sullivan, whose brother Jim was killed at Kilmichael, sheltered men as well.[29] Brothers John and Michael White, both members of Kilmeen Company, scouted for the column men who marched to an empty cottage in Granure after the ambush.[30] Three women whose branches (Toames and Inchigeela) were affiliated to Cork 1 Brigade battalions adjacent to the ambush site carried dispatches and/or cooked for members of the column.[31] All three had brothers in the IRA. A member of the Advisory Committee dealing with a claim from Julia Corcoran (Newcestown) – who delivered a dispatch to the flying column at the ambush site before the arrival of the Auxiliaries – was of the view that she and her two sisters worked so closely with each other their applications should be considered together.[32]

The largest number of MSPC claimants (twenty-eight) were affiliated to Dunmanway Battalion, the IRA unit that supplied close to half the volunteers who fought in the ambush. Members of Aultagh, Ballineen, Behagh, Derrinacahara, Hollyhill, Kinneigh, Knockbue, Shanaway, and Togher Cumann na mBan applied for pensions. Several of the women's claims convey the ambush's traumatic impact on the mental and emotional health of some of the participants. Dunmanway Cumann na mBan veterans from various branches described men who returned from the ambush as frightened and fatigued, in shock, nervous, delirious or in a state of collapse.[33] According to west Cork IRA veteran Peter Kearney's witness statement, several Dunmanway Battalion officers were so badly affected they were eventually replaced.[34] Other women looked after Tom Barry. He suffered from a form of PTSD (attributable to his Great War service), and he relapsed within days of the ambush.[35]

All but one of the claims relating to men who participated directly in the ambush were successful. Outcomes for those engaged in logistical support varied, and the overall service of several women was deemed insufficient to qualify. Sisters Nellie and Nora Farrell both applied, for instance, but only Nora's claim was successful.[36] Their family home in Clogher had been used as an IRA training camp before the ambush.[37] The sisters also fed and scouted for members of the column afterwards. Another difficulty was that the nominal rolls for west Cork are incomplete and do not always tally with what was said in individual claims.[38] Members of Hollyhill branch – including Mollie Barrett whose brother Dick was executed by the Free State in December 1922 – provided safe houses for the column and carried out other duties after the ambush. None of their names appear in the nominal rolls, however, because the Hollyhill branch list was never sent in.[39] Julia Hayes, another applicant, also tended to column members

24 Morrison, *Kilmichael*, pp 71-86; MSPC, A/3(3) 3rd and 4th Battalion, 3rd Cork Brigade; MSPC, A/3(4) 4th Battalion, 3rd Cork Brigade.

25 See applications MSPC, MSP34REF29236 Mary Walsh (née O'Neill); MSPC, MSP34REF26330 Margaret O'Meara (née O'Neill). Michael was killed during an arms raid in April 1922, an incident which sparked off an infamous series of murders of local Protestants in which Mary's brother Daniel seems to have been involved. See MSPC, MSP34REF29692 Jeremiah O'Neill; MSPC, MSP34REF27833 Daniel O'Neill; MSPC, MSP34REF9778 John O'Neill; MSPC, MSP34REF4067 Denis O'Neill.

26 MSPC, MSP34REF52679 Mary Kate Falvey (née Nyhan); MSPC, MSP34REF29786 Elsie O'Callaghan (née Nyhan); Cumann na mBan nominal roll, Dunmanway District Council, MSPC, CMB/16. The sisters also kept a close eye on local loyalists, including some of the Protestants killed in April 1922.

27 P.J. Coughlan to M. Cremins, 11 Jan. 1943, MSPC, MSP34REF49981 Sheila O'Neill (née Julia Hurley).

28 MSPC, MSP34REF28057 Ellen Holland (née Ello Crowley); MSPC, MSP34REF30718 Mary Crowley; Cumann na mBan nominal roll, Clonakilty District Council, MSPC, CMB/1.

29 MSPC, MSP34REF57648 Catherine Collins (née O'Sullivan [Sullivan]); Cumann na mBan nominal roll, Clonakilty District Council, MSPC, CMB/1.

30 MSPC, MSP34REF58839 John White; MSPC, MSP34REF19346 Michael White; IRA nominal roll, Cork 3 Brigade, MSPC, RO/48.

31 MSPC, MSP34REF58147 Lena O'Riordan; MSPC, MSP34REF59743 Nora Fuller (née Cronin); MSPC, MSP34REF35989 Nora Douglas (née Hanora O'Sullivan).

32 MSPC, MSP34REF29366 Julia Desmond (née Corcoran). She and her two sisters Nellie and Mary were members of Newcestown Branch, North Bandon District Council, which was attached to the Bandon Brigade, MSPC, CMB/5. Her brothers Jeremiah and Patrick were members of Newcestown IRA Company, IRA nominal roll, Cork 3 Brigade, MSPC, RO/47.

33 MSPC, MSP34REF59217 Julia Grace (née Hayes); MSPC, MSP34REF29350 Margaret Deasy; MSPC, MSP34REF29224 Kattie Daly (née O'Neill); MSPC, MSP34REF29946 Margaret McCarthy (née Mahony); Cumann na mBan nominal roll, Dunmanway District Council, MSPC, CMB/16.

34 Morrison, *Kilmichael*, p. 82; BMH, WS 444 Peter Kearney.

35 Morrison, *Kilmichael*, p. 33, p. 128; MSPC, MSP34REF29696 Mollie (Mary) O'Neill (née Barrett); MSPC, MSP34REF57564 Margaret Bowen (née O'Neill).

36 MSPC, MSP34REF52825 Nellie Galvin (née Farrell); MSPC, MSP34REF45215 Nora O'Leary (née Farrell).

37 Barry, *Guerilla days in Ireland*, p. 38.

38 Report, Cumann na mBan Annual Convention, 22-23 Oct. 1921, NLI, Erskine Childers papers, MS 48,063; Rúnaidhe to Hanna O'Driscoll, 2 Dec. 1938, Cumann na mBan nominal roll, Cork 5 Brigade, MSPC, CMB/20; Morrison, 'The Bureau of Military History and female republican activism', p. 61.

39 MSPC, MSP34REF29696 Mollie (Mary) O'Neill (née Barrett); MSPC, MSP34REF28763 Mary Ellen Lordan (née Nyhan); MSPC,

in her home. She worked with Knockbue IRA company, Dunmanway Battalion, but no corresponding Cumann na mBan branch is listed on the relevant nominal roll. It seems likely that her branch was either accidently overlooked or she was not formally affiliated to Cumann na mBan.[40]

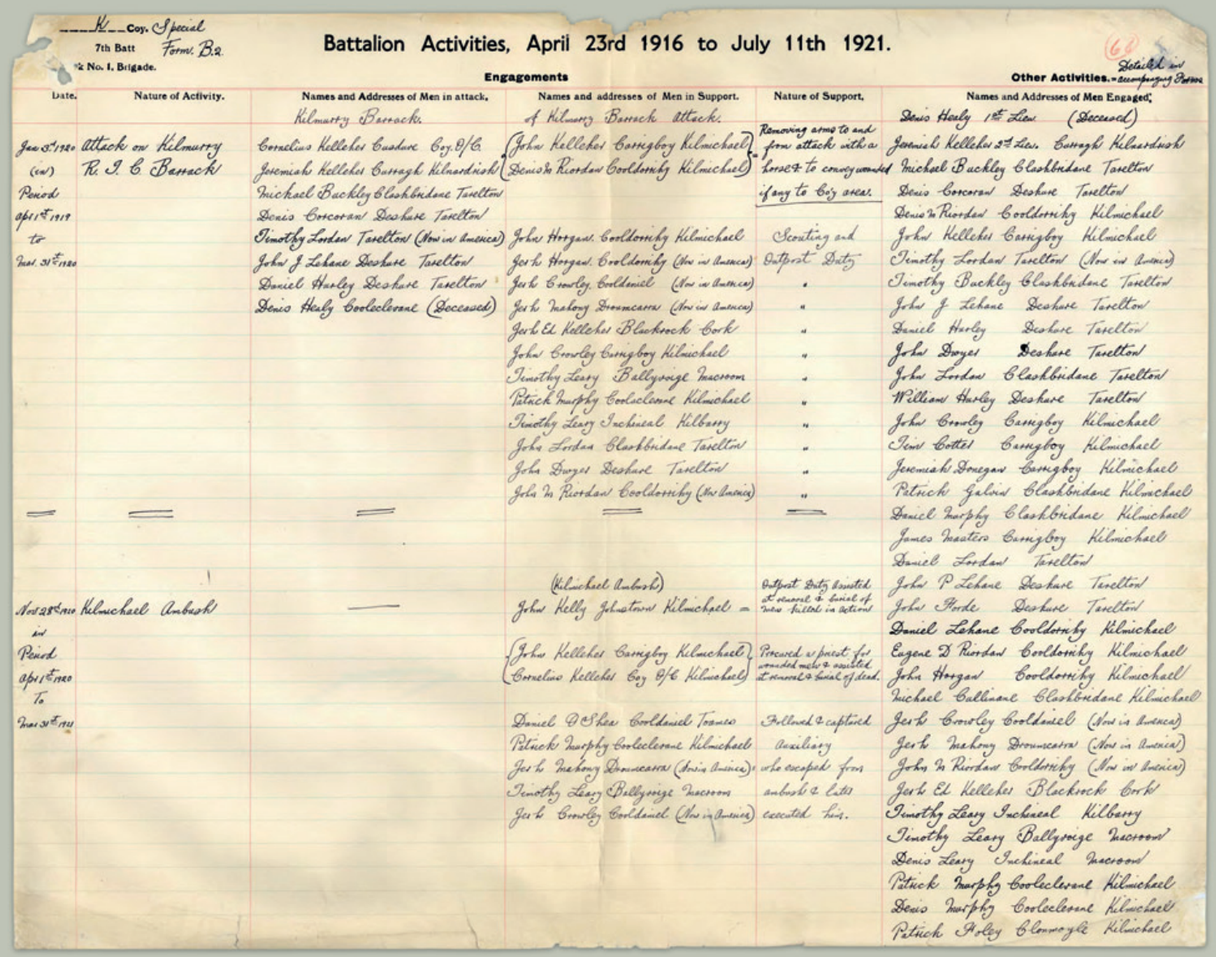
The BMH and MSPC document the revolutionary and post-revolutionary lives of both high-profile activists and individuals whose names have rarely, if ever, appeared on honour rolls, and contain all sorts of new details relating to events. Thanks to the witness statements, IRA memoirs which dominated public perceptions for many decades now form part of a more complex and nuanced picture of the independence struggle. MSPC claims relating to previously unknown participants and the IRA's wider logistical networks are transforming understanding of how military actions were organised and supported. Irregular armies, no less than regular ones, march on their stomachs, and it is unlikely that the IRA could have remained in operation without support from the local networks documented in the MSPC. Insurgencies and guerrilla wars by their nature blur divides between civilians and combatants, and crucial logistical activities were carried out in workplaces and family homes. MSPC claims gave both female activists and rank-and-file volunteers an opportunity both to put their activities on record and, often, to vent their frustration at what they felt was a lack of appreciation for their sacrifice.

Further reading:

Mark Duncan, 'Explainer: the Kilmichael ambush' https://www.rte.ie/centuryireland/index.php/articles/explainer-the-kilmichael-ambush
Cal McCarthy, *Cumann na mBan and the Irish revolution: revised edition* (Cork, 2014)
Eve Morrison, *Kilmichael: the life and afterlife of an ambush* (Newbridge, 2022)
Charles Townshend, *The Republic: the fight for Irish independence, 1918-1923* (London, 2014)

MSP34REF56974 Nora Ryan (née O'Driscoll); Cumann na mBan nominal roll, Dunmanway District Council, MSPC, CMB/16.

40 MSPC, MSP34REF59217 Julia Grace (née Hayes); Cumann na mBan nominal roll, Dunmanway District Council, MSPC, CMB/16. For the IRA Company see IRA nominal roll, Cork 3 Brigade, MSPC, RO/48 and IRA nominal roll, Cork 5 Brigade, MSPC, RO/67. Census returns suggest she was probably the sister of one of the two William Hayes in Knockbue IRA company.



Battalion Activities, April 23rd 1916 to July 11th 1921.

Engagements

Date.	Nature of Activity.	Names and Addresses of Men in attack.	Names and addresses of Men in Support.	Nature of Support.	Other Activities. — Names and Addresses of Men Engaged.
		Kilmurry Barracks.	of Kilmurry Barrack Attack.		Denis Healy 1st Lieu (Deceased)
Jan 28th 1920 (est) Period 1st Apl 1919 to Mar 31st 1920	Attack on Kilmurry R. I. C Barrack	Cornelius Kelleher Coolaure Coy O/C Jeremiah Kelleher Curraghkinneadirish Michael Buckley Clashbindane Tuselton Denis Corcoran Deshare Tuselton Timothy Lordan Tuselton (Now in America) John J Lehane Deshare Tuselton Daniel Healy Deshare Tuselton Denis Healy Coolclerane (Deceased)	John Kelleher Curraghboy Kilmichael Denis M Riordan Coolkelure Kilmichael	Removing arms to and from attack with a horse & to convey wounded if any to Coy area.	Jeremiah Kelleher 2nd Lieu. Curragh Kilnaneadirish Michael Buckley Clashbindane Tuselton Denis Corcoran Deshare Tuselton Denis M Riordan Coolkelure Kilmichael John Kelleher Curraghboy Kilmichael Timothy Lordan Tuselton (Now in America) Timothy Buckley Clashbindane Tuselton John J Lehane Deshare Tuselton Daniel Healy Deshare Tuselton John Dwyer Deshare Tuselton John Lordan Clashbindane Tuselton William Healy Deshare Tuselton John Crowley Curraghboy Kilmichael Jim Cotter Curraghboy Kilmichael Jeremiah Horgan Curraghboy Kilmichael Patrick Galvin Clashbindane Kilmichael Daniel Murphy Clashbindane Kilmichael James Noonan Curraghboy Kilmichael Daniel Lordan Tuselton John P Lehane Deshare Tuselton John Forde Deshare Tuselton Daniel Lehane Coolkelure Kilmichael Eugene D M Riordan Coolkelure Kilmichael John Horgan Coolkelure Kilmichael Michael Sullivan Clashbindane Kilmichael Jerh Crowley Coolduel (Now in America) Jerh Mahony Drumcarra (Now in America) John M Riordan Coolkelure (Now in America) Jerh Ed Kelleher Blackrock Cork Timothy Leary Inchineal Kilbarry Timothy Leary Ballyvoige Inchroom Denis Leary Inchineal Inchroom Patrick Murphy Coolclerane Kilmichael Denis Murphy Coolclerane Kilmichael Patrick Foley Clonroyle Kilmichael
			(Kilmichael Ambush)		
Nov 28th 1920 or Period 1st Apl 1920 To Mar 31st 1921	Kilmichael Ambush		John Kelly Johnstown Kilmichael —	Deport Duty assisted at removal & burial of Crown Patrol in Ambush	
			John Kelleher Curraghboy Kilmichael Cornelius Kelleher Coy O/C Kilmichael	Procured a priest for wounded men & assisted at removal & burial of dead.	
			Daniel O'Shea Coolduel Tramore Patrick Murphy Coolclerane Kilmichael Jerh Mahony Drumcarra (Now in America) Timothy Leary Ballyvoige Inchroom Jerh Crowley Coolduel (Now in America)	Followed & captured Auxiliary who escaped from ambush & Later executed him.	

Above

List of IRA men involved in the Kilmichael ambush.

Reference:
MSPC, Brigade Activity Reports, A1_7 - 7 Battalion, 1 Cork Brigade.

Headquarters, 1st Division,
Collins Barracks,
CORK.

23rd August, 1945.

Military Service Pensions Board,
Department of Defence,
DUBLIN.

Case of Mrs. Agnes McCarthy, Passage West.

I am reluctant to make a statement in this case as the applicant is my sister, and I do so only because some of her service is unknown to anybody except myself.

She lived with me from my earliest associations with the Volunteers in Cork up to the time I had to go on the run in early 1920. From the time I was appointed Brigade Adjutant in 1918 she kept all my official papers and records; she kept my revolvers and grenades when I was not carrying them; she acted as confidential messenger between the members of the Brigade Staff and as a despatch carrier to Units. Brigade Staff meetings were held in the house, for which she acted as scout.

When the Brigade Intelligence Branch was organised in 1919 and I was made responsible for it in addition to the Adjutant's Branch, her work increased considerably and in the following two and a half years she kept certain valuable contacts for me which could not otherwise be maintained. All the intelligence material of the Brigade was in her hands for over two years. We never lost a document or a weapon. After I went on full time service in 1920 her services became indispensable to me. She kept the contacts I could not keep myself and kept them well. She handled Intelligence reports as well as routine matter. She kept in touch with me every day up to the time I went to the First Division in April, 1921.

After that she continued to work for the Brigade, and in addition maintained one line of communication to me at the Division. I know that her services continued in the Civil War until her health broke down as a result.

This is not a full summary of her services. I have referred only to points not covered in statements from other Officers.

F. O'Donoghue MAJOR
(F. O'Donoghue)

Officer i/c. G.2., 1st Division.

SM

4. (a) When and in what area did the deceased receive the wound or injury or contract the disease which resulted in death? — After Kilmichael ambush he suffered from a nervous breakdown & stomach trouble –

(b) Who was the Deceased's Commanding Officer at the time? — Sean Barry, Commandant. Cork.

(c) Give the names of any persons who can corroborate your answer to (a) above. — * Liam Deasy. Ballincurrid Rossmore, Macroom. Sean Buckley Builder Bandon

* for general references

4. (d) Replies to Questions 4 (d) (i) to (v) to be filled in **only** in case of death due to **Disease**.

(i) In what way is it claimed that the disease which was the cause of death was connected with the Military Service of the deceased and what are the grounds for the claim?

(A detailed statement of the facts with dates should be given). — Deceased's health broke down after the Kilmichael ambush. Up to then he had never been ill.

(ii) Were there any particular conditions affecting the service of the deceased which it is claimed caused the disability (or disabilities)? Did the deceased suffer from any illness during the period of his service? If so, give particulars, including any treatment received. — Deceased suffered from shock – had a complete nervous breakdown & suffered from severe stomach troubles. He had to leave the County for a time owing to his state of health.

(iii) Give particulars of the health of the deceased for the three years prior to joining the particular force in which it is claimed he incurred the disability (or disabilities) which caused his death. If possible certificates should be furnished :— — Deceased was a strong healthy young man & had never been to a doctor.

(a) from his doctor, and

(b) from his approved Society for the three years prior to joining the particular Force, or if he was not an insured person, certificates should be furnished by the Medical Practitioner who ordinarily attended him during those three years. A statement will also be required from his Employers in respect of the three years prior to his joining the particular force.

He joined St Finbarrs Nat. Health Insurance Society on 15/4/1919 His card no. 11961.

He was re-insured 25/8/1924 His card no. being : 314.00.

Sickness benefit 2 weeks. 1919.
" " 2 " March 1930
(He died May 4th 1930)

Unemployment card. No. 1637.
Granted 156 days.
Ceased benefit 28th January 1930 for 22 days.

Left

Because he alone knew the sensitivity and the full extent of his sister's activities, Florence O'Donoghue wrote this letter in support of Agnes McCarthy's application.

Reference:
Agnes McCarthy
MSP34REF60655.

Medical report stating John Condon suffered a 'complete nervous breakdown' following his participation in the Kilmichael ambush.

Reference:
John Condon DP3798.

Civilians in the Military Service Pensions Collection

Caoimhe Nic Dháibhéid

In December 1932, seventy-five-year-old Roscommon widow Maria Grealy wrote to the new Fianna Fáil minister for finance, Seán MacEntee, to stake her claim for 'my share of army pension'.[1] Her claim, elaborated in an application formally made the following January, was for the death of her son, Michael Grealy, executed by the Free State government in March 1923. In June 1933 Maria Grealy received the response: 'The Military Service Registration Board have reported to the Minister that your son Michael (deceased) was not killed while engaged in Military Service.'[2] Confidential inquiries had revealed that while Michael Grealy had been an active member of the IRA from 1919 to 1921, he had not been at the time of his arrest. This news came as a profound shock to his mother, who wrote in outraged tones to Frank Aiken:

> At the time of his arrest the Government of that time called him 'a prominent local irregular leader'... It looks to me as if the bones of my son were paraded by the supporters of the present Government for the purposes of vote-catching but when it comes to doing justice to his unfortunate mother, all his and her sacrifices are conveniently forgotten.[3]

She had submitted her son's last letters as part of her application. 'Dear mother', he had written, 'I am quite happy as I am dying for Ireland, true to the dead and fully resigned, and I will ask you to smile when you get this, as I'll be praying for you in Heaven'.[4] Now, she demanded their return: 'To his mother, & the other members of his family they are an everlasting barrier against calumny and misrepresentation. I sent them to you more to you to vendicate his character than for any material they might bring to me.'[5] Paddy O'Dowd, Fianna Fáil TD for Roscommon, was also surprised when he heard the application was turned down. He told a Defence official that the bank raid on which Grealy was arrested was 'unofficial but authorised', and pointed out to Aiken that 'if he was not killed while on Military Service, then we have no right to claim that 77 men were executed by the last Government. In future we will have to reduce the figure to 76.'[6] The government, however, did not budge. Maria Grealy received no pension, and Michael Grealy is categorised under 'civilian' in the MSPC catalogue.

1 Maria Grealy to Seán MacEntee, received Dec. 1932, MSPC, DP1835 Michael Grealy.

2 Secretary, Dept. of Defence, to Maria Grealy, 16 June 1933, ibid.

3 Maria Grealy to Secretary, Minister of Defence, 4 July 1934, ibid.

4 Last letter of Michael Grealy, *Éire The Irish Nation*, 12 May 1923.

5 Maria Grealy to Frank Aiken, 2 Oct. 1933, MSPC, DP1835 Michael Grealy.

6 Memo of telephone conversation with Paddy O'Dowd, 31 July 1933; Paddy O'Dowd to Frank Aiken, 14 July 1933, ibid. Breen Murphy points out that official and unofficial lists of the Civil War executions exist, with varying numbers, according to whether Greery [sic] and other 'civilian' executions are included. See Breen Timothy Murphy, 'The government's execution policy during the Irish Civil War' (PhD thesis, Maynooth University, Maynooth, 2010), pp 20-1.

Grealy's case appears at first glance exceptional: a son who died for Ireland posthumously and unceremoniously stripped of his martyrdom. Yet it reveals the complexities which frequently lay behind the label of civilian within the Military Service Pensions Collection. Grealy, and his family, believed he died as a combatant, a soldier for Ireland. The bureaucratic machinery of the Military Service Pensions Board decided otherwise, and so he is recorded administratively as a civilian. His mother, Maria Grealy, is also a civilian, one of the approximately 2,300 dependants to date whose files have been catalogued and released by the Department of Defence. Some who were designated 'civilians' included those whose applications for military pensions were denied due to not meeting the exacting, byzantine, and frequently shifting definition of 'active service' under the successive Army and Military Service Pensions Acts. To add to the layers of complication, some were categorised specifically as 'civilians' but others were merely deemed to not belong formally to any organisation. Others still never claimed to be members of the IRA, Citizen Army, or Cumann na mBan but applied for pensions on the basis of having provided assistance at various stages, such as storing arms or explosives, or lived in the same household as those who provided assistance. Yet another group were those who applied for a pension or gratuity arising from their being injured during Volunteer, IRA, or National Army activity. Although many were refused for a variety of reasons, they too are designated as 'civilians' in the Collection. Moreover, the designation of 'civilian' in the Collection database was sometimes applied by the archivists themselves during the cataloguing process, not as a judgement on the status of unsuccessful applicants but rather as a means of differentiating these applications from those whose membership in organisations and whose active service was not in question. As such, exploring the term 'civilian' also makes visible the cataloguing choices which are made during the processing of such a complex and challenging Collection, and which in turn can create its own interpretative results. 'Civilian', therefore, is a complex term in the Collection, and one through which varied and challenging revolutionary and post-revolutionary experiences can be explored. It was a status that could be claimed, contested, or assigned. In tracing some of these stories, this essay also considers what is revealed of the bureaucratic mind which constructed, maintained, and adjudicated this extraordinary system.

I

As readers of this volume will be aware, the legislation governing the awarding of military pensions was extended successively between 1923 and 1953. From the outset, some civilians were viewed as being in scope, with the Army Pensions Act 1923 making provision for the payment of allowances and gratuities to the dependants (primarily widows and children) of any officers or soldiers killed in action between April 1916 and April 1922.[7] Some of these, particularly the dependants of those killed during the Easter Rising or the War of Independence, had received one-off or ongoing payments from various republican and humanitarian aid organisations.[8] With the establishment of the Irish Free State, these payments were

7 Patrick Brennan, '"Active service": changing definitions', in Catriona Crowe (ed.), *Guide to the Military Service (1916-1923) Pensions Collection* (Dublin, 2012), p. 64.

8 Caoimhe Nic Dháibhéid, 'The Irish National Aid Association and the radicalization of public opinion in Ireland, 1916-1918' in *Historical Journal*, lv, no. 3 (2012), pp 705-29.

now regularised and the state formally took responsibility for these families. Thus, Monica Clarke, widow of Irish Citizen Army member Philip Clarke, who had been killed in action at Stephen's Green on Easter Tuesday, successfully applied for a pension and was awarded £90 and a further £24 for her five minor children.[9] She was, her file reveals, 'in very poor circumstances since his death' but crucially, 'claimant and all her family are staunch supporters of the present Government'.[10] Many of the widows of the 1916 executed leaders refused to apply for assistance to the hated Free State government. And where they did, their current political allegiances were carefully noted. Áine Ceannt's 1924 application for a widow's allowance or gratuity under the 1923 Army Pensions Act was granted by the minister for defence, but the Army Pensions Board 'wished to direct [his] attention to the fact that Claimant is a sympathiser with the Forces opposed to the Government'.[11] Despite the fact that her oldest son Séamus Mallin was a member of the anti-Treaty IRA (arrested for a capital offence and imprisoned for much of the Civil War), Úna Mallin was awarded a pension of £90 per annum in 1924, and successfully claimed for the education of her minor children (£24 per annum each) up until her death in 1932.[12] Owing to the size of her family and the backdating of the pension to 1 April 1922, her first payment was for £469 1*s*. 6*d*., a substantial amount for the Mallin family who were in straitened circumstances. There were limits to this munificence, however, even for the family of a 1916 executed leader. The youngest child, Joseph Mallin, turned twelve years of age on 13 September 1925, but he began school for the year on 11 September. 'You were not entitled, therefore', the army finance officer wrote to Mrs Mallin, 'to a refund for the 11th and 12th. The overpayment, accordingly, has been deducted from the gross amount of your allowance for the month of June.'[13] The overpayment was four shillings.

Of course, not all dependants were civilians. Some, particularly the children of the Rising leaders, had participated in the War of Independence or, more commonly, the Civil War themselves. Thus, many who took an anti-Treaty position were excluded from pension arrangements under the Cumann na nGaedheal administration, and their mothers, often politically active in their own right, refused to apply for the pension available to them at least during the period of the Cosgrave government. It is worth noting, moreover, that the widows and dependants of the signatories of the Proclamation were always a category apart in multiple pieces of legislation dealing with military service pensions, and were continuously awarded amounts over and above what other dependants, even those killed in action in 1916 or executed during the War of Independence, received. The glow of proximity to a 'founding father' had financial as well as political consequences. But this could also cut the other way. Áine Malone of Grantham Street in Dublin applied for a pension arising from injuries received on Easter Monday 1916. She had a 'bullet that lodged in her hip' and was no longer able to stand all day as her job as a draper's assistant required.[14] Although her brother Michael Malone had been killed in action during the Rising,

9 Certificate of assessment, 3 July 1924, MSPC, 1D162 Philip Clarke.

10 Col. Michael Costello to Adjutant-General, 18 Feb. 1924, ibid.

11 Army Pensions Board to Minister for Defence, n.d. [1924], MSPC, 1D330 Eamonn Ceannt.

12 Secretary, Dept. of Defence, to R. O'Hegarty, President's Office, 13 Aug. 1924, MSPC, 1D322 Michael Mallin.

13 Army Finance Officer to Úna Mallin, 1 June 1926, ibid.

14 May Malone to Minister for Defence, 5 May 1925, MSPC, DOD/2/4334 Ann Malone.

Áine Malone's sister Brigid was married to Dan Breen. 'In that case', declared Director of Army Intelligence Michael Costello, 'the whole family is tainted with Irregularism'.[15] No pension or gratuity was made to Áine Malone, and there is a sense in the file that her family having received National Aid money was implicitly held against her. But many other individuals and families received both National Aid grants and state pensions. Moreover, her mother Mary Malone successfully applied the following year for a pension on the basis of her son having been killed in action during the Rising. While army intelligence again attempted to draw attention to her status as Dan Breen's mother-in-law and being an 'intimate friend of De Valera', these concerns were dismissed by, it appears, W.T. Cosgrave himself, as 'immaterial in this case'.[16] If one hesitates to apply the word 'mercurial' to the rule-bound culture of the Military Service Pensions Board, then certainly there is a variation in the degree and ferocity with which the rules were applied. Along with the changes and updates to the legislation underpinning the military service pensions, it makes for a bewildering experience, both for applicants and for later historians.

As the above examples make clear, contemporary politics sometimes intruded into the assessment process. But even non-politicised claims could be complex. Much of this complexity revolved around the texts of the Army Pensions Acts and their interpretation, and Section 41 of the 1937 Act proved particularly difficult. This section provided for the provision of a gratuity to a person who was not a member of the revolutionary organisations if he or she was wounded or injured 'either (i) by reason of the fact that such person was keeping arms the property of any of the said organisations, or (ii) by being accidentally shot by a member of one of the said organisations who was staying in the house of such person and was evading arrest'.[17] News of this provision was widely publicised in the press, and the notice which appeared in the *Sunday Independent* on 9 May 1937 prompted seventy-two-year-old Agnes Carr to apply for a gratuity. She had been seriously wounded on 30 April 1916 when she left her house to take food to her son, a member of Fianna Éireann, and her injuries later necessitated the amputation of her right leg. Although the Ministry of Defence did agree an exceptional payment to replace her prosthetic limb, her application for a gratuity was refused, as her injuries were not incurred in either of the circumstances envisaged by the Act.[18] Similar stringency can be seen in the case of Christopher Barnes, who at nine years of age was wounded in the head during the Rising at Chancery Street by a ricochet bullet fired by the Four Courts garrison, was hospitalised in Jervis Street for six months and received a bone graft from his hip to the occipital bone of his skull.[19] His application was also rejected as the Volunteers were not in his house evading arrest at the time of his injury. Despite further correspondence from Barnes claiming that the Volunteers occupied the family home at Mary Street, obliging his family to seek shelter at Chancery Street where he was wounded, his application was deemed not 'to conform to the requirements of Section 41'.[20]

15 Col. Michael Costello to Minister for Defence, 20 May 1925, ibid.

16 Capt. Peadar McCabe to Comdt Kennedy, GHQ, 16 May 1924 [with handwritten annotations], MSPC, 1D315 Michael Malone. I am grateful to Anne Dolan for drawing my attention to the initials L.T. MacC [Liam Tomás MacCosgair].

17 Army Pensions Act 1937, Section 41. Available at (https://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/1937/act/15/section/41/enacted/en/html) (accessed 23 Jan. 2023).

18 Report of the Army Pensions Board, 12 Apr. 1938, MSPC, Sp.G.2 Agnes Carr.

19 Medical certificate, Dr C.K. Byrnes, Richmond Hospital, 7 Aug. 1937, MSPC, Sp.G.3 Christopher Barnes.

Sometimes the decisions seem baffling even to the historian with the benefit of hindsight. At least two cases exist where children assisting the Volunteers were killed in action during the Rising, but their parents were denied a pension because they were deemed not a member of an organisation covered by the Army Pensions Act of 1932. Fourteen-year-old Moses Doyle ran errands for the Jacobs garrison, and was shot dead on Easter Monday; his elderly mother, perhaps confused, said he had used the code name 'Lawrence O Tool'.[21] In her spidery letters to the Pensions Board we catch a glimpse of the turmoil of Easter week: 'there was a few days of heavy firing and I could not find him until the ninth day I was informed there were some bodies in the Adelaide Hospital (Peter St) awaiting Identification, so it was there I found his body, lying along with the bodies of some British soldiers.'[22] 'All the facts of [her] case were carefully and very sympathetically considered', as the stock phrase went, but her claim was refused. Similarly, the mother of James Kelly, a seventeen-year-old shot dead on the North Circular Road on Easter Tuesday, was turned down for a pension as her son was not deemed to be a member of Fianna Éireann. In this case, enquiries were made to Barney Mellows and Gearóid Ó hUallacháin, both then senior Fianna officers, but no response was forthcoming. Kelly's mother was asked to provide details of her son's unit and commanding officer, but she was unable to furnish these, beyond the name of Constance Markievicz as leader of the Fianna.[23] This is not altogether surprising: teenagers were no more likely then as now to confide in their parents the details of their social lives, perhaps even less likely once the rebellion was being planned.

II

Although those children who lost their lives during the War of Independence or Civil War await a formal study, a brief examination of some of the cases of children killed or severely wounded in the Military Service Pensions Collection is revealing, not merely of attitudes towards 'innocent' victims, but of the wider bureaucratic and legalistic mind which underpinned the administration of the military pensions scheme.[24] These issues revolved around the specific wording of Section 41 of the 1932 Act: the 'keeping arms' requirement. Many of these cases involved children being injured, sometimes grievously, by explosives stored in their homes. But were they in scope of the Act? Thomas Carey was ten years of age in June 1923 when he tried to remove explosives stored in his father's field in County Limerick on receipt of a warning from his anti-Treatyite brother. Unable to reach the explosives through the briars, he set fire to the bushes, just the sort of thing a clueless young boy might do. The explosives detonated, and Carey lost his right eye and both index fingers. He had made an earlier application for a pension in 1933 but was turned down as he was not deemed a member of the requisite organisations.[25] When Section 41 allowing for gratuities to those injured keeping arms was introduced, Carey applied again. He was, he declared, 'practically incapacitated from following any useful occupation & I consider I am justly entitled to some disability compensation'.[26] His artificial eye, it was noted, was too small, and frequently had a 'pussy' discharge.[27] He was initially awarded a £100 gratuity, but there were concerns about the floodgates opening behind the scenes. Was the Irish government taking general responsibility for injuries suffered during the revolution? How far could 'keeping arms' be deemed to extend?

Similar questions revolved around the case of Nellie Baker, who also lost an eye aged three years old when an anti-Treaty IRA man staying in her parents' house in County Clare accidentally discharged his gun while lighting a cigarette. The bullet hit the flagstone floor, and a splinter flew up and lodged in the little girl's eye. Baker was also initially granted £100, but her case along with Carey's and two others were referred to the attorney general for an opinion as to the scope of the Act and whether 'such persons' in Section 41 could be interpreted to mean dependants, employees, or those otherwise resident in the house. Patrick Lynch, the old Parnellite attorney general, delivered a much-anticipated opinion in 1939:

> It seems to me to be difficult to justify a reading of the second sub-paragraph in section 41(1)(a) as if the words were '<u>in the same house as such person</u>' instead of 'in the house of such person'. This would admit persons ordinarily resident in the house but the possessive term has been used and should receive its primary meaning.[28]

In both cases, the £100 gratuity was revoked. Although there are hints in the official correspondence that Minister Aiken might have been more favourably disposed to a more liberal interpretation than this, Lynch's opinion chimed with that of civil servants. 'The Section was very tightly drawn so as to prevent it becoming a General Compensation Section', one observed, and the line had to be held.[29] It is not clear, however, whether this rationale was ever communicated to those writing in in increasingly desperate and furious terms, asking for their cases to be reconsidered. Frequently, all that was returned was a bald refusal: 'you are not one of the persons to whom Section 41 of the Act applies'.[30] Nellie Baker's mother demanded to know 'what clause therein that deprived her of the said section of the Act'.[31] Nellie Baker wrote to de Valera from post-war London, where she had emigrated seeking work, her words full of rage:

> I want to know why not, I was shot at as a child by a member of the Irish R. Army (whilst in uniform) & at the time he was evading arrest in our home, & I now happen to have grown up and realise what it means to go through life with one eye … I have been turned down from

20 Note by the Secretary, Pensions Board, 21 June 1940, Ibid.

21 Mary Doyle to Minister for Defence, received 20 Oct. 1937, MSPC, DP1366 Moses Doyle.

22 Mary Doyle to Minister for Defence, 13 Mar. 1932, ibid.

23 Report by Gearóid Ó hUallacháin, received 12 May 1947; Teresa Kelly to Dept. of Defence, received 12 Oct. 1936, MSPC, DP7310 James Kelly.

24 Those killed during the Easter Rising are charted in Joe Duffy, *Children of the Rising* (Dublin, 2015).

25 Dept. of Defence to Thomas Carey, 31 May 1933, MSPC, Sp.G.13 Thomas Carey.

26 Thomas Carey to Minister for Defence, 5 Mar. 1938, ibid.

27 Opinion of Dr McAreavey, 12 Nov. 1938, ibid.

28 Opinion of the Attorney General, 5 July 1939, MSPC, Sp.G.5 Nellie Baker. Emphasis from the original.

29 J. O'Connell to Secretary, Dept. of Defence, 27 Mar. 1939, MSPC, Sp.G.13 Thomas Carey.

30 Dept. of Defence to Michael Neilon, 29 June 1940, MSPC, Sp.G.4 Michael Neilon.

31 Mary Baker to Secretary, Dept. of Defence, 8 May 1940, MSPC, Sp.G.5 Nellie Baker.

> different jobs & in my opinion, & the opinion of lots of other people over here you, & your Government have given me a very hard deal, don't you personally think so? If you lost the complete sight of one of your eyes in the same way as I did, you would certainly expect some compensation.[32]

Splinters, explosions, lost eyes, damaged fingers; these are just some of the physical injuries that befell the civilian population. But, as historians of the Irish revolution are increasingly recognising, the psychological wounds inflicted during the conflict could be equally life changing.[33] Such was the case for Christina Horan, who had lived at Thomas Ashe Hall on French's Quay in Cork until December 1920. As the local Sinn Féin hall, it was the subject of constant raids by Crown forces until it was evacuated some time after the burning of Cork. Christina Horan, aged eleven, developed a condition of vomiting and convulsions during these raids, culminating in a state of nervous paralysis down her left side, and two doctors testified that 'her disability is due to terror caused by raids'.[34] Horan herself testified before the Pensions Board that about ten days before the murder of Thomas MacCurtain, the hall was raided.

> I was in bed. I had to get up as I was ordered to. The lights were extinguished. I was very nervous. I was not struck or abused in that way. I think the raid lasted for over an hour. Everything in the house was smashed. My nerves are bad since. I vomited for a long period of time after this raid.[35]

A lengthy departmental debate occurred again in this case as to whether Section 41 applied in this instance, and whose responsibility it was for determining same: the Army Pensions Board or the Department of Defence itself. This seems to have been partly about reluctance to expend funds investigating claims – travel funds for applicants, *per diem* funds for Board members – but may also have been part of wider power struggles over who controlled the administration of the legislation. Mícheál Mac Murnaigh, chairman of the Army Pensions Board, wrote pointedly to the army finance officer that 'cases have come before the Board under this Act where, on their face, rejection of the claim would appear to be advisable, but where on further and full investigation by the Army Pensions Board by medical examination and interrogation of the applicants, it has been found that the applicants were entitled to awards'.[36] Christina Horan was examined by the Board and, in a surprisingly expansive interpretation of Section 41 it was found that she had received an injury as a result of storing arms and explosives but – the sting was in the tail – the Board did not recommend an award as 'they are not satisfied on the evidence that applicant's present condition is due to injury (shock)'.[37] All Christina Horan received was the customary clipped notice: 'you are not a person to whom the provisions of Section 41 apply.'[38]

III

There was a postscript to the Horan case, however. Christina Horan's mother had been vigorously pursuing pensions since 1932, believing, not without reason, that their family had paid a hard price for their part in the revolution. Finally, in 1946 the then Mrs Walsh (who had been widowed for a second time) was awarded a special allowance for herself, with an additional allowance for her daughter Christina (both incapable of self-support) to supplement the Cumann na mBan pension the former had been receiving since 1935. Three days after her mother's death on 28 January 1949, Christina Horan applied for a Military Service Medal, in which she claimed to have been a member of the IRA between 1921 and 1923. This application was certified by two Old IRA members, and a medal duly issued on 23 October 1953. Following this, she applied for a disability pension and then a further special allowance, for which medical evidence – a doctor's letter – stated she had been disabled since she was six years of age. This conflicting information prompted a reinvestigation of all her claims, and she was asked to return her medal.[39] How the Pensions Board and the Department of Defence weighed the recent medical evidence against the existing testimony from two doctors who had treated Christina Horan in the 1920s and 1930s and who stated definitively that her disablement was due to Crown terror is not recorded in the file. Similarly, that she was aged twelve or thirteen in 1921 and 1922 was, in 1953, taken as proof positive that she could not have been a member of the IRA and hence her medal was revoked. Such rigid boundaries around what 'membership' consisted of, and what age one could be considered a member, were perhaps necessary to the administration of a complex financial pension scheme, but sat uneasily with the sometimes messy reality of revolution, particularly in the even messier period of the Civil War. Rooting out supposedly 'fraudulent' claims, even retrospectively, was a perennial concern of the Pensions Board, and their ability to do so, cross-referencing complex information across decades and through multiple sub-departments, is testament to the careful, methodical accounting, documenting, and filing systems that made up the Military Service Pensions Collection. Such care and attention to detail is part of what makes the Collection so attractive to historians, but also poses its own challenges around dealing with voluminous and complex files. In particular, it challenges us to reflect on how we weigh and sift evidence, accommodate conflicting testimonies, and read across the grain or beneath the surface of bureaucratic judgements and think more openly about the multiple possible truths they may contain.

There was at least one case where an applicant was jailed for supplying false information. Patrick Jinks of Riverstown, Sligo, was sentenced to six months' hard labour in 1928 after his application for

32 Nellie Baker to Éamon de Valera, 21 May 1946, ibid.

33 Anne Dolan, 'Death in the archives: witnessing war in Ireland, 1919-1921' in *Past and Present*, no. 253 (Nov. 2021), pp 271-300; Justin Dolan Stover, 'Violence, trauma and memory in Ireland: the psychological impact of war and revolution on a liminal society, 1916–1923' in Jason Crouthamel and Peter Leese (eds), *Psychological trauma and the legacies of the First World War* (Basingstoke, 2017), pp 117-40; Ian Miller, 'Pain, trauma and memory in the Irish War of Independence: remembering and contextualising Irish suffering' in Fionnuala Dillane, Naomi McAreavey and Emilie Pine (eds), *The body in pain in Irish literature and culture* (Basingstoke, 2016), pp 117-34; Síobhra Aiken, *Spiritual wounds: trauma, testimony and the Irish Civil War* (Newbridge, 2022).

34 Opinion of Dr T. Donovan, 24 Mar. 1938; see also opinion of Dr George Hegarty, 25 Mar. 1938, MSPC, Sp.G.14 Christina Horan.

35 Statement of Christina Horan, 5 Apr. 1940, ibid.

36 Mícheál Mac Murnaigh to Army Finance Officer, 3 Jan. 1940, ibid.

37 Report by the Army Pensions Board on an application for a Special Gratuity, 10 Apr. 1940, ibid.

38 Dept. of Defence to Christina Horan, 16 May 1940, ibid.

39 P.J. Kilcullen to Christina Horan, 19 Nov. 1954, ibid.

a wound gratuity was found to be fraudulent. He claimed to have been shot in the chest by British forces during a raid on his house, and had successfully obtained compensation for this injury at Ballymote County Court in 1923. It seems, however, that there had been some local disquiet about this award, and when Jinks went further in applying to the Pensions Board in 1927, an anonymous letter from 'Prominent Ratepayers' denounced him. Garda investigations ensued, and it was reported that Jinks 'had no service in the Volunteers … He was wounded in resisting an attempt by the Volunteers to seize a shotgun from him. It appears that when they demanded his gun he attacked them with a hay fork and attempted to stab one of them.'[40] Sentencing Jinks, the presiding district justice denounced the 'unmeasured greed' of the defendant: 'This man has been much better paid for the imaginary services he gave his country than hundreds who gave genuine service.' The Jinks case, it was hoped, would have a deterrent effect, and in prosecuting, the state solicitor asked for a heavy penalty precisely because 'there are so many of these claims being paid all over the country that it is a serious strain on the Department's finances'.[41]

The term 'fraudulent', however, is not an appropriate label for most of the cases refused by the Pensions Board. The reasons why someone may have considered themselves entitled to a pension were broad and varied, from having provided assistance, sometimes at great personal risk, to being commandeered by the IRA. Some may have felt that even if they had never formally participated, their loss still merited compensation. Bernard Loonane was shot accidentally by a soldier of the National Army in June 1922 on King Street, Athlone, while in pursuit of an anti-Treaty IRA member; this case was also deemed not to fall within the remit of Section 41.[42] Owen Murtagh's widow claimed he died in January 1922 following a beating by the Black and Tans and a doctor's letter certified 'contusion and shock'; but his claim was denied, declared 'bogus' by the officials administering the file: 'Man was never a Volunteer. Man was drunk and fell over a soldier, who fired over his head died from effects of fright.'[43] Nora O'Leary was accidentally shot dead by the anti-Treaty IRA in County Kerry in 1923, but her near-destitute widower's application for compensation was rejected, seemingly because Section 41 of the Act only envisaged compensation for being wounded, not being killed.[44] This might seem pure Jesuitry, but such was the logic on which the system was built and continued to function. Even the more ostensibly straightforward 'bogus' cases can be read differently. Bernard O'Connell, a twenty-four-year-old farmer's son from Mallow, had his right arm amputated after he was wounded during an ambush on Great Brunswick Street in June 1921. Having received a weekly gratuity from the White Cross, he applied for a wound gratuity under the 1923 Army Pensions Act, but his attempts to supply the names of corroborating officers failed when nobody could remember him and when he gave the wrong brigade area. Further investigations by army intelligence revealed that O'Connell had been unconvinced of the merits of joining the Volunteers: 'A friend of his at that period… states that O'Connell's opinion was "that the man who would lose his life for his country was a fool".'[45] The experiences of those who did give their lives, or a limb, or an eye, or their health for their country, all contained in the Military Service Pensions Collection, suggests that O'Connell was not entirely wrong. For civilians and veterans alike, grappling with the pensions' infrastructure was 'an immediate and personal introduction to bureaucracy in its purest form'.[46] Yet that bureaucracy, cumbersome, glacial, and labyrinthine though it was, should not be construed as monolithic. The Military Service Pensions system in Ireland was at the same time one of fluidity: decisions could be overturned or retrospectively revoked, as new legislation was brought forward, and as new claims were considered or old claims resubmitted. This was a dynamic process of constant negotiation and renegotiation between applicants and their administrators. In exploring the MSPC, historians should embrace this dynamism with all of its uncertainties and challenge ourselves to use the Collection not as a repository of truth but as a site of contestation, for civilians, dependants, veterans, and all those who fell outside or in between those deceptively neat categories.

Further reading:

Marie Coleman, 'Military service pensions for veterans of the Irish revolution, 1916–1923' in *War in History*, xx, no. 2 (2013), pp 201-21

Thomas Earls Fitzgerald, *Combatants and civilians in revolutionary Ireland, 1918-1923* (Abington, 2021)

Megan J. McClintock, 'Civil War pensions and the reconstruction of Union families' in *The Journal of American History*, lxxxiii, no. 2 (1996), pp 456-80

Desmond Morton, 'Resisting the pension evil: bureaucracy, democracy, and Canada's Board of Pension Commissioners, 1916-33' in *Canadian Historical Review*, lxviii, no. 2 (1987)

40 Report by Chief Superintendent R. Muldoon, Sligo, 30 Nov. 1927, MSPC, 1P976 Patrick Jinks.

41 Clipping from *Sligo Champion* [Mar. 1928], ibid.

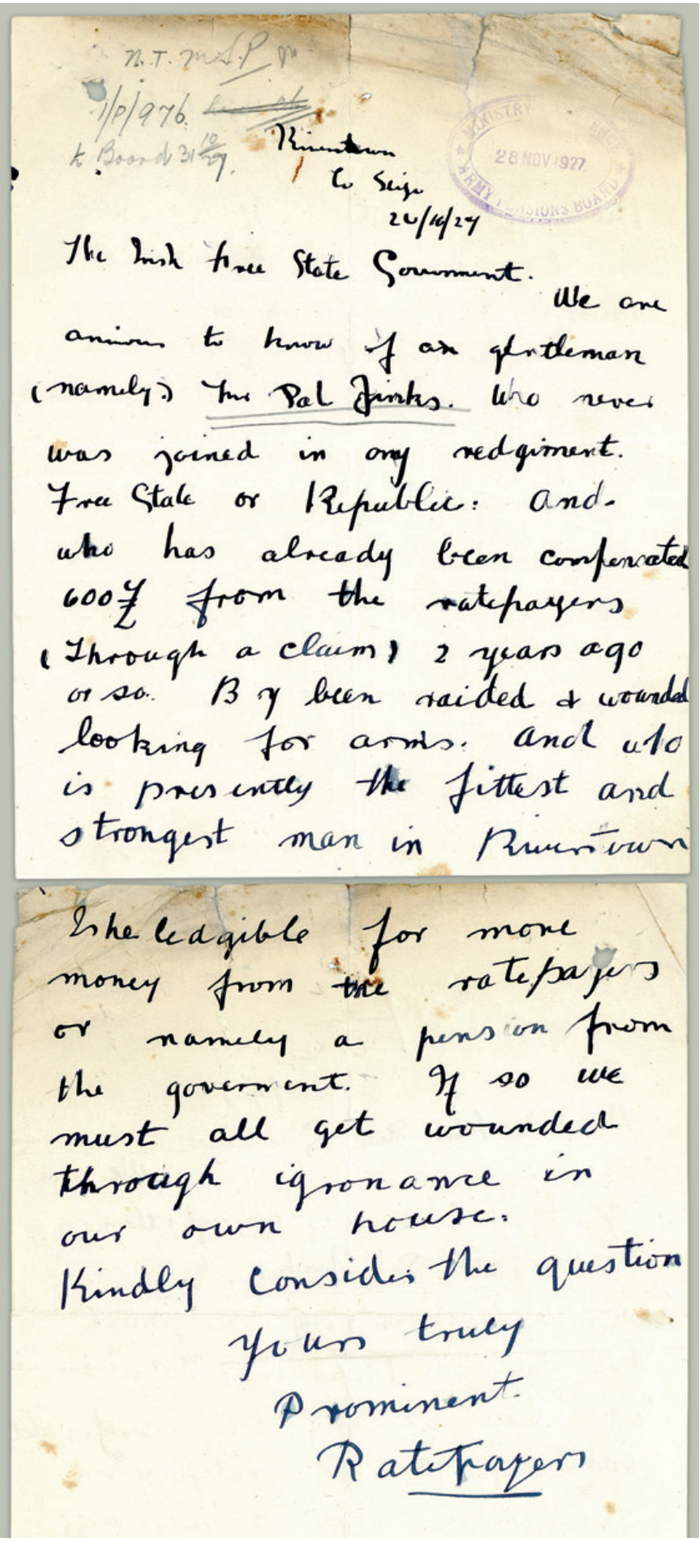
42 Secretary, Dept. of Defence to Bernard Loonane, 18 May 1938, MSPC, Sp.G.6 Bernard Loonane.

43 Opinion of Dr P.J. Cusack, Medical Officer, Nobber District Dispensary, n.d.; handwritten note, 8 May 1925, MSPC, 1D408 Owen Murtagh.

44 Secretary, Dept. of Defence to Cornelius Healy, 21 Oct. 1938, MSPC, Sp.G.10 Nora O'Leary.

45 Col. Michael Costello to Adjutant General, 3 Sept. 1924, MSPC, 1P97 Bernard O'Connell.

46 Desmond Morton, 'Resisting the pension evil: bureaucracy, democracy, and Canada's Board of Pension Commissioners, 1916-33' in *Canadian Historical Review*, lxviii, no. 2 (1987), p. 224.



N.T. MSP
1P976
Rimtown
Co Sligo
26/4/24

The Irish Free State Government.

We are anxious to know if a gentleman (namely) Mr Pat Jinks. Who never was joined in any redgiment. Free State or Republic: and who has already been conferated 600£ from the ratepayers (through a claim) 2 years ago or so. He been raided & wounded looking for arms. and who is presently the fittest and strongest man in Rimtown

Is he eligible for more money from the ratepayers or namely a pension from the government. If so we must all get wounded through ignorance in our own house.
Kindly Consider the question

Yours truly
Prominent
Ratepayers

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Left

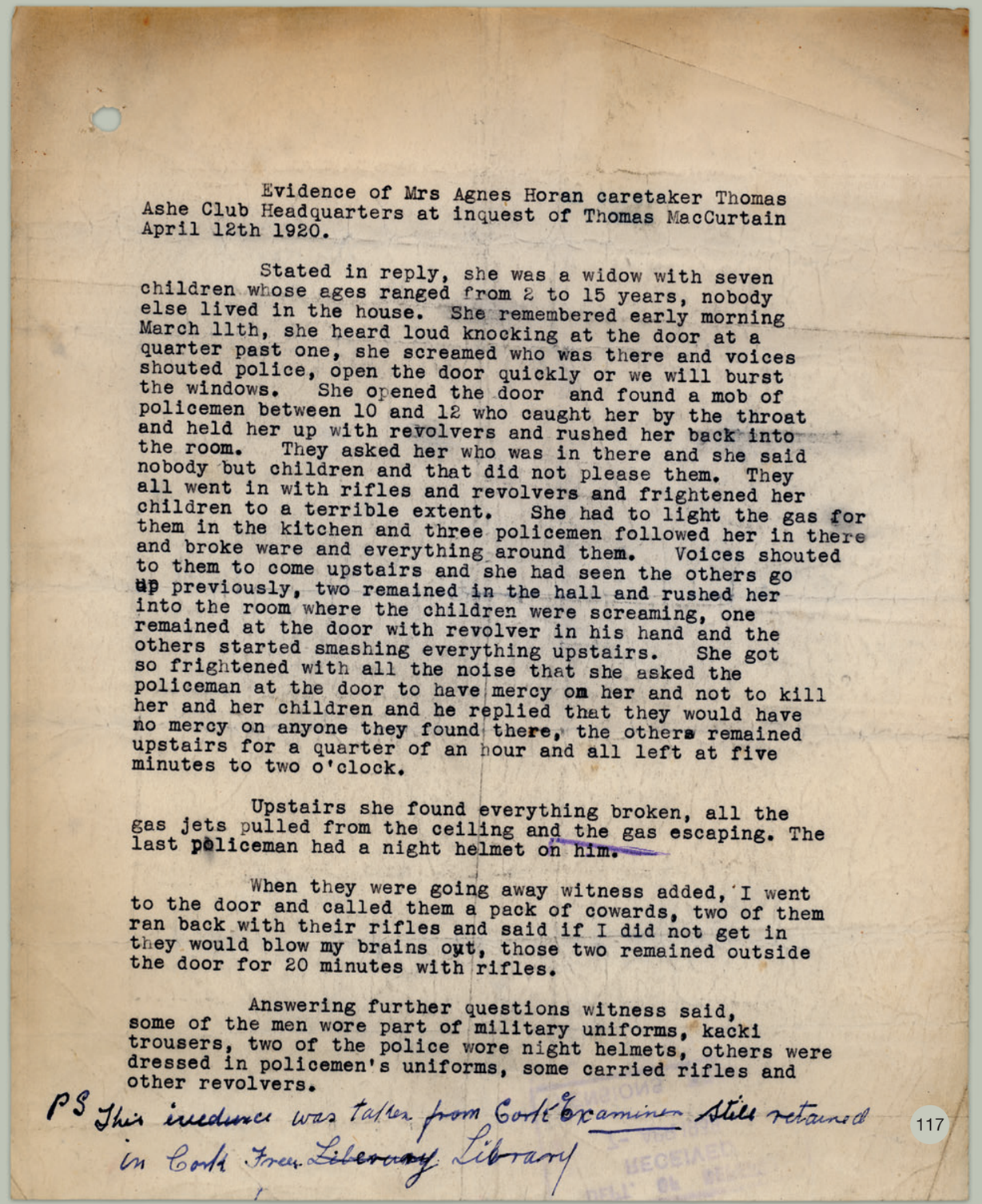
A letter from an anonymous 'Prominent Ratepayer' questioning the legitimacy of the claim of Patrick Jinks and concluding scathingly that if he is to get a pension 'we must all get wounded through ignorance in our own house'.

Reference:
Patrick Jinks 1P976.

Right

Agnes Horan describes a raid she and her children, including Christina Horan, endured on their home. Armed officers, she claims, 'frightened her children to a terrible extent' and destroyed a large amount of her property.

Reference:
Christina Horan Sp.G.14.



Evidence of Mrs Agnes Horan caretaker Thomas Ashe Club Headquarters at inquest of Thomas MacCurtain April 12th 1920.

Stated in reply, she was a widow with seven children whose ages ranged from 2 to 15 years, nobody else lived in the house. She remembered early morning March 11th, she heard loud knocking at the door at a quarter past one, she screamed who was there and voices shouted police, open the door quickly or we will burst the windows. She opened the door and found a mob of policemen between 10 and 12 who caught her by the throat and held her up with revolvers and rushed her back into the room. They asked her who was in there and she said nobody but children and that did not please them. They all went in with rifles and revolvers and frightened her children to a terrible extent. She had to light the gas for them in the kitchen and three policemen followed her in there and broke ware and everything around them. Voices shouted to them to come upstairs and she had seen the others go up previously, two remained in the hall and rushed her into the room where the children were screaming, one remained at the door with revolver in his hand and the others started smashing everything upstairs. She got so frightened with all the noise that she asked the policeman at the door to have mercy on her and not to kill her and her children and he replied that they would have no mercy on anyone they found there, the others remained upstairs for a quarter of an hour and all left at five minutes to two o'clock.

Upstairs she found everything broken, all the gas jets pulled from the ceiling and the gas escaping. The last policeman had a night helmet on him.

When they were going away witness added, I went to the door and called them a pack of cowards, two of them ran back with their rifles and said if I did not get in they would blow my brains out, those two remained outside the door for 20 minutes with rifles.

Answering further questions witness said, some of the men wore part of military uniforms, kacki trousers, two of the police wore night helmets, others were dressed in policemen's uniforms, some carried rifles and other revolvers.

PS This inedence was taken from Cork Examiner Still retained in Cork Free Library

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Left

Women salvaging their belongings after the sack of Balbriggan, 20 September 1920.

Image courtesy of the National Museum of Ireland (NMI-HE-EWP-124).

Above

A bread counter on Gardiner Street, 1921.

Image courtesy of the National Museum of Ireland (NMI-HE-EWP-95).

Éire saor agus Gaelach?
The Military Service Pensions Collection and the Irish language

Síobhra Aiken

Eithne Ní Chumhaill (Coyle) grew up in the strong Irish-speaking district of Cloich Cheann Fhaola in West Donegal but only discovered that her native language existed in print when she was in secondary school in Strabane, County Tyrone. Her later recollections present this unexpected encounter with her first Gaelic book as a key moment in her political awakening: 'the tears began to flow as I could not read a single word of it. I cried all the way home'.[1] Ní Chumhaill soon learnt to read and write Irish and went on to work as a teacher and organiser for the Gaelic League. The language question remained central to her revolutionary activism. When on trial in February 1921 for possessing 'seditious documents', she informed the judge in Irish that she refused to recognise the court and went on to teach her own dialect of Ulster Irish to her comrades during her many stints in prison.[2] She also produced political articles in Irish for a range of publications including *An Crann, An Phoblacht, Barr Buadh*, and *The Nation.*[3] As President of Cumann na mBan between 1926 and 1941, she was vocal in her criticism of the government for neglecting the needs of Irish speakers along the western seaboard.[4]

Yet despite the significance of her belatedly acquired literacy in Irish, Ní Chumhaill's application for a military service pension, granted in 1935, is written almost entirely in English except for courtesies such as 'le meas ort' and 'a chara'.[5] This was not unusual. In fact, one of the more striking features of the Military Service Pensions Collection is the sheer lack of material in Irish. This absence of Irish language material is at odds both with the centrality of the language question to the aspirations of the revolutionary generation and with the (albeit declining) prevalence of the language among the general population during the early decades of the Irish Free State. Yet even as the Irish language was marginalised within the bureaucratic institutions of the state, the language is still ever-present in the available pension files: it appears in evolving nation-building symbolism, in the politics of personal names, in botched translations, in angry (sometimes unanswered) letters, and, even more often, in uncomfortable absences. This short essay maps these sites of linguistic conflict. In particular, it addresses how attitudes to the language reflect fluctuations in state language policy from the 1920s through to the 1980s and how these tensions escalate at the intersections of language, gender, and socioeconomic class. Ultimately, this essay argues that the active marginalisation of the Irish language is integral for understanding the power hierarchies and inequalities which define not only the Military Service Pensions Collection but also the writing of history itself.

1 Manuscript draft and typescript accounts by Eithne Coyle, UCDA, Eithne Coyle O'Donnell papers, P61/2.

2 BMH, WS 750 Eithne Coyle; *Derry Journal,* 7 Dec. 1923.

3 For examples, see *An Crann*, Dec. 1921; *The Nation*, 13 Aug. 1927; *An Barr Buadh*, Jan. 1928; *An Phoblacht*, 10 Jan. 1931.

4 *An Phoblacht*, 10 Jan. 1931; *Irish Press,* 31 Jan. 1973.

5 Eithne O'Donnell to Minister for Defence, 15 May 1945, MSPC, MSP34REF60256 Eithne O'Donnell (née Coyle).

Ní Chumhaill was one of 543,511 people – or 18.3 per cent of the population – who still spoke the Irish language on the foundation of the Free State. Within just one hundred years, the population of Irish speakers had shrunk from between three and four million speakers in the 1830s to half a million in 1926.[6] The majority of these speakers – with the exception of a small group of urban-based intellectuals – lived in rural communities and were restricted to the lowest socioeconomic strata of society.[7] The establishment of the new Irish Free State was seen by many as an opportunity to undo the rapid decline of the language in the previous century. In his 1924 pamphlet *The victory of Sinn Féin,* Treaty supporter and prominent Gaelic Leaguer P. S. Ó hÉigeartaigh contended that the Treaty negotiations were accompanied by 'a phenomenal increase in the sale of Irish grammars, dictionaries, and primers of all sorts', as the public believed that the new government would 'safeguard' the language, 'gradually extending its use until it becomes of equal importance with English'.[8] Indeed, successive governments shared a commitment to convert what was by now a minority language into the 'national' or 'official language' of the state. Government language policy – which ranged from aggressive to ambitious to reactive – focused in particular on four main areas: the maintenance of the language in the Gaeltacht, the extension of the language across the country through the education system, language standardisation, and the Gaelicisation of public service administration.[9]

The lack of Irish material within the Military Service Pensions Collection offers a useful case study for addressing the challenges of decolonising the bureaucratic structures of the public sector and the general failure of the state's aims to embed the Irish language into the civil service. This dearth of Irish material in the MSPC also reflects the emphasis within the new state on establishing, preserving, and promoting the 'purest' possible form of Irish as it was spoken in those areas designated as 'Fíor-Ghaeltachtaí' [True Gaeltacht areas] under the Gaeltacht Commission of 1926. This emphasis on the idiomatic Irish of rural-based native speakers effectively eclipsed consideration of the ways in which the language was being adapted and modernised by revolutionary activists to describe their military operations. These views are perhaps best summed up by the distinct approaches of the two most significant state-building memory projects of the early twentieth century: the Folklore Commission (1935–1970) and the Bureau of Military History (1947–57). Whereas the former actively privileged and prioritised the gathering of Irish-language material from the traditional Irish-speaking areas (to the exclusion, perhaps, of other forms of folklore), no similar commitment to collecting material in Irish was evident in the Bureau. That is not to say that the Bureau's proponents were indifferent to the language: an early Bureau questionnaire asked witnesses about the use of oral and written Irish among the Volunteers and the Advisory Committee included a number of scholars known for their interest in the revival, including Bureau Director Michael McDunphy, history lecturer Síghle Ní Chinnéide, folklorist Séamus Ó

6 See Nicholas M. Wolf, *An Irish-speaking island: state, religion, community and the linguistic landscape in Ireland, 1770-1870* (Wisconsin, 2014).

7 Tadhg Ó hIfearnáin, 'Irish-speaking society and the state' in M. Ball and N. Müller (eds), *The Celtic languages* (London, 2019), pp 539–86.

8 P.S. Ó hÉigeartaigh, *The victory of Sinn Féin: how it won it and how it used it* (Dublin, 1924), p. 177.

9 Ó hIfearnáin, 'Irish-speaking society and the state'; Pádraig Ó Riagáin, *Language policy and social reproduction: Ireland 1893-1993* (Oxford, 1997).

Duilearga, and the aforementioned P. S. Ó hÉigeartaigh.[10] Nevertheless, of some 1,773 witness statements taken by the Bureau, only two were given in Irish: these were the statements of Dr Seán Ó Ceallaigh, a Belfast native whose medical premises in Rathgar were a central meeting place for the leaders of 1916, and Séamas Ó Néill of Tipperary, who was active from 1916 and later a member of An Garda Síochána.[11] This dearth of Irish-language material is all the more puzzling given that a number of key Bureau investigators were Irish speakers, including Sinéad Ní Chiosáin (Jane Kissane), who was known as a 'brilliant linguist' and a 'devoted member of the Gaelic League'.[12]

The scarcity of material in Irish in the Bureau of Military History is also at odds with the stated commitment to the language in military circles. In 1921, the Irish Volunteers called for the use of Irish military titles and words of commands, and various brigades – such as the IRA Belfast Brigade – were known to give commands in Irish during military operations.[13] This association between the use of Irish and military action is further evident in the many applications for military service pensions which cite attending, forming, and teaching languages classes as evidence of service.[14] Mary Agnes Burke (née Chambers), for example, contended that one of her tasks as a member of Cumann na mBan was to translate articles from *An t-Óglach* into Irish for local activists in Tourmakeady, County Mayo, who didn't understand English (Such work was not considered 'active service' in the Board's view and Burke's application was unsuccessful).[15] After the foundation of the new state, there were hopes that the army would be a key institution in the process of state Gaelicisation. The official army journal, *An t-Óglach*, called on every Irish soldier to use 'only the original Irish form' of their names in official contexts, Irish classes were held for soldiers in various army centres, and an Irish-speaking army battalion, An Chéad Chathlán Coisithe, was formed under Pádraig Ó Conchubhair in 1924.[16] In September 1925, Gearóid Ó Suilleabháin wrote to Major General Seán Mac Eoin, GOC Curragh Training Camp of the National Army, pleading with him to join the Gaelic League and to continue to ensure that the army 'be in the vanguard of the [Irish-language] movement now as it has been during the past decade'. Ó Suilleabháin was concerned that this task would be all the more challenging given 'gur mó tréan-fhear d'Óglaigh na hÉireann atá fé'n bhfód indiu a dhein ard-obair ar son na teanga' [that many men of the Irish Volunteers who did great work for the language are now dead].[17]

There were others who shared Ó Suilleabháin's concerns about the army's commitment to the language. An unnamed army officer wrote to *An t-Óglach* in 1925 complaining that even though the chief of staff's secretariat correspondence was written in Irish, the majority of the men were 'apathetic' to the language.[18] This institutional indifference is indeed reflected in the fact that, from the passing of the first Army Pensions Act in 1923, most subsequent application forms for supports, disability allowances, and pensions were issued in English only.[19] While the language served important symbolic functions within the Department of Defence (as clear from the use of department names, addresses, military ranks, date stamps, or cover sheets in Irish), the language had little practical day-to-day use. The issuing of all-English forms (even when the requests for forms were written in Irish) essentially deterred revolutionaries from submitting documentations or statements in Irish. Even the Belfast-born volunteer and language activist Ailbhe Ó Monacháin – who boldly completed his household census form in Irish in 1911 and had a run-in with police in Cavan in 1915 for signing his name in Irish – deferred to the English-only policy after he was issued an application form in English (following his request, in Irish, for the same).[20] These disincentives against the use of Irish might explain why the files in the MSPC for many of the most renowned Irish revivalists are primarily in English. These include leading government figures strongly associated with the Gaelic League – such as Eoin Mac Néill, Ernest Blythe, and Richard Mulcahy – as well as many Gaelic teachers, government-employed Irish translators, and even a later minister for Gaeltacht affairs.[21]

Yet some of these same activists adopted Irish in other contexts as their preferred language for processing and recounting their revolutionary experience. In contrast to the paucity of Irish in the MSPC, writing in Irish was strongly represented within the competitive commemorative print culture of the early twentieth century. In fact, there was a 'richer' stock of revolutionary autobiographies and memoirs in Irish than in English by the 1960s, owing to state supports for Irish-language publishing and the necessity to produce reading materials to facilitate the state's ambitious, if often ineffective, attempts to revive the language through the school system.[22] Galway-based Liam Ó Briain's *Cuimhní Cinn* [Recollections] appeared in 1951, National Army officer Piaras Béaslaí revisited the revolution in various dramatic and fictional writings in Irish, Cumann na nGaedheal minister Earnán de Blaghd wrote his trilogy of memoirs in Irish, while Dublin volunteer Frank Henderson too jotted his 1916 memoirs in Irish.[23]

10 For example, questionnaire regarding the use of Irish among the Volunteers, see BMH, WS 1557 Séamus Ó Néill.

11 BMH, WS 471 Seán Ó Ceallaigh; BMH, WS 1557 Séamas Ó Néill.

12 *Irish Press*, 3 Jan.1964.

13 *An t-Óglach*, 30 Sept. 1921; 21 Oct. 1921.

14 For examples, see MSPC, MSP34REF34790 Annie Kelly; MSPC, MSP34REF50108 Mary McCormack (née Delahunty); MSPC, MSP34REF10997 Bella Lucas.

15 Statement of brief outline of service, n.d., MSPC, MSP34REF40894 Mary Agnes Burke (née Chambers).

16 *An t-Óglach*, 11 Apr. 1925; *An t-Óglach*, 28 July 1923; *An t-Óglach*, 14 July 1923; Pádraig Ó Conchubhair was the son of Gaelic Leaguer founder Seana-Sheán Ó Conchubhair. Active in the Irish Volunteers from 1914, both Pádraig and his brother Seán were prominent in the National Army.

17 Gearóid Ó Suilleabháin to Seán Mac Eoin, 29 Oct. 1925, UCDA, Seán Mac Eoin papers, P151/299.

18 Oifigeach, 'The Army and the Irish Language' in *An t-Óglach*, 29 Sept. 1925.

19 An exception seems to have been Irish-language applications for medals issued in the 1940s and 1950s. See Eibhlín Bean Uí Chearnaigh to Secretary, Dept. of Military Pensions, 6 Nov. 1941, MSPC, MSP34REF35466 Nelly Carney (Eibhlín Bean Uí C[h]earnaigh – née Groarke), and medal application form, 22 Feb. 1950, MSPC, MSP34REF26762 Éamon Ó Duibhir (Eamon O'Dwyer). Eibhlín Bean Uí Chearnaigh's unsuccessful application for a military service pension was completed in English, but her application for a medal, issued on the Irish version of the form, was completed in Irish. Census records from 1901 and 1911 suggest that the Groarke family spoke both Irish and English.

20 BMH, WS 298 Ailbhe Ó Monacháin; Application form, 28 Jan. 1935, MSPC, MSP34REF3926 Ailbhe Ó Monacháin (Alfred Monaghan/Monahan).

21 See MSPC, MSP34REF21830 Liam Ó Riain (Ó Rinn/Ring); MSPC, MSP34REF3627 Gerald Bartley (Gearóid Mac Parthaláin).

22 Oliver Snoddy, 'Notes on literature in Irish dealing with the fight for freedom', *Éire-Ireland*, iii, no. 2 (Summer 1968), pp 138-48.

23 Earnán de Blaghd, *Trasna na Bóinne* (Baile Átha Cliath, 1957), *Slán le hUltaibh* (Baile Átha Cliath, 1969), agus *Gaeil á múscailt* (Baile Átha Cliath, 1973). See the translated English version of Frank Henderson's memoir: *Frank Henderson's Easter Rising: recollections of a Dublin Volunteer* (Cork, 1998).

These revolutionaries hailed from distinct class, diasporic, and religious backgrounds and all acquired the language in tandem with their revolutionary activism. Yet their documents archived in the MSPC are almost completely in English and fail to capture the remarkable bilingual, and even multilingual, worlds that this generation cultivated for themselves. This might go some way to explaining de Blaghd's concerns, expressed in his Irish-language column in the *Sunday Independent* in 1945, that the MSPC would give future historians an incomplete impression of the period:

> *Ní foláir nó bainfidh lucht staire ana-úsáid as na cáipéisí sin amach annso. Ach ní déarfainn go gcuirfeadh na cáipéisí amháin ar chumas scríbhneora é cunntas ar chogaíocht na mblian 1916-1921 a chur le chéile a thabharfadh fíor-phictiúr d'imtheachtaí na tréimhse úd. Baineann na ráitisí do fuarathas ó lucht pinsin d'éileamh le lugheacháin do rinneadh roimh náimhde, le beairicí do gabhadh, le bombaí agus le gránáidí do caitheadh, le póilíní, le spiairí agus le brathadóirí do lámhachadh, le droichid do séideadh san aer agus lena leithéidí sin de ghnóthaí gníomhacha. Ní dóigh liom go bhfuil puinn iontu faoi na smaointe a bhí ag na h-óglaigh agus ag na daoine is díograisí do sheasamh leo nó faoi'n sórt saoil go raibh coinne ag lucht S[h]inn Féin leis tar éis na troda nó faoi'n éad agus easaontas d'éiríoch idir óglaigh ó am go ham nó fós faoi'n do-mheanmain agus duairceas a bhuaileadh an chuid ba chalma de shaighdiúirí Éireann uaireanta…*
>
> [Historians will surely make great use of these files in the future. But I do not think these files alone will allow a writer to put together an account of the war from 1916–1921 that will give a true picture of the events of that period. The statements from pension applicants concern ambushes on the enemy, the occupation of barracks, bombs and grenades that were thrown, police, spies and informers who were executed, bridges that were blown into the air, and similar types of active duties. I do not think there is anything in them about the thoughts of the volunteers or the thoughts of the most dedicated people who stood with them or about the type of life that Sinn Féin supporters were hoping for after the fight or about the jealousy and the disputes that arouse between volunteers from time to time or about the low spirits and gloom that sometime affected the most courageous of Ireland's soldiers…][24]

Despite the general discouragement of the use of Irish on pension applications, some revolutionaries insisted on engaging with the state in Irish. In many cases, the Pensions Board facilitated Irish speakers and replied in Irish when prompted. However, the use of Irish also led to numerous conflicts between applicants and the Board, hinting at the limitations of Irish-language services despite the introduction of language requirements for new entrants into the civil service from 1925.[25] Limerick native John Hennessy or Seán Óg Ó h-Aonghusa – who had survived a ninety-four day hunger strike in Cork Jail in 1920 – filed his English-only disability pension form in Irish in April 1928. Yet when Ó h-Aonghusa didn't hear anything from the Board after five months, he was clearly concerned that his choice of language might delay the process and wrote in English to ask if his application was received.[26] Ó h-Aonghusa's suspicions were correct. Officials were struggling to understand his outline of activities, as evident in the translation they provided of his statement: Baile Átha an Ghaorthaidh [Ballingeary] is rendered as 'some place in Cork', Criostóir Ó Lúsaidh becomes 'don't know name', while 'Mágh Cromtha' [Macroom] is rendered as 'some place'.[27] This was probably not Ó h-Aonghusa's only unsatisfactory engagement with the civil service. In the 1930s, he was involved in a group of Irish teachers who met in the Gaelic League offices in Parnell Square and called on the Department of Education to support the training of Irish teachers and denounced 'officials who cared nothing for the language'.[28]

For some revolutionaries, using Irish with the state was an extension of their defiant linguistic stances against the British administration. Easter Rising veteran and later Governor General Domhnall Ua Buachalla had been at the centre of language conflict at the turn of the century. In 1905, he was prosecuted for putting his name in Irish on his grocery cart and was defended in court, unsuccessfully, by none other than P.H. Pearse. When Ua Buachalla refused to pay the court fine, goods were confiscated from his shop and sold at public auction. Thirty years on in 1935, Ua Buachalla persisted with his use of the language by filling in his documentation for a military service pension in Irish.[29] He also requested to be interviewed by the Pensions Board in Irish, but, as internal notes indicate, the Irish interview was followed by an English interview, thus emptying his Irish account of all practical meaning.[30] Moreover, despite Ua Buachalla's exclusive use of the Irish form of his name (a mark of identity for which he had gone to court in the pre-independence period), his name was anglicised by officials and he is erroneously listed as 'Donal/Daniel Buckley' in the MSPC database.

Ua Buachalla's 1916 comrade Eoghan Ó Briain was also known for his insistence on speaking Irish and even had a falling out with Thomas Clarke on account of his use of Irish in Clarke's tobacconists on Amiens Street. Ó Briain's interactions with the Pensions Board illustrate that he continued to live by his 'principle' of using 'my own language whenever I enter a business house'.[31] He completed his application for a pension in Irish and requested to be examined by the Board in Irish, although only an English translation of his 1937 sworn statement is included in his file. By the end of the 1940s, he had grown increasingly frustrated with both the stoppages and reductions to his special allowance payment and also with the Board's insistence on writing to him 'as Béarla Shacsan' [in Sax-English].[32] He finally wrote to the Pensions Board bilingually to express his frustration with his mistreatment: 'ar eagla na h-eagla: ar eagla ná dtigtheá chuile focal' [just in case: in case you don't understand every word]. He continued by lamenting that: 'Time was when I was called a "hero", now I feel I am being called a "damn nuisance". One term is [as] stupid as the other'.[33] While Ó Briain only signed his name 'Eoghan Ó Briain',

24 *Sunday Independent*, 8 Apr. 1945.

25 John Walsh, *One hundred years of Irish language policy, 1922-2022* (Oxford, 2022), p. 113.

26 John Hennessy to Secretary, Dept. of Defence, 27 Sept. 1928, MSPC, DP4362 John Hennessy (Seán Ó h-Aonghusa).

27 Translation of answers to question 21, n.d., ibid.

28 *Cork Examiner*, 9 Apr. 1931. See also *Cork Examiner*, 14 Mar. 1947.

29 Application form, 4 July 1935, MSPC, MSP34REF8261 Domhnall Ua Buachalla (Donal/Daniel Buckley).

30 Summary of sworn evidence, 1 Jan. 1942, ibid.

31 Eoghan Ó Briain to Tom Clarke, n.d., NLI, MS 49,353/3/5.

32 Eoghan Ó Briain to Secretary, Dept. of Defence, 4 Sept. 1944, MSPC, MSP34REF20913 Eoghan Ó Briain (Eugene O'Brien).

33 Eoghan Ó Briain to Oificeach Scrúducan, 8 Jan. 1948, ibid.

civil servants anglicised his name as both Eugene O'Brien and Hugh O'Brien – neither version of which appears on his obituary.[34]

The insistence of Ua Buachalla and Ó Briain on making a 'nuisance' of themselves and challenging the civil service on their commitment to the language perhaps indicates a level of privilege not shared by Irish speakers in rural areas and for whom important financial compensation claims were not worth jeopardising. Moreover, as Ní Chumhaill's case above illustrates, Irish speakers had historically been denied access to the rich print culture of their native language and many were not literate in Irish. Applications from Irish-speaking areas were thus often completed in English, sometimes in imperfect English inflected by Irish turns of phrase or written with assistance from family or community members.[35] English had long been established as the dominant language of the schoolroom, the courthouse, the marketplace, and the political system. The Catholic Church, too, was suspicious of Irish-language printing due to fears it would be employed for proselytising by the Protestant churches.

The idea that Irish belonged to the private sphere, rather than the public domain, plays out in the ways in which Irish was used in the pension files in some contexts and not others. For example, Cormac Ó Cuilleanáin wrote a cover letter to the Board in Irish to which he attached a lengthy statement of activities in English.[36] Equally, the Gaeltacht-born volunteers Muiris Ó Catháin and Colm Ó Gaora wrote personal requests or friendly cover letters in Irish but reverted to English when providing more 'important' statements on military activities (that invariably needed to be read, scrutinised, and corroborated by a wider audience).[37]

There were genuine and longstanding fears among Irish speakers that they would not only be dismissed and even mocked by the state, but also misinterpreted with serious consequences. One of the most famous cases underscoring the vulnerability of Irish speakers within the dominant English-language state system was the Maamtrasna trial in 1882, when a monolingual defendant whose evidence was misunderstood was wrongfully convicted of murder and sentenced to death. The enduring anxieties regarding the potential discrimination faced by Irish speakers shines through in the pension files. Pádraig Ó Fathaigh, the Gaelic Leaguer and Fianna Fáil TD from Gort, County Galway, corresponded with the Pensions Board in Irish from the 1930s through to the 1970s but attached an English-language translation with each of his requests, ensuring thus that his choice of language had no detrimental effect.[38] When Colm Ó Gaora wrote to the Board in Irish requesting a pension form on 7 January 1932, he was clearly worried this might delay his application and sent a second request in English less than a month later.[39] Meanwhile, when Conamara volunteer Peadar Ó Máille's application was rejected, he speculated that his documents had been misinterpreted: he suggested that the officials failed to understand Tadhg Ó Cadhain was the same person as Timothy Kyne, secretary of the West Conamara Brigade, and also requested a copy of the Board's English translation of his sworn statement to confirm it was correctly interpreted and to ensure 'go bhfuaireas cothrom na Féinne' [that I was given fair treatment].[40]

If applicants from the traditionally Irish-speaking areas often wrote in English, they are also likely to be underrepresented in the Collection. Not only were these areas most affected by high rates of youth emigration in the 1920s, but many rural republicans also operated in more informal ways and perhaps had less direct engagement with military operations as required to satisfy the rigid categories and definitions outlined by the Pensions Board.[41] For example, Brigid Ní Ionáin, originally of An Rinn in County Waterford but applying from Boston, claimed 'bhíos ag deunamh obaire óglaigh' [I was doing the work of a volunteer]. She confessed, however, 'ní rabhas in aon áit i raibh troid óir ná raibh a[on] troid ann' [I was never anywhere there was a battle as there was no battle].[42] Ní Ionáin's application was unsuccessful.

Of the main 'Gaeltacht' areas established under the Gaeltacht Commission of 1926, veterans from the small Waterford Gaeltacht of 'na Déise' seem to have been more likely to file their paperwork in Irish. This might reflect influence of the local Irish college, Coláiste na Rinne, which was established in 1905 and has remained a key local resource to the present day. The nominals rolls for the Third Battalion Waterford Brigade compiled in 1935 associated a number of local revolutionaries with the Irish college, including 'captaen' [captain] Micheál Ó Cuirrín, 'céad oifigeach' [first officer] Lúghaidhe Ó Baoighill, 'congantóir' [adjutant] Micheál Ó Cionfhaolaidh, and 'oifigeach iomchuir' [transport officer] Micheál Ó Briain.[43]

It is important to note, too, that testifying in English was not an option for all applicants. For example, Máire Bean Uí Chionnaith (née Ní Ionáin), from Maoil an Choirne, An Rinn, filled in her application for a military service pension in Irish and also presented her evidence to the Pensions Board in her native language. An internal note raises questions about her competency in English by stating that when Bean Uí Chionnaith was presented with a translation of her statement, she 'said she understood it'.[44] Muiris Ó Cléirigh, who was based at Coláisde Phiaras Firtéur in the 'Fíor-Ghaeltacht' of Kerry, also

34 *Irish Press*, 29 May 1964.

35 For example, see application form, 11 Dec. 1923, MSPC, 2D64 Patrick Greany.

36 Statement of activity, 29 July 1942, MSPC, MSP34REF59839 Charles Cullinane (Cormac Ó Cuilleanáin).

37 See Muiris Ó Catháin to E. de Búrca, 26 Oct. 1936, MSPC, MSP34REF7404 Maurice Cleary (Clery); Colm Ó Gaora to Rúnaidhe, Bord an Réiteóra, 22 Aug. 1938, MSPC, MSP34REF4434 Colm Ó Gaora.

38 See MSPC, MSP34REF13953 Patrick Fahy (Pádraig Ó Fathaigh).

39 Colm Ó Gaora to Secretary, Dept. of Defence, 7 Jan. 1932 [received Jan. 1933] and 23 Jan. 1933, MSPC, MSP34REF4434 Colm Ó Gaora.

40 Peadar Ó Máille to Oscar Traynor, 6 May 1942; Peadar Ó Máille to Secretary, Office of the Referee, 29 May 1942, MSPC, MSP34REF16493 Peter O'Malley (Peadar Ó Máille).

41 On emigration see Gavin Foster, '"No 'wild geese' this time"? IRA emigration after the Irish Civil War' in *Éire-Ireland*, xlvii, no. 1& 2 (2012), pp 94-122; Síobhra Aiken, '"Sinn Féin permits … in the heels of their shoes": Cumann na mBan emigrants and transatlantic revolutionary exchange' in *Irish Historical Studies*, xliv, no. 165 (May 2020), pp 106-30.

42 Bridie Lenane to Dept. of Defence, received 27 May 1936, MSPC, MSP34REF17388 Bridie Lenane.

43 See, for example, MSPC, MSP34REF32138 Michael Curran (Micheál Ó Cuirrín, Ó Curráin, Ó Curraoin); Waterford III Brigade, 1st Southern Division, MSPC, RO/82. On the history of the Irish college, see Mícheál Ó Domhnaill, *Iolscoil na Mumhan: Coláiste na Rinne: gearr-stair* (Corcaigh, 1987). On the impact of the Irish colleges more broadly, see Máire McCafferty, '"You cannot teach the children of Ireland Irish until the teachers have got Irish themselves": na Coláistí Samhraidh agus Modhanna Múinte na Gaeilge, 1904–1922', *COMHARTaighde*, no. 8 (November 2022), (https://doi.org/10.18669/ct.2022.02) (accessed 19 February 2023).

44 Application form, 8 June 1935; Note to the Advisory Committee, 13 Mar. 1942, MSPC, MSP34REF44337 Máire Bean Uí Chionnáith (Mary Kenny, Mary Ann McKenna).

pleaded with the Board to send all correspondence in Irish: 'Ní thuigim an Béarla i mo chás sa. Tá súil agam nach bhfuilim ag cur an iomarca trioblóide ort' [I do not understand English in my case. I hope I'm not causing you too much trouble].[45] If Irish speakers who provided evidence in their first language were at risk of being misinterpreted or even undermined, those who deferred to the English-language policy also placed themselves at a potential disadvantage. Such was the catch-22 situation of Irish speakers in the new state.

One of strongest examples of the inability of the bureaucratic English-only administrative system to accommodate Irish speakers is in the practise of naming. The use of family surnames within the state system does not reflect the indigenous naming systems practised in Irish-speaking communities in which the first name is followed by a double patronym, often with the father or mother and grandparent's names.[46] The 'Green' brothers from Rann na Feirste in Donegal – who were interned as anti-Treaty republicans during the Civil War and did not, it seems, apply for military medals or pensions – were known locally as Jimí Fheilimí Dhónaill Phroinsiais and Joe Fheilimí Dhónaill Phroinsiais. The relative newness of modern surname usage is evident from the fact that they both Gaelicised their surname differently, with Séamus opting for 'Ó Grianna' while his younger brother, Seosamh, went by 'Mac Grianna'.

Not only are such traditional naming practises absent from state documents, civil servants working in the Department of Defence consistently struck out Irish versions of names on forms and replaced them with standardised (and even incorrect) English versions, as in the cases of Domhnall Ua Buachalla and Eoghan Ó Briain above. Siobháin Ní Mhódhráin from An Coireán in south-west Kerry offered 'Hannah Moran' in brackets as the used English version of her name. However, officials mistranslated her name to both 'Johanna Moran' and 'Susan Moran'.[47] Máire Bean Uí Chionnaith reappears as both 'Mrs Mary Kenny' and 'Mary Ann McKenna'.[48]

The insistence on the use of standardised names could be a particular issue for married women, as evident in the case of Bheronica Ní Riain. A member of the Keating branch of the Gaelic League in Dublin and a founding member of Cumann na mBan, Ní Riain was awarded an Ardteastas by Douglas Hyde in 1909 and was later a member of An Cumann le Béaloideas Éireann. Though she filed her application for a pension in Irish, officials routinely struck out the Irish version of the name supplied by the applicant and replaced it with Veronica Gleeson.[49] Writing to the Board on 1 June 1938, Ní Riain took issue with the Board's correspondence in English and the use of her married name despite her consistent use of her maiden name, Ní Riain. In this context, it is worth noting that married women in Irish-speaking areas often retained their maiden names, the most famous example being the Blasket Island storyteller Peig Sayers.[50] Nevertheless, the Board's response to Ní Riain was 'gur cheart duit d'ainm pósta, i.e. Bheronica Uí G[h]lasáin a chur ar an bhfuirm iarratais má rabhais pósta an uair a chuiris isteach í' [that you should put your married name, ie. Bheronica Uí Glasáin on the application form if you were married when you submitted it].[51]

Another request that went unheeded was that of Pádraig Ó Conchubhair who pleaded with the Board not to use the 'incorrect, bastardised English form' of his name.[52] Regardless of the applicant's request, the file is still listed under the main name of 'Patrick O'Connor'. Úna Bean Sheáin Uí Nualláin wrote to the Pensions Board in 1943 seeking a reissue of her service certificate as '[níl] m'ainm i gceart uirthi' [my name is incorrect on it].[53] Meanwhile, Pádraig Ua Cathaláin was requested by the Board to furnish a 'fresh specimen' of his signature duly witnessed, which, the Board stated, should be 'the English form of your name'.[54] He responded with a note with his name and address in Irish, commenting: 'sighníghim i gcomhnuidhe m'ainm mar seo' [I always sign my name like this].[55]

Efforts to anglicise Ailbhe Ó Monacháin's name show the risks of attempting to translate personal names. In 1935, Ó Monacháin received an unusual letter addressed to Mr Joseph MacSweeny – the 'nom de guerre' he had adopted as a cover during the revolutionary period. As he quipped in a response to the Board: 'I hope whoever wrote out the acknowledgement did not think that "Joseph MacSweeny" was the anglicized form of Ailbhe Ó Monacháin, I know of course, from experience, that some people can not write a Gaelic name.'[56] The practice of anglicising Gaelic names has direct implications for researchers in the present, as many revolutionaries are not listed in the online catalogue under the names by which they were most known.[57]

The prevalence of Irish in correspondence also can also fluctuate depending on an applicant's personal circumstances. Some applicants turned to Irish after their claims had been accepted and there was less risk, perhaps, that the use of Irish would cause delays. For example, Eibhlín Bean Uí Thuama was awarded a pension in 1941 and subsequently corresponded with the Board in Irish regarding more

45 Muiris Ó Cléirigh to Secretary, Dept. of Defence, 2 May 1952, MSPC, MSP34REF7404 Maurice Cleary (Clery).

46 For reflections on the Irish language in the MSPC see 'Deciphering the archives' (https://militarypensions.wordpress.com/2018/04/19/deciphering-the-archives/) (accessed 10 June 2022).

47 See MSPC, MSP34REF41310 Siobháin Ní Modháin [*sic*: Ní Mhodhráin].

48 MSPC, MSP34REF44337 Máire Bean Uí Chionnáith (Mary Kenny, Mary Ann McKenna).

49 See, for example, application for a service certificate, 25 Oct. 1935, MSPC, MSP34REF41995 Bheronica Ríain [*sic*: Ní Riain] (Veronica Ryan, Veronica Gleeson, Bheronica Uí Glasáin [*sic*: Uí Ghlasáin]).

50 Observed in Máire Ní Chinnéide's introduction of Peig's autobiography, *Peig: a scéal féin* (Baile Átha Cliath, 1936), p. 11.

51 Secretary, Pensions Branch, Dept. of Defence, to Bheronica Bean Uí Ghlasáin, 10 May 1938, MSPC, MSP34REF41995 Bheronica Ríain [*sic* Ní Riain] (Veronica Ryan, Veronica Gleeson, Bheronica Ui Glasáin [*sic*: Uí Ghlasáin]).

52 Pádraig Ó Conchubhair to Dept. of Defence, 28 Feb. 1955, MSPC, MSP34REF1745 Patrick J. O'Connor (Padhraic [*sic*: Pádraig] Ó Conchubhair).

53 Úna Bean Sheáin Uí Nualláin to Secretary, Dept. of Defence, 20 May 1943, MSPC, MSP34REF21181 Una Nolan (Bean Uí Nualláin, née Moran).

54 Request for specimen signature, 11 Jan. 1956, MSPC, MSP34REF20145 Patrick Cahalan (Pádraig Ua Cathaláin).

55 Note by Pádraig Ua Cathaláin, n.d., ibid.

56 Ailbhe Ó Monacháin to Peadar Uasal Mac Mathghamhna, Dept. of Defence, 5 Mar. 1935. MSPC, MSP34REF3926 Ailbhe Ó Monacháin (Alfred Monaghan/Monahan).

57 Original names in Irish are also misspelt which means their files are not easy to find under the most frequently used version of their names. For example, there are cases where the 'séimhiú' (which was indicated by a dot over a consonants in the Gaelic font) is omitted from names, eg. Eibhlín appears as Eiblín, Domhnall as Domnall, Micheál as Miceál and Fathaigh as Fataig. Equally, there are errors with missing and added accents and with unnecessary apostrophes: Roibeárd is rendered 'Ríobárd', Ní Riain rendered 'Ní Rían', Ó Gaora appears as O'Gaora. It should also be noted that the Military Archives website is not yet available bilingually. An apology for the delay in the production of the Irish-language site was posted on 11 November 2017. See: https://www.militaryarchives.ie/as-gaeilge (accessed 19 July 2022).

day-to-day matters such as lost and missing cheques.[58] For other applicants, the opposite was true. Máire Bean Uí Chiosóig (M. T. Keyes) was captain of the London branch of Cumann na mBan before serving as captain of the Ballyferriter branch (which camouflaged as a Gaelic League branch). Uí Chiosóig mostly wrote in English but increased her use of Irish after she requested a re-investigation of her application which was refused due to lack of evidence of 'active service', hoping 'go ng[c]abhareócfaidh muintir mo thíre liom fé mar a chabharígheas leó san' [that the people of my own country will help me just like I helped them].[59] Séamas Ó Néill (mentioned above for completing his Bureau statement in Irish) presented his use of Irish as evidence of his right to recognition: 'Táim comh Gaedhealach indiu is do bhíos ins na bliadhantaibh' [I am as Gaelic today as I was in those days].[60] Diarmuid Ó Corcordha, a native Irish speaker from west Kerry and later a Garda in Dublin, also switched from English to Irish as he grew increasingly frustrated with the delays in processing his pension application filed in 1934:

> *B'fhéidir dá mbeitheá-sa, mar atáim-se, ar leath-chois agus lúth do dhá lámh beagnach caillte agat, b'fhéidir gur mhaith leat, leis, go ndéanfaí do éileamh d'éisteacht agus ceist do phinsiúin do réidtheach go luath, ar eagla go gcaithfeá an fórsa do d'fhágaint de bharr a bheith nea-infeidhmtha i gcóir diúité, rud d'fhéadfadh a thárlachaint go tapaidh.*
> [Maybe if you were, as I am, on one leg and having almost lost the power of your two hands, maybe you would like, also, that your demand be heard and the matter of your pension be cleared soon, for fear that you would have to leave this force for being unfit for duty, something that could happen quickly.][61]

The civil servant dealing with Ó Corcordha's application requested a translation of the letter. Ó Corcordha died on 24 January 1942 before the outcome of this claim was relayed to him.

The personal and the political collide in many of these heated correspondences. The MSPC files thus offer a means through which to trace shifting attitudes towards state language policy over the course of the twentieth century. The fiftieth anniversary of the Rising was accompanied by intense debates regarding the successes and failures of the language revival since the foundation of the state, particularly as government policy moved from a focus on national sovereignty to a programme of modernisation and internationalisation.[62] The Language Freedom Movement led a campaign against compulsory Irish in schools, while the radical left-wing group Misneach staged a hunger strike in the spring of 1966 in protest against the neglect of the language and of the Irish-speaking regions.[63] This context might explain Roibeárd Ó Longphuirt's sudden refusal in September 1966 to submit his pension declaration form given that it was not issued in Irish: 'Ní féidir liom a thuisgint go bhfuil d'fhiacaibh orm fuirim P.D.I. a líonadh nuair ná cuirtear a leithéid chugham sa teanga náisiúnta. Do cheapas i gcomhnuí gur b'é an cuspóir "Éire saor agus Gaolach".' [I cannot understand why I am compelled to fill in a PDI form when it is not sent to me in the national language. I always thought that the aim was 'Ireland free and Gaelic'].[64] Meanwhile, Maireád Ní Laoghaire decided in 1968 that she wanted all future correspondence regarding her pension to be addressed to her in Irish. When she felt her request was ignored, she complained asking 'Is it possible that your clerks do not know Irish, or not sufficiently well, to be able to use it officially?'[65] Ní Laoghaire even wrote to her TD, Dick Gogan of Fianna Fáil, to convey her fear that 'current criticism of government attitude to the Irish language is correct'.[66]

By the 1970s, the requirement to pass Irish to be awarded the Leaving Certificate was abolished and the Irish-language entrance exam for civil servants removed.[67] The disappointment felt by Irish speakers due to perceived failures in language policies thus stretches across the entire MSPC. When Caitlín Bean Uí Thallamhain wrote in 1986 to report that she had not received a number of cheques, she was not satisfied by the suggestion by officials that her post must have gone missing due to the fact that she listed her address in Irish.[68] Bean Uí Thallamhain retorted that she had no issue receiving any of her other post addressed in Irish.

The small handful of revolutionaries who insisted on corresponding with the Pensions Board in Irish give an insight into the difficulties experienced by Irish speakers within the independent state from the 1920s through to the 1980s. More often than not, their linguistic challenges to the state highlight the inability of public administrations to cater for Irish speakers despite efforts to institutionalise Irish as the 'national language' of the Free State. These points of conflict also underscore the historically ambiguous relationship between Irish speakers and the state and highlight the practical challenges of incorporating a marginalised, essentially oral tradition into the official written archive. However, the visible archival acts of defiance are just one part of this story. Recuperating the histories of marginalised linguistic communities requires, as Margaret Kelleher contends, 'reading between, and below, the lines'.[69] More telling are the missing original documents in Irish, the need for translations despite language entry requirements for civil servants, and the insistence on using established naming systems over the names preferred by applicants themselves. These absences and power structures underscore the inequalities which characterise the Military Service Pensions Collection, and, by default, the writing of the history of the Irish revolution (which continues to be primarily based on established English-language source materials).

58 See, for example, Eibhlín Bean Uí Thuama to Dept. of Defence, 11 Sept. 1947, MSPC, MSP34REF54944 Eileen Twomey (Eibhlín Uí Thuama, née Eileen Hegarty).

59 Petition to the Board of Assessors, 20 May 1950; Máire Bean Uí Chiosóig to the Office of the Referee, 19 Feb. 1958, MSPC, MSP34REF35954 Máire Keyes (née Mary-Teresa Manning).

60 Séamas Ó Néill to the Referee, 4 Feb. 1943, MSPC, MSP34REF728 Seamas O'Neill [*sic*: Séamas Ó Néill].

61 Diarmuid Ó Corcordha to Éamonn de Búrca, 25 July 1937, MSPC, MSP34REF44 Diarmuid Corkery (Dermot Ó Corcordha).

62 See Gearóid Ó Tuathaigh, 'The state and the Irish language: an historical perspective' in Caoilfhionn Nic Pháidín and Seán Ó Cearnaigh (eds), *A new view of the Irish language* (Dublin, 2008), pp 26-42.

63 See Hugh Rowland, 'An choimhlint idé-eolaíochta idir misneach agus an LFM le linn chomóradh 50 bliain an Éirí Amach' in *COMHARTaighde*, no. 2 (Oct. 2016) (https://doi.org/10.18669/ct/2016.07) (accessed 19 July 2022).

64 Roibeárd Ó Longphuirt to Secretary, Dept. of Defence, on the back of letter to him of 29 Sept. 1966, MSPC, MSP34REF31293 Robert Lankford (Ríobárd O Longphuirt [*sic*: Roibeárd Ó Longphuirt], Robert Langford, Bob Langford).

65 Maireád Ní Laoghaire to Dept. of Defence, 7 Apr. 1969, MSPC, MSP34REF33412 Margaret O'Leary (Maireád Ní Laoghaire).

66 Ibid.

67 Walsh, *One hundred years of Irish language policy*, p. 5.

68 Caitlín Bean Uí Thallamhain to Dept. of Defence, 4 Nov. 1986, MSPC, MSP34REF59929 James Tallon (Seamus O'Tallamháin [*sic*: Séamus Ó Tallamhain]). Caitlín Bean Uí Thallamhain was a prolific author of children's and historical non-fiction, including a biography of Sinéad de Valera, *Sinéad: scéal Shinéad Bean de Valera* (Baile Átha Cliath, 1979).

69 Margaret Kelleher, *The Maamtrasna murders: language, life and death in nineteenth-century Ireland* (Dublin, 2018), p. xxiv.

While this essay highlights these exclusionary practises as they relate to the Irish language, the need to read into the silences and look 'between and below the lines' is essential for reconstructing the histories of the various minoritised groups represented within the MSPC, including those Irish speakers who were doubly and even triply marginalised on account of their gender and socioeconomic status.

Further reading:

V. Morley, *Cúrsaí staire: aistí ar an stair, ar staraithe, agus ar scríobh na staire* (Baile Átha Cliath, 2018).
C. Ó Comhraí, *Sa bhearna bhaoil: Gaillimh 1913-1923* (Indreabhán, 2016)
J. Walsh, *One hundred years of Irish language policy, 1922-2022* (Oxford, 2022)

Left

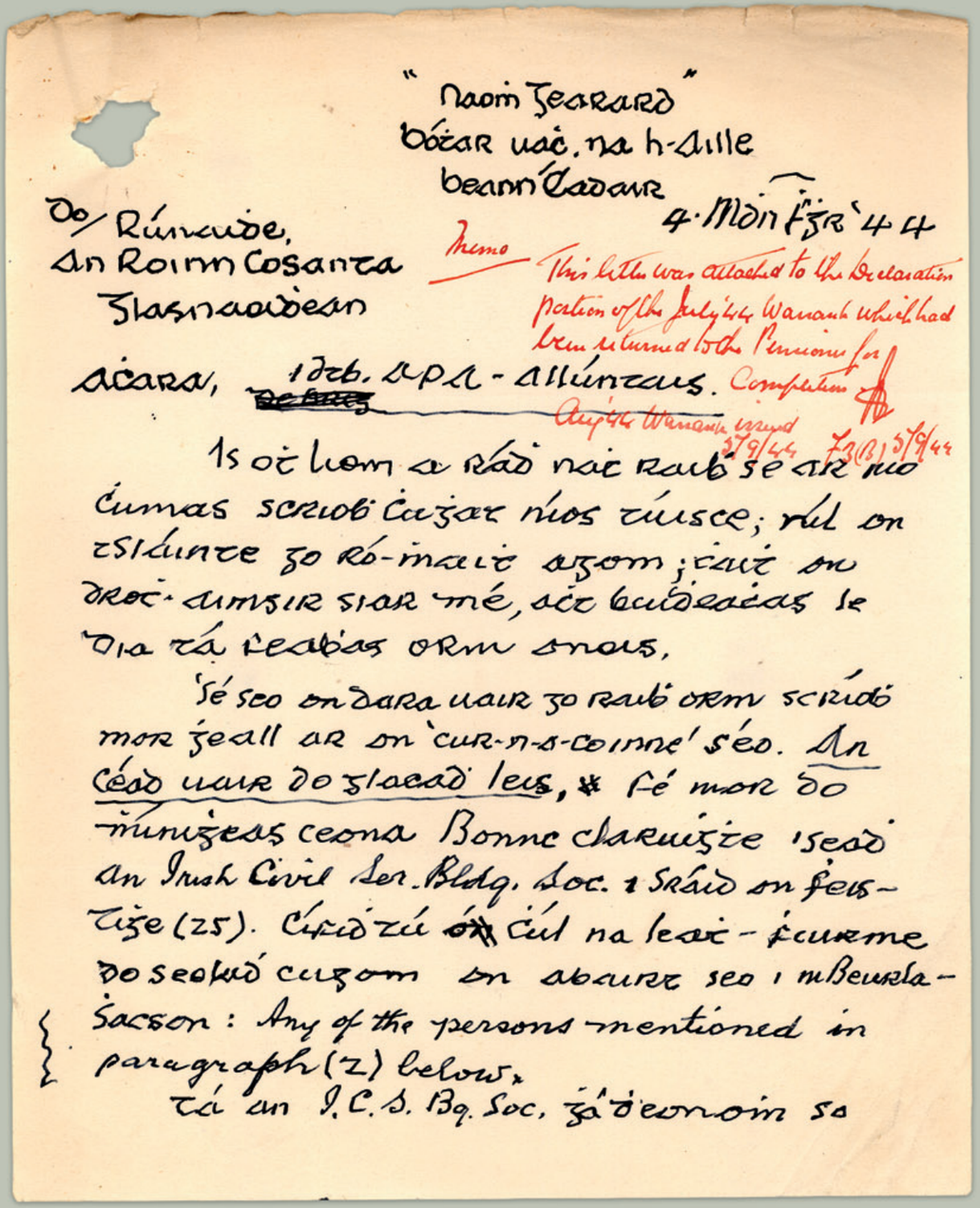
A poster promoting the Gaelic League's Seachtmhain na Gaedhilge with a provocative message.

Image courtesy of the National Library of Ireland (NLI—EPH G11).

Right

Eoghan Ó Briain expresses his anger and discontent at the continued use of 'Béarla Shacsan' [Saxon-English] by the Pensions Board while corresponding with him.

Reference:
Eoghan Ó Briain
MSP34REF20913.


"Naoin Seasaid"
Bóthar Mac. na h-Aille
Beann Éadair
4 Mean Fómhar '44

Do/ Rúnaidhe,
An Roinn Cosanta
Baile Átha Cliath

Memo This letter was attached to the Declaration portion of the July '44 Warrant which had been returned by the Pensions for Completion of Aug '44 Warrant issued 27/9/44 FZ(B) 5/9/44

Dáta, 1ú Deb. Aib. - Aibreán. 1944

Is oth liom a ráid nach raibh sé ar mo cumas scríobh Gaeilge níos túisce; níl an tsláinte go ró-maith agam; tá an aois-aimsir siar mé, ach buidheachas le Dia tá feabhas orm anois.

Sé seo an dara uair go raibh orm scríobh mor Sgeall ar an 'cur-n-a-coinne' séo. An céad uair do Sgaoil leis, * Sé mor do mhuinteas ceana Bonne Clanuighe i Seo an Irish Civil Ser. Bldg. Soc. a Sháid an Seis-tige (25). Cáid tú ~~ón~~ cúl na leasc-fcuime do seoladh cugam an abairt seo i mBeurla-Sacson: Any of the persons mentioned in paragraph (2) below.

Tá an I.C.S. Bg. Soc. gá dearnoin sa

Dan Rúnaidhe F3D

Áit bPinsean Seirbíse Mileata

T/S 1/14 Dg/7 "Cill Colum"
Sórd Colum Cille
Co Áth Cliath
11-3-1954

A Dhuine Uasail,

Tá orm éiriú as an post atá agam (múinteoir Calaidan ag Corcaigh Fairmoidis Co Átha Cliath) mí luaithnasa seo chugainn. Mar gheall ar na blianta a chaith mé i seirbís mileata, ó bunaíd na nÓglaigh go dtí 1924, níl mórán blianta seirbíse agam i gcionn múinteoireachta, agus mar sin ní bheidh pinsean mór agam. Ní mór dom, mar sin, glacadh leis an pinsean a tairgeadh dom Mí Deireadh Fómhair 1942. Ní admhaím go bhfuair mé comhrom na Féinne ón Roinn Tuarastal mo rang dom. Caithfidh mé creideamhaint do na blianta seirbíse a bí agam." Nuair is cruinn ar an Ceithre Caithfidhsí Riú" mar sin glacfaidh mé leis an méidín a tairgeadh dom, agus, ar ndóigh, an mead atá le teacht chugam ó 1934.

Is mise le meas mór

An Caithfidh Dubh Ó Monacháin

(nom de guerre, Séosamh Mac Suibhne)

uimh 3926

Recd. from Ref. 18/3

Letter from Ailbhe Ó Monacháin stating he has to leave his job teaching art and now needs to accept the pension he was originally offered in 1924. He had not accepted it then as he felt it was too low given his level of military service.

Reference:
Ailbhe Ó Monacháin
MSP34REF3926.

Right

Roibeárd Ó Longphuirt [Robert Lankford] expresses disbelief that he is required to fill out forms in English saying 'Do cheapas i gcomhnuí gur b'é an cuspóir "Éire saor agus Gaolach"'. [I always thought that the aim was 'Ireland free and Gaelic'].

Reference:
Robert Lankford
MSP34REF31293.

A Dhuine Uasail, Roinn Cosanta (F.y) Sráidse Caomhán. Baile Átha Cliath.

A Chara,

Cuir caighean leis "Seirbís Phoiblí" i nGaeilge, agus beidh sin, cortheanaí é leagadh síntiúsóir agus le "Seirbís Coimisiúin" ann leis.

Ní féidir liom a thuiscint go bhfuil dhá chaighdeán ann Fuinn N.D.I. a léiríodh nuair bhí cuireadh caighean ar leitreach ar teanga Béarla.

Do cheapas i gcomhnuí gur b'é an cuspóir "Éire saor agus Gaolach".

Ar an adhbhar sin le deis bhíthean seo tá an réalt i nGaeilge, agus ar do chabhair chí-Chaitlic i nGaeilge agus an chéad a réalt caighean sa gan difríocht.

Bhí réalt, beidh an ghrá ann — an Seirbís Phoiblí a cur caighean sa teanga ceart agus gan dom ~~teanga~~ Seirbís. Agus, nuair nei duil dom ~~to~~ Gailla d'imeacht. Le mo mheas is beannacht

Roibeárd Ó Longphuirt (C.561/34)

'Alas, how I have been let down': prison, ill-health, entitlement, and the army pensions legislation[1]

William Murphy

Introduction

This essay is based on a series of pension applications, made under the Army Pensions Acts, 1923-53. The applications relate to men and women who sought redress for an alleged loss of health which they ascribed to imprisonment. In particular it takes as its subject cases where the described ill-heath took the form of chronic illness, disease or disability (sometimes culminating in death). First, the essay will consider the matter of the legislation and ill-health consequent to imprisonment, and in so doing enter into conversation with recent work by Marie Coleman. Subsequently, it will examine cases in which the applicant, either a former prisoner or a family member claiming dependence on a deceased former prisoner, found their application rejected, at least initially. By focusing on how these veterans of the Irish revolution and their families responded to rejection, by looking at the letters which such rebuffs prompted, the essay will examine how applicants regarded and presented the relationship between imprisonment and ill-health, and how that shaped their responses. Further, it will reflect upon the language they used, including some of the rhetorical strategies they deployed. More specifically, it will ask what that might tell us about their expectations of the new elite, their former colleagues in prison.

Imprisonment, ill-health and the legislation

As Coleman's work shows, the Army Pensions Act, 1923, the first piece of legislation to provide compensation for disability, was restrictive in ways that affected former prisoners. While that Act facilitated the compensation of those who had incurred a physical wound when on active service (including when in the prison) that resulted in disability or death, and the compensation of the relatives of those who died on hunger strike in prison, it did not provide for compensation in cases of physical or mental illness.[2] This excluded claims from those suffering from ill-health flowing from the hardships of imprisonment in general and from participation in hunger strikes in particular. Though this approach was challenged, unsuccessfully, during the debates on the 1923 Bill, a series of subsequent cases exposed the manifest injustice and illogicality of the approach.[3] Coleman instances William Partridge, whose ill-health was exacerbated by his imprisonment after the 1916 Rising and who died in July 1917, and William Halpin, who became insane in Frongoch internment camps in 1916 and died in Richmond Lunatic Asylum, Grangegorman, in April 1925, having spent years in such institutions. In both cases relatives of these men failed to achieve compensation, given the terms of the 1923 Act.[4] As the Army Pensions Board noted in its recommendation in the case of Halpin on 27 March 1924: 'No award', 'not within the scope of the Act'.[5]

And there were others. In September 1924, the secretary of the Army Pensions Department informed Edmond Galvin, father of Maurice Galvin who had died at Ballykinlar camp, on 9 April 1921, of complications associated with the kidney condition nephritis, that it was 'unable to recommend an award' because the death was 'not the result of a wound or injury'.[6] More obviously emotive, and embarrassing for the authorities, was the situation of the dependants of Patrick O'Toole of Carlow. O'Toole had also died at Ballykinlar of pneumonia on 8 February 1921. On 10 April 1924, Reverend John Killian submitted an application on behalf of O'Toole's dependent niece and nephew under the 1923 Act. Patrick and Maura were five and three years of age.[7] Inquiries confirmed that O'Toole had been supporting the two children, 'belonging to his sister (deceased), whose husband (an Englishman) deserted his children'.[8] Nonetheless, the Army Pensions Branch informed Killian in September 1924 that the Board was 'unable to recommend any award' because O'Toole's death was 'not the result of any specific wound or injury'.[9] When Killian replied that he could not 'let the matter rest there' and threatened to 'bring the matter to the Dáil', he received a further letter. It informed him that 'certain amendments to the Act covering cases of death from diseases contracted while on Active Service with the Forces, are at present engaging the attention of the Government, and your claim will be brought forward for consideration if and when the proposed Amending Act becomes law'.[10]

If these refusals called into question the utility and fairness of the Act, then in other cases the fudges, half-truths, and compromises that were indulged, in order to circumvent the limits of the legislation and facilitate awards, endangered the integrity of the legislation and those who managed the associated bureaucracy. Two cases where senior figures intervened are perhaps sufficient to illustrate this. There was Richard Coleman. His mother Mary Anne was awarded a gratuity of £60 in March 1924, following an application she made the previous November. This award rested on the assertion, as attested to by Gearóid O'Sullivan, adjutant general of the National Army, that 'Richard Coleman died as an immediate result of refusing to take nourishment while detained a prisoner by the British.'[11] This was not true. Coleman died of influenza at Usk prison on 10 December 1918, and anyone who knew anything about the events of the preceding years knew this. His death, happening as it did in the days leading

1 The author gratefully acknowledges the support of the Wellcome Trust (Senior Investigator Award, grant number 103351/Z/13/Z). Patrick Furey to W.T. Cosgrave, 27 Feb. 1926, MSPC, MSP34REF15070 Patrick Furey.

2 For an example of compensation awarded under the 1923 Act, consequent to violence and injury in prison see the case of John W. Moore, MSPC, 1D327, and of compensation, awarded under the same Act, consequent to death on hunger strike see the case of Joseph Murphy, MSPC, 1D86.

3 Marie Coleman, 'Privileged injuries: defining disability among veterans of the Irish revolution (1916-1923)' in *History*, cvii, no. 377 (2022), pp 707-26.

4 For the case of William Partridge see MSPC, 1D303; for the case of William Halpin see MSPC, 1P161.

5 Recommendation of Army Pensions Board, signed by J.J. Horgan, 27 Mar. 1924, MSPC, 1P161 William Halpin.

6 Secretary, Army Pensions Branch, to Edmond Galvin, 15 Sept. 1924, MSPC, 1D40 Maurice Galvin.

7 John Killian, Statement of Claim under Army Pensions Act, 1923, 10 Apr. 1924, MSPC, 1D234 Patrick O'Toole. An incorrect date of death for O'Toole was provided in this original claim.

8 Eastern Command to Acting Adjutant General, GHQ, 13 June 1924, ibid.

9 Secretary, Army Pensions Branch, to Rev. John Killian, 18 Sept. 1924, ibid.

10 John Killian to Secretary, Army Pensions, 18 Dec. 1924; Secretary, Army Pensions Branch, to John Killian, 1 Jan. 1925, ibid.

11 Gearóid O'Sullivan to the Army Pensions Department, 9 Jan. 1924, MSPC, 1D15 Richard Coleman.

into the general election, had received enormous publicity.[12] Death from influenza would not do in March 1924 however, the Act required death to be an 'immediate result of refusing nourishment while in prison'. This ensured Coleman, already a prison martyr, became Coleman the hunger strike martyr.[13] Some months later the Army Pensions Board considered the case of Patrick Burke. He was released from prison on 31 October 1921 and died only months later, on 7 March 1922, of cardiac failure associated with tuberculosis. Despite evidence that Burke's participation in a hunger strike had contributed to his poor health and death, the Board turned down his father's claim because the Act required death to be an 'immediate result of refusing nourishment'.[14] Sometime later though, and shortly after his appointment as minster for defence, Peter Hughes intervened. His office noted that 'this is a case which he would be prepared to sympathetically consider with a view to making provision for it in the amending Bill', going on to suggest that instead 'a period inside which death must intervene could be inserted in the Section to prevent "opening the door" – say six months after release from prison'. Within a week, and despite the existing law, the Board reversed its decision and made an award.[15]

As a result of these combined problems, in 1927 the government did introduce an amending Act which expanded the remit of the schemes beyond physical wounds and death due to hunger strike. As Coleman has noted, despite this, 'physical wounds retained a privileged status' because 'those suffering from disease needed to reach a disability threshold of eighty percent to qualify for a pension'.[16] Ten years later this was addressed in a further amending Act, in which the threshold for disability associated with illness was reduced to fifty percent. This did not, however, relieve a further problem that ex-prisoners suffering from ill-health (especially a chronic illness or disease) encountered in achieving a pension. Again, as Coleman has highlighted, Hughes informed the debate on the 1927 Act: 'A wound is a clear-cut thing that everyone can see. Everyone knows where it was contracted and the day on which it was contracted, and there is a record in connection with it. It is another matter to detect when disease commenced.'[17] Consequently, the unsuccessful applications and disgruntled applicants continued to accumulate.

The representation of prison as a site of ill-health

Between the summer of 1915, when the British authorities in Ireland began to use the Defence of the Realm Act to imprison radical nationalists engaged in anti-recruitment activity, and the summer of 1924, when the government of the Irish Free State released the last of those held because of the Civil War, at least twenty thousand men and women were imprisoned or interned due to the conflicts that together constitute the Irish revolution.[18] Though the states sometimes cast their carceral net more widely than accurately, most of those held were participants, politically or militarily, in the struggles of the period. If mass imprisonment was one of the state's methods of spancelling radical individuals and their revolutionary organisations then they, in turn, sought to exploit imprisonment to further their cause. Prisoners worked to subvert their jailers' intentions by transforming prisons into sites of active resistance. Very often this activity began as, or at least was justified as, protest against their conditions and treatment inside. Soon it became an essential and integrated aspect of the wider challenge to the state and its institutions. Indeed, at the time, prisons were regarded as a key arena of conflict. Prisoners wrote of being members of the 'Army of the Interior (of British prisons)' while prison protest was characterised as 'a branch of warfare not usually taught in drill-halls but none the less necessary to our soldiers of freedom'.[19]

For the prisoners, this resistance involved endangering their health by exposing themselves to physical violence, dousing with freezing water, or periods in restraints during and in the aftermath of riot; to deprivation of exercise, toilet or diet during campaigns of disobedience; and, perhaps most famously, to starvation or force-feeding during hunger strike.[20] In the propaganda of the revolution, prisons and camps were places where martyrs were generated and not only through comparatively dramatic events and campaigns. The nationalist press consistently represented suffering and danger as intrinsic to any period in prison no matter how uneventful. This involved emphasising prisons as places where mental health broke down in the face of prolonged confinement and as sites of infection – influenza, tuberculosis or venereal disease, for example. In doing this, Irish nationalists were picking up on, and repurposing for their own ends, a persistent critique of imprisonment. Prisons had long been represented, especially by those who wished to reform them, as 'both producing and exacerbating' physical and mental illness.[21] In the case of Irish political prisoners, mindful of their status and keen to define themselves against 'ordinary' prisoners, this trope was often bound up with classist representations of the other prisoners as diseased. Altogether, this discourse ensured that the prisoner, an evocative metaphor for the nation in chains, was a cause around which sympathetic activity was organised. The support groups which emerged placed considerable emphasis on addressing the health needs of prisoners and ex-prisoners. Indeed, the stricken body of the prisoner became a central image of revolution. It was utilised, and mobilised around, again and again. When crowds of women gathered outside Mountjoy in April 1920, carrying posters that asked 'Shall The Prisoners Die?', they pressed for the release of a group of hunger strikers at a moment of severe crisis, but they were also expressing a widely held assumption

12 William Murphy, *Political imprisonment and the Irish, 1912-1921* (Oxford, 2014), pp 120-2.

13 Army Pensions Act, 1923 (https://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/1923/act/26/enacted/en/print.html) (accessed 7 Feb. 2023).

14 Secretary, Army Finance Office, to Patrick Burke, father of deceased, 21 Aug. 1924, MSPC, 1D285 Patrick Burke.

15 Secretary to the minister, Dept. of Defence, to Army Finance Officer, 28 Nov. 1924; Certificate of assessment, 5 Dec. 1924, ibid.

16 Coleman, 'Privileged injuries', p. 722.

17 As cited in ibid., pp 722-3.

18 Murphy, *Political imprisonment and the Irish*, p. 38; Seán McConville, *Irish political prisoners, 1920-1962: pilgrimage of desolation* (London, 2014), pp 212-13.

19 Pádraig Mac Murchadha to Austin Stack, 30 Aug. 1919, UCDA, Austin Stack papers, P149/330); An Irish Priest, *In Maryboro' and Mountjoy: the prison experiences and prison-breaking of an Irish Volunteer* (Dublin, 1920), p. 1.

20 For recent studies of hunger strike and force feeding see Kevin Grant, *Last weapons: hunger strikes and fasts in the British Empire, 1890-1948* (Oakland, 2019) and Ian Miller, *A history of force feeding: hunger strikes, prisons and medical ethics 1909-1974* (Abingdon, 2016).

21 Catherine Cox and Hilary Marland, *Disorder contained: mental breakdown and the modern prison in England and Ireland, 1840-1900* (Cambridge, 2022), p. 2; Robin Evans, *The fabrication of virtue: English prison architecture, 1750-1840* (Cambridge, 1982), pp 94-118, points to the importance of the fears engendered by 'gaol fever'.

that prisoners put their lives and health on the line.[22] As Maud Gonne argued in a letter to the *Irish Independent* in December 1918, 'In prison one's health is gradually weakened, one has less power of resisting illness.'[23]

It should come as no surprise then that applicants under the Army Pensions Acts took it for granted that they were on 'active service' when in prison and asserted with considerable certainty that prison had been the cause of their disease or disability. This was not only true of the applicants themselves but of those they turned to for support when, to their annoyance and bafflement, their claims were denied.

Some responded to rejection of their initial application by writing letters that incorporated a narrative which provided a comparatively detailed explanation of how their disability was linked to imprisonment. For example, when Christina Brooks received a letter, 5 July 1933, from Peadar MacMahon, secretary to the Department of Defence, informing her that the Army Pensions Board recommended the rejection of her application, on the grounds that her disabilities were not attributable to her imprisonment during the Civil War, she immediately wrote to Seán T. O'Kelly. 'There seems to be,' she insisted to the vice-president of the Executive Council, 'some grave mistake about this'. In the course of her letter she explained that:

> I never had to attend a Doctor for any illness until after my imprisonment, and I was the only woman prisoner in Mountjoy who got no mattress or Bedding or food for over a week …
> … When I was released the Doctor, Gov. and Adj. of Kilmainham Jail came home in the Ambulance with me, as I was more dead than alive, and since that time I have been suffering every year since with acute sciatica which effected the nerve of my left eyelid so much that it is now completely paralysed and won't function ...
> ... As I very seldom get a whole nights rest, and am often up the whole night with the pains, and sometimes I am quite lame.
> I am telling you this to show I got the illness through bad treatment in jail.[24]

The speed with which she wrote to O'Kelly spoke to her shock and disappointment. She went to prison. She was badly treated. Her health was affected. It remained so. How could the Army Pensions Board not see the direct connection between her current condition and her imprisonment when it was so obvious to her?

In May 1938, when the well-known Tipperary republican Maurice Crowe sought a grant under the Army Pensions Act for '(1) Bronchitis & Heart trouble (2) neuritis (3) neurasthenia', he linked these to several periods in prison.[25] This was his second such application. In 1934, the Army Pensions Board had awarded him a gratuity of £55 for unrelated damage to his left hand but nothing for the ill-health he ascribed to imprisonment.[26] On this occasion he was no more successful. He had not, the Department of Defence informed him, 'established that the disease from which you suffer is attributable to your Military service'.[27] When he responded to this further setback with a supporting statement from six IRA officers, and was again refused, he wrote to Dan Breen, former IRA comrade and Fianna Fáil TD. In this letter of 7 May 1942, Crowe explained that he had provided specific evidence of his hospitalisations when he fell ill on a prison ship, the *SS Arvonia*, and at Gormanstown camp (1922 and 1923). In doing so, he demonstrated that he had come to understand that the Army Pensions Board wanted evidence of a specific bout of illness in prison that he could link to a current disability. That he nonetheless included a long passage, which described his various experiences and sufferings in prisons, emphasised the general thinking that informed such applications: everyone knew that one paid for imprisonment with one's health and his prison record was replete with sacrifice. The passage began, 'I gave almost 4 years in various prisons in both wars, took part in 7 hunger strikes being in handcuffs in jail several times 2 jail smash ups 6 months in solitary confinement in Cork in 1919.' We will return to consider where, or rather at whom, Crowe directed his anger, but that he was furious is evident from the first sentence in which, as he recalled what prison meant for him, he briefly lost the control required to punctuate.[28]

It is perhaps Mary Luddy's application of 20 January 1954 that illustrates this point most starkly. She sought an allowance under the Army Pensions Act of 1953, consequent to the death of her brother William. He had died at the Mater Hospital in Dublin on 10 April 1922, following an operation for appendicitis. To Mary (as it had been to her mother Margaret when she made an application that failed in 1924) it was self-evident that William's death was 'due entirely to the neglect of prison authorities while confined at Canterbury Prison from Sep 1920 to June 1921 when he was removed to Curragh Prison Camp where he suffered severely through exposure from June to December 1921'.[29] Nonetheless, and not surprisingly, on 21 April 1955 Mary was informed that 'It has not been established that the death of your brother was due to disease attributable to Military Service in Óglaigh na hÉireann.'[30] For Mary, as for other applicants, this was a straightforward matter and she made this clear when she wrote to protest the Army Pensions Board's finding. 'Willie', as she called him, 'Deceased my brother was a strong healthy man in the full bloom ... when arrested Sept. 1920. When released Dec 1921 ... he was a dying man and died on the 10th April 1922 four months after his release.'[31] Cause and effect could not have been plainer.

Five months earlier, James 'Jimmy' Ryan, Luddy's senior officer in the Dublin IRA, who was arrested with him and around forty others on 19 September 1920, had written in support of Mary's claim. He had little by way of specifics to offer about Luddy's fate. Yet, he articulated in a manner that was first gothic in its detail and then sweeping in its implication, a commonly held attitude:

22 *Freeman's Journal*, 12 Apr. 1920.

23 *Irish Independent*, 11 Dec. 1918.

24 Peadar MacMahon to Christina Brooks, 5 July 1933; Christina Brooks to Seán T. O'Kelly, 7 July 1933, MSPC, MSP34REF8968 Christina Brooks. For a full discussion of Christina Brooks's application, see the essay by Susan Byrne in this book.

25 Application for a wound or disease pension or a gratuity, 31 May 1938; Statement of Maurice Crowe, 24 Oct. 1940, MSPC, MSP34REF2313 Maurice Crowe.

26 Application for a wound or disease pension or a gratuity, 21 Feb. 1933; W.P. Blunden to Finance Officer, 26 Apr.1934, ibid.

27 Dept. of Defence, to Maurice Crowe, 16 June 1941, ibid.

28 Maurice Crowe to Dan Breen, 7 May 1942, ibid.

29 Application for an allowance, 20 Jan. 1954, MSPC, 1D76 William Luddy.

30 B.A. Armstrong, Dept. of Defence, to Mary Luddy, 21 Apr. 1955, ibid.

31 Mary Luddy to Army Finance Office, received 13 May 1955, ibid.

> He [Luddy] appeared to be in very good health while in Mountjoy Jail, but after some time all the prisoners were split up into small groups and sent to English jails. I noticed in two English jails the prison authorities gave the Irish prisoners the most menial and filthiest jobs, namely the teasing of all the coconut fibre mattresses used by the prisoners. These mattresses were not fumigated as far as I know but merely damped with water, and they had to [be] teased by hand inside the locked cells, with poor ventilation.
> In one prison there were only about 52 prisoners including 12 Irish prisoners. 36 of the British prisoners suffered from V.D. and other skin diseases … So it is not hard to imagine the state of the fibre mattresses after 5 or 6 months use by such prisoners.
> I do not know if Wm Luddy was subjected to this treatment nor do I know what jail he was sent to. I do not know of what disease he died but I firmly believe whatever it was it must have begun in the English jail.[32]

Former prisoners and the families of former prisoners, it is clear, thought very differently to those tasked with managing the pensions bureaucracy when considering the relationship between imprisonment and later ill-health. The first group's thinking was characterised by experience transformed into stories. Stories that were shaped by familial and nationalist understandings of the revolution, often given urgency by current need. As the examples above illustrate, the language might differ somewhat from case to case, and from place to place, but whether the afflicted was a man or woman, whether they had been held in an Irish camp or an English prison, from the perspective of applicants to deny that their disabling illness followed from incarceration was to fly in the face of common knowledge. For the civil servants and doctors, these were primarily matters of medical science, law, proof, precedent, and accountancy. These servants of the state were not without empathy, and the system was capable of change, albeit slowly over long periods. Nonetheless, frequently, as these cases illustrate, the chasm between the civil servant's task and the applicant's expectation was all too palpable.

Reacting to rejection: expressing entitlement

Getting an influential person to listen appeared to be one way to narrow the gap. Having had an application for a pension rejected in 1924, Patrick Furey of Oranmore, County Galway, decided to try again in early 1926. His renewed bid began with a letter to W.T. Cosgrave, president of the Executive Council, on 27 February 1926. This was to be the first of ten such letters, sent to four senior politicians, over a period of six and a half years, in which Furey petitioned and harangued, accused and explained, complained to and thanked these former revolutionaries turned members of the political elite. The letters reveal how one former prisoner conceived of his entitlement to compensation for ill-health and the various rhetorical strategies he adopted in pursuing this.

First of all, it is important to note that apart from their contemporary political power, Furey's chosen correspondents all shared a key characteristic. They had been in prison with Furey having received, like him, a penal servitude sentence in the aftermath of the 1916 Rising. In each case, this fact was essential to Furey's opening gambit. With Cosgrave he began: 'Being acquainted with you in Lewis Prison after 1916 I take the liberty to address these few lines to you in hopes that you'll see justice done to a fellow prisoner.'[33] Two years later, he opened a correspondence with the minister for defence, Desmond FitzGerald, with the words: 'I take the liberty of addressing these few lines to you, I been a fellow prisoner with you in Dartmoor & Lewis prisons.'[34] And, on 27 June 1932, some months after Fianna Fáil's ascent to power, he wrote to both Éamon de Valera, president of the Executive Council, and Seán MacEntee, minister for finance. Though by then Furey had been granted a pension due to his prison-affected health, aided by FitzGerald's intervention, he still hoped for more. He told MacEntee that he had read in 'the papers that there will be a revision of the pension lists' and he wanted to 'put the facts of my case before you' because he was 'justly entitled to a fair pension'. And just as he had with their Cumann na nGaedheal predecessors, Furey began his appeal to de Valera with 'Been a fellow prisoner of yours in Dartmoor & Lewis prisons in 1916, I wish to ask you a favour' while he announced himself to MacEntee with 'Being a fellow prisoner of yours in 1916, in Dartmoor & Lewis, I hope I am not making too bold in addressing these few lines to you.'[35]

None of these politicians, it seems, would be allowed to forget. Whether Furey presented himself as seeking 'justice' or a 'favour', he did it on the basis of fellowship rooted in the shared experience of having once been a prisoner. He had been with them, in those places, and this gave him the standing to take liberties and 'make bold'. It was not just that. He expected them to understand the circumstances of his imprisonment and how that had led to his loss of health. At the end of May 1917, a campaign of concerted disobedience turned into a riot at Lewes and it was to these events, and the hardships associated with them, that Furey pointed, repeatedly. To FitzGerald he explained, 'During the strike in Lewis prison in 1917 my health got affected. I have been slowly declining year by year since.' His explanation to Cosgrave was both more detailed and more melodramatic: 'My health broke down during the strike in Lewis, and I was told by the Doctor to take exercise or I would be too late, that I would never recover from the effects. I told him I didnt expect to survive, and I gladly offered my life for the cause.'[36] In communicating to de Valera and MacEntee, reflecting perhaps his hopes for more, he enhanced the references to Lewes with descriptions of how he had maintained his protests when transferred to Portland.[37]

This correspondence shares some of the characteristics of charity letters, such as the contemporary examples sent to Edward Byrne, the archbishop of Dublin (1921-40). The majority of those may have been written by women, and the majority of these by men, but both manifest that combination of 'conformance and rebellion' described by Lindsey Earner-Byrne.[38] If Furey's standard openings and

32 Statement by James Ryan regarding William Luddy, 28 Nov. 1954, ibid.

33 Patrick Furey to W.T. Cosgrave, 27 Feb. 1926, MSPC, MSP34REF15070 Patrick Furey. Those male prisoners who had been convicted by courts martial after the Rising, and had till then been held at three places – Dartmoor, Portland, and Wormwood Scrubs – were gathered together at Lewes prison, Sussex in December of 1916.

34 Patrick Furey to Desmond FitzGerald, 20 Mar. 1928, ibid.

35 Patrick Furey to Éamon de Valera, 27 June 1932; Patrick Furey to Seán MacEntee, 27 June 1932, ibid.

36 Patrick Furey to Desmond FitzGerald, 20 Mar. 1928; Patrick Furey to W.T. Cosgrave, 27 Feb. 1926, ibid.

37 Patrick Furey to Éamon de Valera, 27 June 1932; Patrick Furey to Seán MacEntee, 27 June 1932, ibid.

38 Lindsey Earner-Byrne, *Letters of the Catholic poor: poverty in independent Ireland, 1920-1940* (Cambridge, 2017), pp 130-

general tone could appear deferential and rooted in convention – all those liberty takings and references to his interlocutors' 'valuable time' – there was an edge to his approach. So much so that the deference verged on the sarcastic at times. If Furey's verbal genuflections are sometimes genuine, then that is only the half of it. He, and others like him, did not see themselves as seeking charity. They were, instead, in pursuit of entitlement. This informed more assertive and angry passages, rooted in expectation and frustration. Furey was willing to write pathetic sentences to Cosgrave: 'I trust that … if it is at all possible for you, that you'll do your best for me for old times sake. Sorry for trespassing on your valuable time.' But he was also clear about what he conceived of as a just outcome and what he would think of Cosgrave if the president did not agree: 'Now I leave it to you to say whether I am entitled to any compensation or not, and in my opinion you have changed since I knew you, if you say I am not and condemn me to a life of misery and sickness, in which I see no prospects but to end up in the Poor House.'[39]

Furey was one of a number of former prisoners who reminded the politicians to whom they wrote that it was they who had put them where they were. As we have seen, Furey queried, by implication, whether Cosgrave had changed, forgotten where he had come from. He was blunter with FitzGerald: 'we have never let down the cause & now that my fellow prisoners are the Government & responsible for the care of its fellow creatures I hope it is not too much to ask that something should be done for me'.[40] Returning to Maurice Crowe's correspondence with Dan Breen, we find him directing his anger at Oscar Traynor, who had been a fellow prisoner at Gormanstown camp: 'The present Minister for Defence [Traynor] was O/C of the Camp at the time and came to see me in the hut on being released from Hospital. He even had to order a few of us off the hunger strike in Oct 1923 when he and others had given up the strike.' Not only did Traynor have personal knowledge of how he lost his health, Crowe implied, but Traynor had sacrificed less to gain more. Later in the same letter, Crowe was more direct:

> Now we are told when all is over and by the very people we put into these positions the usual every day stunt 'You are not a person to whom the Act applies' while they have fixed their own pensions & pensions for the opposition. I have seen day after day men who had active service being turned down, especially in Mount Bruis Coy where they had more active service in 1918-19 than the Minister for Defence who stuck to his job at the time.[41]

Christopher Upton, who survived a ninety-four day hunger strike at Cork prison during 1920, would express similar sentiments. His first disappointment came in 1924, when the Army Pensions Board rejected his application for compensation due to 'stomach trouble' arising from that hunger strike. Then, Upton could not 'understand how you turn down my claim on the grounds you state as you have medical evidence to prove my ill health is due to the above mentioned hunger strike'.[42] When, eighteen years later, his certificate of service, associated with an application for a service pension, did not meet his estimation, he returned the certificate. He was not, he insisted, concerned with the financial aspect of the issue: 'what I am concerned with is the value that is placed on my active military service in which I risked my life and sacrificed so much in the Country's cause'. And, immediately, he returned to the hunger strike:

> I wish also to recall that I was one of the principals in the Cork Hungerstrike of 1920 with the late Terence McSweeney. There is a lot of propaganda being now made of his sacrifice at that time, and I am wondering if he lived would an award like that which is now sent to me be his reward from his country too. My sacrifices and sufferings in the course of that Hungerstrike were none less than the late Terry McSweeney except that I survived it and lived to render active military service with the Forces afterwards under the members of the present administration ...[43]

There they were again, those now in power, who should have known better because they had been there, and they remembered the stories of prison suffering, at least when it suited them. Collectively, and correctly, these letter writers believed that their former colleagues could, and sometimes did, wield huge influence over the pensions system. They could alter its fundamental architecture by driving change to the law. Or, they could lobby for sympathetic interpretations of the existing law, for individuals or for groups. Because those in such positions of influence had once been political prisoners, the letter writers expected greater levels of understanding. These applicants, having not received what they believed were their entitlements, found themselves forced to lobby or plead, and in these circumstances some applicants were prepared to be more deferential than others. Almost all, it seems, resented the apparent expectation of deference, coming as it did from those who had once been like them, from those who owed their elevated position to them. The state, embodied in people they knew, the applicants thought, should defer to their service and suffering, not they to the state and elite they had created. The existence of the pensions system was an acknowledgement that such a debt existed, but for those who did not benefit, it smacked of injustice and betrayal.

Conclusion

In the years after the Irish revolution, when service was counted and suffering measured, imprisonment mattered. It mattered then because it had mattered during the revolution. An awareness that prison had been a site of conflict, and a place of death and debilitation, ensured that growing numbers of former prisoners, and their families, found that their circumstances were addressed in legislation. This essay, however, has paused to reflect upon those who did not experience this, at least not at first. The rejection, sometimes repeated, of their applications for compensation for ill-health, ill-health which they believed had begun in 'the English jail', reveals several patterns and attitudes. Former prisoners afflicted by chronic conditions, often associated these with imprisonment. Perhaps because this was a route to money but more importantly because this aligned with the story that nationalists had long told themselves about

1. For commentary on gender breakdown of charity letters see pp 6 and 253, and for a lengthy discussion of the language of such letters see pp 59-90.

39 Patrick Furey to W.T. Cosgrave, 12 June and 27 Feb. 1926, MSPC, MSP34REF15070 Patrick Furey.

40 Patrick Furey to Desmond FitzGerald, 20 Mar. 1928, ibid.

41 Maurice Crowe to Dan Breen, 7 May 1942, MSPC, MSP34REF2313 Maurice Crowe.

42 Application for wound pension or gratuity, 24 July 1924; Secretary, Army Pensions Branch, to Christopher Upton, 11 Sept. 1924; Christopher Upton to Ministry of Defence, 15 Sept. 1924, MSPC, MSP34REF34051 Christopher Upton.

43 Christopher Upton to Secretary, Dept. of Defence, 4 Sept. 1942, ibid.

the costs of imprisonment. Their puzzlement was genuine when they found that the pensions bureaucracy did not reflect these views back at them. They struggled to grasp the gap between how the effects of imprisonment had been propagandised and collectively conceived during the revolution and how they were being treated.

One of their responses was to turn to those in government, those who had earlier led them in revolution. In part they did this because they believed these men sufficiently influential to affect their claims, but they did so too because they believed these men had shared their experiences and should comprehend their claims better than those directly charged with managing the system. If there appeared to be an unbridgeable space between experience and bureaucracy, between the unwell and the healthy, then surely those they had soldiered alongside in prisons would help, whether from understanding, from fellowship, or from a sense of obligation. The prisons, after all, were places where special ties were formed, or so they had been told.[44] The relationships between the former prisoner revolutionaries, between those among them who had become frustrated applicants and those who were governors or brokers, may have been dissolved by time or may never have been as close as the applicants imagined. Nonetheless, that the applicants had once believed in the strength of those connections, that in some measure they continued to do so, ensured they took the time to write and that they did so in the registers described here. That they turned to these politicians, and that they were so angry when they found that the bonds of shared imprisonment had limits, speaks to the intimate nature of the Irish revolution.

Further reading:

Catherine Cox and Hilary Marland, *Disorder contained: mental breakdown and the modern prison in England and Ireland, 1840-1900* (Cambridge, 2022)

Kevin Grant, *Last weapons: hunger strikes and fasts in the British Empire, 1890-1948* (Oakland, 2019)

Padraic Kenney, *Dance in chains: political imprisonment in the modern world* (Oxford, 2017)

Seán McConville, *Irish political prisoners, 1848-1922: theatres of war* (London, 2003)

Ian Miller, *A history of force feeding: hunger strikes, prisons and medical ethics 1909-1974* (Abingdon, 2016)

44 Justin Dolan Stover, ‘Irish political prisoner culture, 1916-1923’ in *CrossCurrents*, lxiv, no. 1 (2014), pp 90-106.

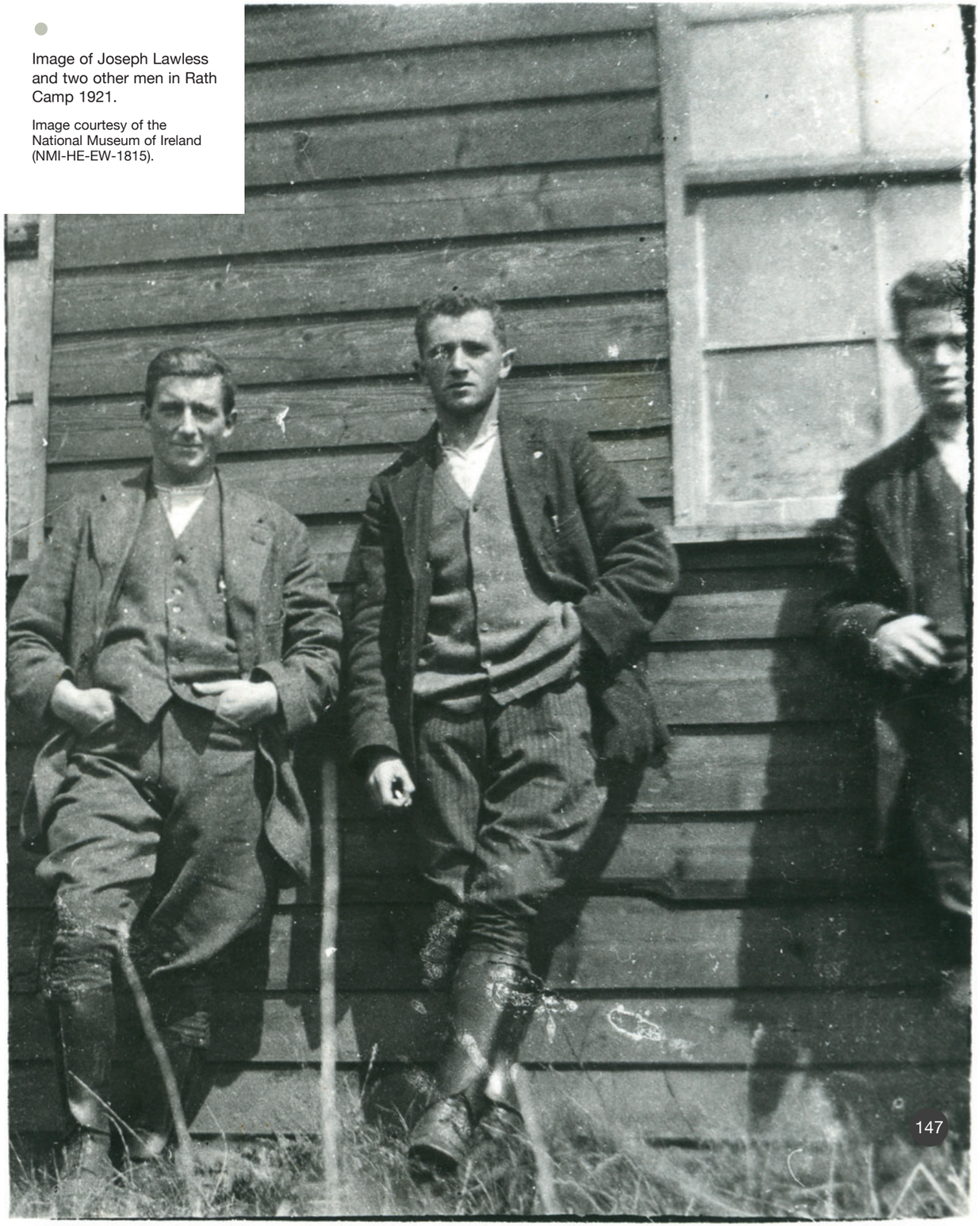


Image of Joseph Lawless and two other men in Rath Camp 1921.

Image courtesy of the National Museum of Ireland (NMI-HE-EW-1815).

The Presbytery,
Carlow.
10– 4bt – '24

A Dhuine Uasail,

I enclose form filled as fully as I am able to with information at my disposal:

The facts of the case are briefly these:

Patk. O Toole was arrested and sent to Ballykinlar in Nov. or Dec., 1920. In the previous July or Aug. he had adopted the two orphan children of his only sister who had just died in England: the father was an Englishman whom we have been unable to trace: in any case we considered his influence undesirable and for that reason principally Patk. O'Toole took the children. When he was arrested I undertook to look after them. Also I got £20, or £25, from local Sinners Benefit funds: I asked a very respectable woman Miss Kearney, 2. Brown St., Carlow, to take the children and she has done so, and treats them as her own. She made no

GUTHÁN 5149.
(TELEPHONE.)

UIMHIR THAGARTHA
(REFERENCE NO.)

Mr Horgan

ROINN COSANTA
(DEPARTMENT OF DEFENCE)

BAILE ÁTHA CLIATH.
(DUBLIN.)

28adh Mi Samhain, 1924.

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENCE FINANCE RECEIVED 29. NOV. 1924

Army Finance Officer.

The MINISTER has had before him the Pension application of Patrick Burke, Carhue, Cooraclare, in respect of the death of his son. This is a case which he would be prepared to sympathetically consider with a view to making provision for it in the amending Bill. Sub-par. 4 of Section 8 of the 1923 Act provides that the word "killed" shall include "death as an immediate result of refusing to take nourishment while detained in prison" and "death by violence while a prisoner". The MINISTER would be glad if consideration would be given to the amending of this Section, so that cases such as Burke's would be included for consideration thereunder. A period inside which death must intervene could be inserted in the Section to prevent "opening the door" - say six months after release from prison - , death being due to injuries as a result of refusing food while in prison.

MINISTRY OF DEFENCE RECEIVED 1 DEC 1924 94, MOLESWORTH STREET DUBLIN ARMY PENSIONS BOARD

Runaidhe Aire.

Left

Reverend John Killian outlines the circumstances in which Patrick O'Toole adopted his niece and nephew when his only sister died and the children's father could not be found. O'Toole died in Ballykinlar Camp of pneumonia on 8 February 1921.

Reference:
Patrick O'Toole 1D234.

A request on behalf of the minister for defence 'to sympathetically consider' the case of Patrick Burke despite the wording of the legislation.

Reference:
Patrick Burke 1D285.

Cranbeg,
Oranmore,
Feb. 27th, 1926.

To: President Cosgrave.

Sir,

Being acquainted with you in Lewis Prison after 1916 I take the liberty to address these few lines to you in hopes that you'll see justice done to a fellow prisoner. The reason I now write to you is, I am a hopeless invalid suffering from a diseased spine and other minor complaints. I applied for a pension under the pensions act. I received a letter from the Minister for Finance stating no applications would be considered except from members of the National Army, I was not fit to serve in the Army, even if I was inclined to do so. I applied for compensation from the Shaw Commission, for injuries inflicted on me, by the Black & Tans, when I was captured and taken along a lonely road, and there stripped and made lie on a pool of mud and water, and there scourged with a steel rod and the butt end of a revolver, several shots were then fired at me, from a distance. The reply from the Commission was they were sorry they could not see their way to investigate the case and my compensation was a solicitor's bill for 2 gns. I took part in the rebellion of 1916 under Captain Mellows deceased. I was sentenced to 3 yrs penal servitude with another brother, a third being on the run. I took part in the strike in Lewis Prison, as ordered, was changed to Portland, and there put on punishment, until released in the general amnesty at the point of death. If our release had been a few days later, there would be no need, for me to apply to you now for assistance, and if it isnt the will of God I would have been better off.

My health broke down during the strike in Lewis, and I was told by the Doctor to take exercise or I would be too late, that I would never recover from the effects. I told him I didnt expect to survive, and I gladly offered my life for the cause. Alas, how I have been let down. I was sent to a Dublin Hospital at the instance of the National Aid Committee - you might remember having an interview with the late Joe Howley concerning me, in 1918, I was asked by the Secretary of the National Aid, to make out a case for com-

Left

An unflinchingly forthright letter from Patrick Furey to W.T. Cosgrave regarding the suffering he claims to have endured in his military service and the long-term effect it is having on his quality of life. He appeals to Cosgrave to see ‘justice done’ in his case and even includes a stamped envelope to receive Cosgrave’s reply.

Reference:
Patrick Furey
MSP34REF15070.

Right

‘Le Martyr Irlandais’: the hunger strike of Terence MacSwiney as depicted by *Le Petit Journal*, 19 Sept. 1920.

Image courtesy of the National Library of Ireland (NLI—PD C74).


Le Petit Journal

ADMINISTRATION 61, RUE LAFAYETTE, 61 — 15 CENT. — SUPPLÉMENT ILLUSTRÉ — 15 CENT. — ABONNEMENTS

Les manuscrits ne sont pas rendus — 31me Année — Numéro 1.552

On s'abonne sans frais dans tous les bureaux de poste — DIMANCHE 19 SEPTEMBRE 1920

LE MARTYR IRLANDAIS

M. Térence Mac-Swiney, lord-maire de Cork, accusé d'intelligences avec les Sinn-Feiners, refuse, dans sa prison, toute nourriture, et se laisse mourir de faim pour servir la cause de l'indépendance de l'Irlande

To whom it may concern … : the case of Christina Brooks

Susan Byrne

While the official application forms in the MSPC provide much information about applicants' military and medical situations, it is the thousands of letters which accompany these forms that provide the detail, the evidence, for the Advisory Committee to decide how to proceed in each case. These letters are from the applicants themselves, referees, doctors, ministers, between government departments, and vary in length, tone, formality, and detail. Of course, the context in which they are written needs to be kept in mind – ultimately, the applicant is seeking financial recompense for service rendered while the state is seeking to minimise the compensation paid. Indeed, as Marie Coleman notes, the awarding of such compensation 'is often fraught with political divisions, and sometimes creates resentments as governments seek to balance fiscal responsibility with their obligation to those who have died or been injured in service to the state, often creating a sense that sacrifice has not been adequately recognized'.[1]

As with any process which involves retrospective claims, issues with memory and remembering are central to the letters and testimonies in this Collection. Some referees had problems remembering details of events which had happened over ten years before, while others claimed personal knowledge because 'they were there' and verifying where the 'truth' lay was not easy. It can be argued that for women proving their contribution was even more difficult. Most served in roles which were largely viewed as supportive rather than active, and as they did not always involve direct engagement with the enemy, were discounted as having little military or operational value. Yet without this support – provision of safe houses, transportation of arms, smuggling communications, fundraising, producing and distributing propaganda – it would have been impossible to wage a war, especially a guerrilla war, for any length of time. Nor were their activities without personal risk. During the Civil War alone, approximately six hundred women were interned for their roles in the conflict, and many went on hunger strike in support of their demands for better treatment or release, which for some resulted in lifelong health issues. Those women who submitted pension applications were convinced of their eligibility under the legislation and deservedness as combatants – they had fought alongside their male comrades and firmly believed they had earned the right to be heard with the same respect and to be rewarded at the same level.

Taking a microhistory approach to the Collection, examining a single file, reveals clues to larger issues at play while stressing the agency of the individual.[2] This essay explores letters and testimonies in one case, that of Mrs Christina Brooks (née Stafford). Her case was chosen because of the number of applications she made, and the richness of documentation contained within them. But her case was also chosen because she was a well-connected figure. As such, she was a well-informed applicant and fully confident of her entitlement under the pensions legislation. Christina Brooks's case reveals, despite her connections, and her knowledge of the system, how difficult the process was, and what a woman like Christina Brooks had to do to be recognised.

At the time of application, Mrs Brooks was forty-four years of age and married to Frederick Brooks, a widower and fellow combatant, whom she had married in June 1928, and alluding perhaps to their shared republican stance, their home was named 'St Enda's'. She had been an active member of the Central Branch of Cumann na mBan from its earliest days and was claiming for service from Easter week 1916 through to September 1923.[3] As Mrs Brooks had taken the anti-Treaty side during the Civil War, she was not eligible to apply for any pension before 1932. It appears she had been closely following legislative developments which would extend eligibility and was anxious to get her application in as soon as possible. As with most of Mrs Brooks's letters, the first letter in her file, which deals with her application for a disability pension, is very short and abrupt: 'I wrote you over a fortnight ago, but up to date have had no reply or acknowledgment of same.'[4] Under the Army Pensions Act, 1932, members of Cumann na mBan could, for the first time, apply for compensation for a wound or disease. In fact, she had applied before applications had opened and the reply to her note states 'I am desired by Mr Aiken to state that you will be afforded an opportunity of having a claim examined as soon as the new Pensions Bill becomes law'.[5] This reply indicated that Mrs Brooks had written directly to the minister, Frank Aiken, and she continued to use this channel of influence throughout her pension application process (she revealed their connection in a later letter in which she says her father Matthew Stafford, a Fianna Fáil-appointed senator, had spoken to Frank Aiken on her behalf).[6]

According to her application in February 1933, she was forty-four years of age, and her health was not good. Indeed, Dr Maurice FitzGerald certified, in the clear and precise language of a medical report, that he had treated Mrs Brooks

> towards the end of July 1923, & on several occasions after … for severe sciatica of left leg & hip. She afterwards developed Paralysis of the left upper eyelid, which renders the left eye almost useless as regards sight … At present, acting on my advice, she is attending the Richmond Hospital, where she is receiving special treatment.[7]

The description of her medical condition in this statement matched exactly 'the nature of any wound or disease' which was claimed by Mrs Brooks in her application. In her application form, Mrs Brooks gave information on how she had developed these conditions. She was arrested on 17 March 1923

1 Marie Coleman, 'Military service pensions for veterans of the Irish revolution, 1916-1923' in *War in History*, xx, no. 2 (2013), p. 201.

2 Sigurður Gylfi Magnússon and István M. Szijártó, *What is microhistory? Theory and practice* (London, 2013), p.5.

3 Application form, 28 Mar. 1935, MSPC, MSP34REF8968 Christina Brooks (née Stafford). All material in this essay is sourced from this application file unless otherwise stated.

4 Christina Brooks to Frank Aiken, 7 Nov. 1932.

5 Rúnaí Aire, Dept. of Defence, to Christina Brooks, 15 Nov. 1932.

6 Christina Brooks to Judge O'Connor, Military Pensions Board, 1 Oct. 1937.

7 Report by Dr Maurice FitzGerald, 30 Jan. 1933.

> about 10 p.m. at Arbour Hill carrying Arms on Active Service. After arrest was kept in a lorry for six hours, being brought from one Barrick to another ending at 4 a.m. at Mountjoy Jail, where I had to sleep on the floor without bed or bedding or food for a week.[8]

In the year following her release, she had treatment in the Royal Victoria Eye and Ear Hospital, and the Mater Misercordiae Hospital, where she spent '2 weeks as in patient and 2 weeks as outpatient' in June 1924. She also had 'Electric Treatment' paid for by the White Cross and was still attending the Richmond Hospital as an 'out-door Patient'.[9]

According to the medical report produced for the Board, Mrs Brooks's injuries were described as '(1) Sciatica; (2) Paralysis of left upper eyelid; (3) deafness (discovered)'. However, it found that regarding (1) there was no disability, and that (2) and (3) were not due to service. Therefore, the conclusion drawn was, 'Disability not attributable to service'. Her overall degree of disability was deemed thirty per cent but none, in the examining board's opinion, was due to military service, therefore no pension was due. They reached their decision on 27 June 1933.[10]

Mrs Brooks received notice to that effect on 5 July 1933 and she was quite shocked. She reacted immediately and on 7 July penned a letter to Seán T. O'Kelly, minister for local government and vice-president of the Executive Council. Directly, with no preamble or niceties, she stated the issue – 'there seems to be some grave mistake' – and she urged him to 'interview Mr Aiken' on her behalf '& have my case looked into'.[11] In the following three pages to O'Kelly, she further detailed the treatment she had received while on military service, which had led to her disability:

> I was the only woman prisoner in Mountjoy who got no mattress or Bedding or food for over a week and then on two occasions policemen came and brought me away to be tried by a court of 9 soldiers or officers, and when I would not give any information they told me I would be shot. (Blyths order was issued the week before I was arrested to shoot the women carrying arms)[12]

This last sentence highlights the fear women who were arrested around this time felt – unlike earlier in the revolutionary period, when it was largely believed that women would be detained but not harmed, the Public Safety Bill 1922 raised the possibility that they, like their male comrades, could indeed be shot if caught carrying firearms. She continued, 'I am telling you this to show I got the illness through bad treatment in Jail'. She described what happened when she was arrested: 'the two officers in charge of the Soldiers tore my clothes to shreds and threw me into a lorry on my face & hands & kept driving around the town from 10 p.m. to 3 a.m. when we got into Mountjoy on a bitter cold March morning'. She signed off in a less strident manner: 'Hoping I am not giving you too much trouble'.[13]

It worked. Her case, following intervention by the minister, was referred back to the Pensions Board and they did some further investigation. In the first instance, they went back to Dr FitzGerald.[14] Mrs Brooks, in her letter to Seán T. O'Kelly, claimed that Dr FitzGerald had been called in to treat her on the day of her release in 1923. Unfortunately, 'after such a lapse of time', Dr FitzGerald was unable to confirm her story and said that as far as he could remember, 'I did not treat her for the eye before the year 1929', at which time 'the Ptosis was fully established'.[15]

Over a year later, the Board, having considered Mrs Brooks's letter and enclosures, advised O'Kelly in September 1934 'that the medical evidence and all the facts in connection with the case were carefully and sympathetically considered by the Army Pensions Board who reported that Mrs Brooks was not suffering from any disability attributable to service'.[16] As requested by Seán T. O'Kelly, they had reconsidered the claim 'in light of the additional information furnished' but were 'unable to alter their original findings'.[17]

However, Mrs Brooks did not let it rest there, and following further revisions to the pension legislation, she submitted a new claim under Section 29, Army Pensions Act, 1937. She obtained further supporting evidence from fellow combatants who were interned with her. One wrote: 'To whom it concerns. Miss Crissie Stafford (now Mrs Brooks) has asked me to certify she now suffers from the effects of her period in jail'. Having provided much detail of Mrs Brooks's treatment, she concluded 'in my opinion all this suffering has been caused to her directly, as a result of her imprisonment, as prior to that she was one of the strongest members of C. na mBan & always on active service'.[18]

Mrs Brooks was anxious to contact Dr FitzGerald who had treated her in Kilmainham Jail and afterwards, and William Corri, the former military governor at Kilmainham. She wrote, nicely, to the Department of Defence requesting their addresses: 'Would you please give me the address …' and signing off again with 'Hoping I am not giving too much trouble.'[19] In this phase of the application process, she adopted a more conciliatory tone. A note from Mrs Brooks confirms that she spoke with Dr FitzGerald. He confirmed he had already given a certificate to the Board 'but that a lot of his old records were destroyed by fire when he was moving, and consequently the certificate was given from memory' and Mrs Brooks admits that '13 or 14 years is a long time to remember each individual case accurately from memory'.[20] She also succeeded in contacting Mr Corri and he corroborated many of the details provided by the other witnesses; he confirmed she had suffered from acute sciatica and noted how Dr O'Sullivan,

8 Application form for a wound pension, 8 Feb. 1933. For a further discussion of Christina Brooks's health and imprisonment, see the essay by William Murphy in this book.

9 Ibid. The Irish White Cross was established in 1921 and distributed funds raised by the American Committee for Relief in Ireland.

10 Report by the Medical Board, 27 June 1933.

11 Christina Brooks to Seán T. O'Kelly, 7 July 1933.

12 Ibid.

13 Ibid.

14 Army Pensions Board to Dr Maurice FitzGerald, 16 Sept. 1933.

15 Dr Maurice FitzGerald to F. Egan, Secretary, Army Pensions Board, 19 Sept. 1933.

16 Army Pensions Board to Rúnaí Príobháideach, Oifig an Leas-Uachtaráin, 9 Oct. 1934.

17 Ibid.

18 Statement of support by Maud McNeary, 24 June 1938.

19 Christina Brooks to Secretary, Dept. of Defence, 18 June 1938.

20 Note by Christina Brooks, n.d..

the medical officer, and 'a trained Nurse from St Brecin's Hospital', had done 'everything possible to relieve Miss Stafford of the terrible agony no doubt she was suffering'. He also remembered well 'Dr O'Sullivan being called from his bed at nights, sometimes twice or three times, in fact I, myself, was often called in the night'. He went on to say that he had recommended 'her for release on several occasions without result'. When she was finally released in July 1923, 'She was brought to her home in a Military Ambulance, and owing to her ill-health at the time of her release Dr O'Sullivan decided to travel in the ambulance with her.'[21]

Mrs Brooks's case was investigated more thoroughly by the Army Pensions Board than the last time and, 'owing to the exceptional difficulties presented by the case', they deemed it necessary to consult several medical specialists to assess her case.[22] Dr O'Doherty, ear, nose, and throat consultant, concluded that Mrs Brooks's condition 'is progressive and has not been caused by injury'. Crucially, he stated that 'it may have been accelerated by military service' and that the disability, in his opinion, was 'about 50%'.[23] The gynaecological report detailed a large tumour, the position of which 'could very well explain the pain she has been complaining of in the leg'.[24] However, the specialist's report concluded that her condition had not been 'aggravated, accelerated or excited by military service'.[25] However, this raises an important question: was Mrs Brooks informed that she had a tumour? Was she advised of a course of treatment? There is no evidence in the file to suggest she was, and this raises a further question: how many other applicants had a diagnosis which they may not have been notified of? Indeed, what was the policy of the Board in this regard?

The final medical report this time reported that Mrs Brooks's neurofibromatosis (tumour or what she understood as sciatica) was 'not aggravated, accelerated or excited by service', and her deafness was 'accelerated by service'.[26] The neurofibromatosis was assessed at one hundred per cent but not relevant to her claim as deemed not due to military service. While the specialist report had stated that there was no evidence her hearing disability was due to service, it was conceded that it had been accelerated by military service, and the level of impairment as a result was assessed at fifty-five per cent. However, on 29 February 1940, the Army Pensions Board 'were unable to recommend an award as applicant's disability due to (1) [neurofibromatosis] is not aggravated, accelerated or excited by service and her disability due to (2) [deafness] does not reach the required degree, viz 80%'.[27]

Curiously, this decision was not immediately communicated to Mrs Brooks. She wrote to the Board in May 1940 stating it had been three months since she'd heard from the Board that her 'Disability claim was still under investigation but that they hoped to be in a position to give a report on in the near future'. She was concerned her claim had 'been overlooked as I have been kept a very long time waiting'.[28] By 4 June of the same year, she was growing desperate and frustrated:

> I have not received any notice from you yet, and my claim has been before the medical Board for exactly two years. Would you please let me know if there are any further Medical Certificates or information needed but I don't think there can be as I got all the Certificates the Doctors asked for, and two years does not seem to be a reasonable time in a case like mine.[29]

Finally, on 7 June 1940, the long-awaited letter from the Army Pensions Board arrived. It was not what she was expecting and stated that 'The degree of your disablement due to disease (Otitis Media) [deafness] accelerated by your military service does not reach the minimum required for the grant of pension, viz., 80%.' It also stated that 'the further disabilities' she suffered from were not 'aggravated, accelerated or excited' by her military service.[30] Mrs Brooks was puzzled:

> I think there must be some mistake. In 1933 I applied for a Disability Pension under the 1932 Act, but was turned down. Two years ago, when the Act was amended and the percentage reduced I applied again, but your letter states I require 80% disablement for the grant of Pension. Yours sincerely.[31]

She seems to have a point. The relevant paragraph, Part V, Section 26, of the Army Pensions Act, 1937, states:

> (ii) if his degree of disablement is at the date of such re-examination less than eighty per cent. and not less than fifty per cent., there may be granted to such person a final pension of one pound per week commencing on such date (not being earlier than the date of the passing of this Act) as the Minister may determine.[32]

No reply issued and she wrote again, no preamble, no niceties: 'I wrote to you on the 11th June pointing out that my application for Disability Pension, was made under the Amended Act when the per centage for Disability was greatly reduced I have had no reply from you since. Is mise'.[33] The Department of Defence replied citing 'Part VI' of the same Act and stated that it

> provides for the award of pension in respect of disease aggravated, accelerated or excited by Military Service where the degree of disablement due to such disease is not less than 80%. As, however, the degree of your disablement due to disease accelerated by your Military

21 Statement by W. Corri, 28 June 1938.
22 Secretary, Army Pensions Board, to Secretary, Dept. of Finance, 24 Apr. 1940.
23 Medical report by E. O'Doherty, 7 Dec. 1939.
24 Report by Seamus O'Kelly, 24 Apr. 1939.
25 Report by Harry Lee Parker, 13 June 1939.
26 Report by the Army Pensions Board, 29 Feb. 1940.
27 Ibid.
28 Christina Brooks to Secretary, Dept. of Defence, 14 May 1940.
29 Christina Brooks to Secretary, Dept. of Defence, 4 June 1940.
30 Army Pensions Board to Christina Brooks, 7 June 1940.
31 Christina Brooks to Secretary, Dept. of Defence, 11 June 1940.
32 Part V, Section 26, Army Pensions Act, 1937.
33 Christina Brooks to Secretary, Dept. of Defence, 26 June 1940.

> Service was found by the Army Pensions Board to be less than 80%, no award could be made to you.[34]

However, Part VI of the Act deals with the assessment of degree of disablement and not the percentage of disability. As above, that is dealt with in section V. This suggests two possibilities: the person writing the reply was using the wrong section, or it was a typo – they used VI instead of V. Either way, it seems what they say is incorrect and Mrs Brooks, with an assessment of fifty per cent disablement, may have been entitled to a pension. Unfortunately, it is likely the word 'may' was the issue. The letter from the Department of Defence goes on to say that the minister 'has fully reviewed the findings in the case but much regrets he can see no reason for a departure from the decision reached'.[35]

However, Mrs Brooks had also applied for a service pension under the Military Service Pensions Act, 1934, and her application was received on 29 March 1935. She was claiming for service in Easter week, the War of Independence, and the Civil War.[36] The twenty references attached to this application outlined her military credentials with many praising her zeal and enthusiasm. Roisin de Rebalta (née O'Moore) described how she and Mrs Brooks carried 'arms & ammunition which was buried by the men near the Thatch (Puckstown side) when they were escaping'. She also remembered another occasion when Mrs Brooks carried 'ammunition with me from our house in St Columbas Rd. to Mrs O'Berns, 29 St Patrics Rd. Drumcondra & she was always ready to give help when required'.[37]

Another reference speaks to her work with the Irish Republican Prisoners' Dependents' Fund from 1917-23. 'Mrs Brooks was an untiring and unceasing worker for the Fund.' While this reference is general in places – 'I feel that my words are all too poor to express my admiration for her and the other girls who, in face of many real dangers, never failed in carrying out the du[ties?] entrusted to them' – it specifically notes that 'Mrs Brooks still bears the marks of her imprisonment, which speak for the abominable treatment she received and the suffering she experienced then and since.'[38] Mairéad Ní Ceallaigh also wrote of Mrs Brooks's health and said that 'indeed I am quite convinced that her present pitiful state of health is due directly to her activities & her long incarcerations in the different jails'.[39]

Other references echoed that of Eilís Ní Conaill who described Mrs Brooks as a 'very energetic worker and most reliable' member of Cumann na mBan from 1916 until her arrest in 1923.[40] Florence Murray was even more effusive in her praise: 'I have known her for a great many years as one of the most active, courageous and zealous workers in the cause. As a matter of fact, her enthusiasm was an incentive to others to try to emulate her.'[41] The reference from Kathleen Clarke was short but confirmed that she was a member of Cumann na mBan from 1914 to 1923 and 'always was active & reliable she carried out all orders in an admirable manner'.[42]

References from male comrades concentrated specifically on military actions. Leo Brooks (now her stepson), wrote of her carrying messages and carrying ammunition, while John Stafford (her brother) stated that 'she was actively engaged (and was always available) in assisting the I.R.A. in carrying on the war for the independence of our country'.[43]

The Advisory Committee interviewed Margaret Kennedy, commandant Dublin city Cumann na mBan, to identify Mrs Brooks's exact involvement during Easter week and Mrs Brooks's hearing difficulties were consistently mentioned as the reason for her limited involvement in military actions. This interview is the most conversational document in the file and allows the reader to eavesdrop on the to-and-fro of the interview. When asked if she had any evidence that Mrs Brooks was 'actually mixed up in any fighting', Miss Kennedy said, 'No. She was too deaf. We could not chance her, she was kept more on collections. She spent a lot of time in that way. We did not give her dispatches or anything else because we could not.' However, Miss Kennedy conceded, 'She was a great worker she may not have any terribly alarming stunts but she worked all the way through.'[44] Most testimony and references were understated, emphasising Mrs Brooks's reliability, energy, and enthusiasm rather than highlighting, or indeed considering, the transportation of arms and mobilisation of men at critical times as 'alarming stunts'. In that context, it is difficult to interpret Miss Kennedy's summation: is it faint praise or is she being complimentary?

In May 1937, a frustrated Mrs Brooks wrote to the minister for defence saying that it was 'now eleven months since I was called before the Military Service Pensions Board. I think I am entitled to ask what is the cause of the long delay over my claim.' She claimed that those who had been called at the same time had, 'with one exception, received their Certificates months ago'. She signed off, 'Surely it has not taken 11 months to verify my claim.'[45] In reply, the minister's secretary wrote, 'I am to say that the Minister [Frank Aiken] is asking the Referee to look into the matter with a view to expediting his report on your claim'.[46]

More frustrated still, Mrs Brooks wrote to Judge O'Connor, Military Service Pensions Board, on 1 October 1937, that her father had 'asked Mr Aiken about the delay early in the summer & he told him there was some mix up in my Disability Claim & Military Pension Claim'. She went on angrily: 'There can be no mix up in that matter as I was done a deliberate injustice, and since my release from jail am going about lame, one eye completely closed, and very deaf, but I do not desire my case to be re-opened, as I was notified my disability was not due to service and made feel I was a fake.' She then asked if there was any more evidence required in connection with her claim, would Judge O'Connor

34 Dept. of Defence to Christina Brooks, 27 June 1940.

35 Ibid.

36 Application form, 28 Mar. 1935.

37 Reference by Roisin de Rebalta, 18 Feb. 1936.

38 Reference by M. [Guikean?], 20 May 1936.

39 Reference by Mairéad Ní Ceallaigh, 16 June 1936.

40 Reference by Eilís Ní Conaill, 15 June 1936.

41 Reference by Florence Murray, 15 June 1936.

42 Reference by Kathleen Clarke, 16 June 1936.

43 Reference by Leo Brooks, 16 June 1936, and John Stafford, 13 June 1936.

44 Evidence by Margaret Kennedy before the Advisory Committee, 24 Sept. 1936.

45 Christina Brooks to the Minster for Defence, 9 May 1937.

46 Secretary, Minister for Defence, to Christina Brooks, 13 May 1937.

please let her know as '15 months is not a reasonable time'.[47] However, she received no reply and wrote again: 'It is now fifteen days since I wrote to you. At the very least I expected the Courtesy of a reply from you before this.' She signed off, with no salutation, 'I now enclose a stamped, addressed envelope.'[48] Her annoyance and utter frustration jump off the page!

The decision finally issued on 10 November 1937 – Mrs Brooks was to receive 4 369/500 years at Grade E.[49] She was not happy and composed a comprehensive letter which included details which had not been considered previously along with further references. Further information on her activities during Easter week – that she had lost her job because of these activities, and specifics relating to her ongoing commitment to the cause – were given. She signed off, 'I don't think I am getting a fair deal.'[50] Her appeal was successful and on 18 June 1938, it was ruled that 'Consequent upon further investigation by the Referee and Advisory Committee the Referee increased the period of appropriate pensionable service allowed from 4 369/500 years Rank E/E to 5 43/1000 years Rank E/E.'[51] This amounted to a rate of £25 4*s*. 4*d*. per year.[52] Mrs Brooks's battle with the Pensions Board was at an end and she collected her pension every month thereafter until her death on 27 April 1950.

Mrs Brooks, in common with many other applicants, had spent years fighting for what she considered her due, a 'fair deal'. She had been active right through the revolutionary period and had, in her view and that of many of her referees, suffered a serious deterioration in her health because of imprisonment during the Civil War. Proving her case was not simple; she had to gather her evidence, find her referees, and present it all to the Board. When applying for both the disability pension and the military pension, she was met with cold officiousness. The only trace of the people behind the official documents and their interactions is in the handwritten comments on the documents in the file, or the notes between offices, which Mrs Brooks would not have seen. In response, her correspondence was always direct, often blunt to the point of rudeness, and imbued with a sense of rationalised entitlement. She was frustrated that her contribution and suffering was not readily acknowledged by the Pensions Board, and while she was awarded a military pension, she felt she was 'made feel I was a fake' by the Disability Pensions Board.[53]

Owing to the large number of applications for pensions, personal interactions were limited. The only face-to-face interaction Mrs Brooks had during the whole process was when she gave her sworn statement to the Advisory Committee, an experience she appeared to find quite intimidating, very much in contrast to her attitude in her written communication. She could not properly hear some of the questions and rather than admit it, she gave inaccurate answers which she subsequently had to correct.

47 Christina Brooks to Judge O'Connor, Military Pensions Board, 1 Oct. 1937.

48 Ibid., 15 Oct. 1937.

49 Office of the Referee to Christina Brooks, 10 Nov. 1937.

50 Christina Brooks to Office of the Referee, 30 Nov. 1937.

51 Secretary to the Referee to Secretary, Dept. of Defence, 18 June 1938.

52 M.J. Beary, Dept. of Defence, to Secretary, Dept. of Finance, 26 May 1938.

53 Christina Brooks to Judge O'Connor, Military Pensions Board, 1 Oct. 1937.

This essay has traced one woman's application experience, one which was for Mrs Brooks ultimately successful. And yet, many of her comrades who gave similar service, failed to prove their case. So, what aspect of her application made the difference? Was it her continuous service from 1916 to 1923, her imprisonment and resulting ill-health? Or was it her influential social network, her connections in high places? Possibly it was all of these, and a comparative study of successful and unsuccessful applications could tease out these strands and provide further insight into this complex decision-making process and the many factors which influenced it.

Further reading:

Síobhra Aiken, *Spiritual wounds: trauma, testimony and the Irish Civil War* (Newbridge, 2022)

Linda Connolly (ed.), *Women and the Irish revolution: feminism, activism, violence* (Newbridge, 2020)

Lindsey Earner Byrne, *Letters of the Catholic poor: poverty in independent Ireland, 1920-1940* (Cambridge, 2017)

Diarmaid Ferriter and Susannah Riordan (eds.), *Years of turbulence: the Irish revolution and its aftermath: in honour of Michael Laffan* (Dublin, 2015)

Baymount
95 Cloudlay Rd
Dublin

16/6/36

This is to certify Mrs Brooks (Maisie Stafford) was a member of Central Branch Cumann na mBan from 1914 to 1923. She was out in the Rising of Easter 1916. and always was active + reliable she carried out all orders in an admirable manner,

I was President of Central Branch + a member of the Executive at the period

Kathleen Clarke

St. Patricks.
DISPENSARY,
IRISHTOWN,
RINGSEND,
DUBLIN.

28th June, 1938.

This is to certify that Mrs. C. Brooks (nee Stafford) St. Enda's, Bantry Road, Drumcondra, was one of a number of prisoners transferred from the North Dublin Union Internment Camp to my custody in Kilmainham Jail in 1923.

Owing to ill-health she was conveyed from the North Dublin Union in a Military Ambulance and handed over to me on a stretcher. The Prison Medical Officer, Dr. O'Sullivan, examined her and found her to be suffering from acute Sciatica. He ordered a trained Nurse from St. Brecin's Hospital, and with her assistance they did everything possible to relieve Miss Stafford of the terrible agony no doubt she was suffering. I remember well Dr. O'Sullivan being called from his bed at nights, sometimes twice or three times, in fact I, myself, was often called in the night. The only treatment that Dr. O'Sullivan could give her was injections of Morphia. I recommended her for release on several occasions without result.

At last on the advice of Dr. O'Sullivan, the Adjt. General ordered her release in July 1923. She was brought to her home in a Military Ambulance, and owing to her ill-health at the time of her release Dr. O'Sullivan decided to travel in the ambulance with her.

W. Corri. Comdt.
formerly Military Governor
Kilmainham Jail.

Left

Kathleen Clarke certifying Christina Brooks's military service with the Central Branch of Cumann na mBan.

Reference:
Christina Brooks
MSP34REF8968.

Letter from William Corri, former Governor of Kilmainham Gaol, verifying the extent of Brooks's injury and the 'terrible agony' she suffered while imprisoned.

Reference:
Christina Brooks
MSP34REF8968.

St Endas
Bantry Rd
Drumcondra
Dublin
7th July '33

S.T. O'Kelly Esq.,
Minister for Local Gov.,
38 Anglesea Rd

Re Disability Pension

Dear Sir,

I was called up for Medical examination last Monday week at St Bricins Hospital & rec'd the enclosed reply yesterday, stating my disability was not attributable to service

There seems to be some grave mistake about this, so I would be very grateful if you would interview Mr Aiken & have my case looked into.

I never had to attend a Doctor for any illness until after my imprisonment, and I was the only woman prisoner in Mountjoy who got no mattress or Bedding or food for over a week and then on two occasions policemen came and brought me away to be tried by a court of 9 soldiers or officers, and when I would not give any information they told me I would be shot. (Blyths order was issued the week before I was arrested to shoot the women carrying arms)

When I was released the Doctor, Gov. and Adjt of Kilmainham Jail came home in the Ambulance with me, as I was more dead than alive, and since that time I have been suffering every year since with acute Sciatica which effected the nerve

of my left eyelid so much that it is now completely paralized and won't function.

Dr Fitzgerald was called in to treat me the day I was released and I have been attending him for the Sciatica up to 2 months ago, when on his advice I have since been attending Dr Purser Nerve Specialist, Richmond + Hardwicke Hospital. Dr Purser told me a few weeks ago, that I will never be much better, as I very seldom get a whole nights rest and am often up the whole night with the pains, and sometimes I am quite lame.

I am telling you this to show I got the illness through bad treatment in Jail. The night I was arrested in Arbour Hill the two officers in charge of the Soldiers tore my clothes to shreads and threw me into a lorry on my face & hands & kept driving around the town from 10 P.M to 3 a.m when we got into Mountjoy on a bitter cold march morning.

I enclose a couple of Cuttings which I got a loan of and also rough copies of the Application I sent in which if it is not too much trouble I would be glad if you return to me. Hoping I am not giving you too much trouble

Christina Brooks
(nee Stafford)

Left

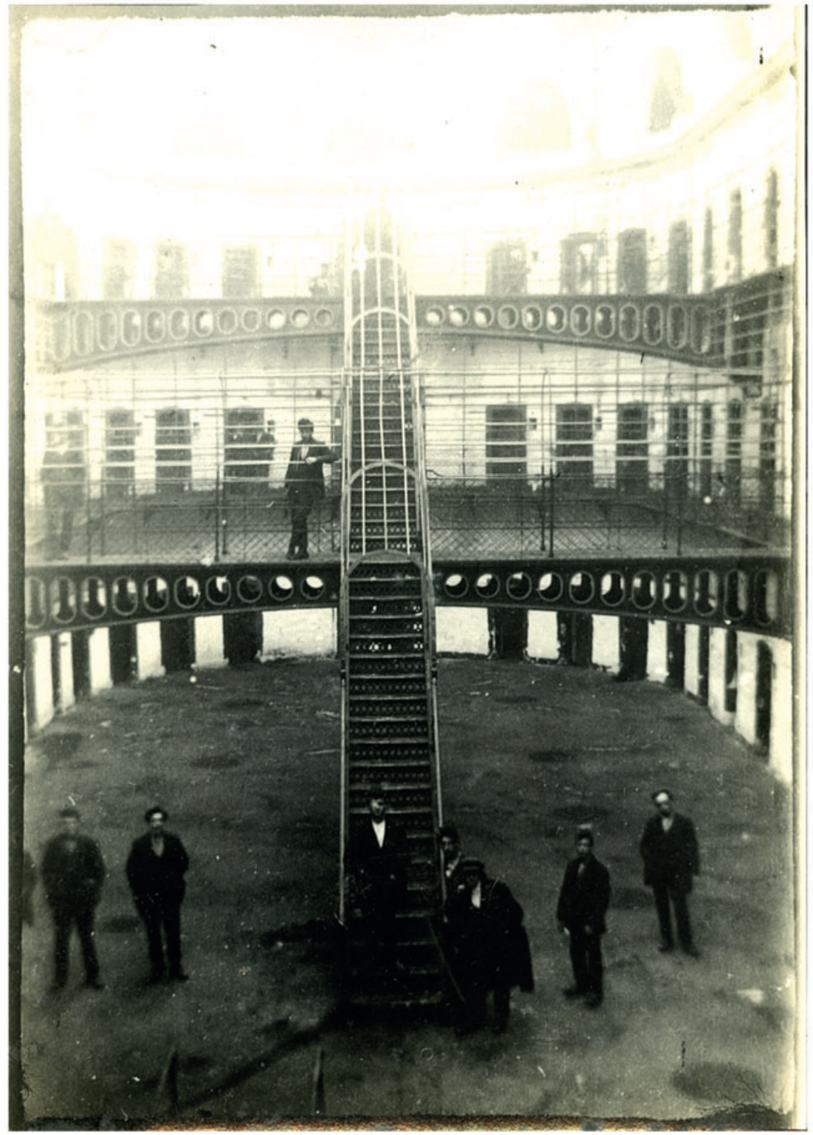
In shock that her claim for a Disability Pension has been refused, Christina Brooks writes to Seán T. O'Kelly that 'there seems to be some grave mistake'. Brooks describes her experience in prison and how her poor treatment caused her health problems defying the Board's ruling that her disability 'was not attributable to service'.

Reference:
Christina Brooks
MSP34REF8968.

Right

Image of Kilmainham jail where Christina Brooks was brought by ambulance after spending time in Mountjoy and the North Dublin Union.

Image courtesy of the Office of Public Works (Kilmainham 17 - 1921).



Welfare, widowhood, and the state: an exploration of the dependant's allowances in the Military Service Pensions Collection

Fionnuala Walsh

George Geoghegan, a boilermaker, was killed during the Easter Rising while serving with the Irish Citizen Army. He left a wife, Margaret, and three young children behind. The family had previously suffered the loss of at least three children in infancy or early childhood.[1] Although the family received support from the National Aid Association and the Irish White Cross, in 1923 Margaret's family was living in 'very poor circumstances' in one room in a tenement house and she was working as a char woman when work was available.[2] Under the Army Pensions Act, she received a pension in 1924 for the duration of her widowhood, and her children received support until they turned twenty-one.[3] However, she fought for several years to have the pension backdated to 1922, to give her equity with 'all the 1916 women' who 'have been paid except me'.[4] In the end Margaret did not cost the state very much: she died in 1932 aged forty-eight and as noted in a similar case: 'her Pension died with her'.[5] There are many more records of women similar to Margaret in the Military Service Pensions Collection, and many more details of intimate lives that can be uncovered.

The Military Service Pensions Collection offers an unparalleled insight into the social history of Ireland in the decades following the Irish revolution. Drawing on the D series which consists of dependants' allowances or gratuities for men killed on active service, this essay uses the pension applications to explore poverty, welfare, and dependence in the first decades of the Free State. It highlights the value of the MSPC for understanding how families managed in the aftermath of a traumatic loss, what it meant for the material survival of the household, what organisations stepped in to provide support before the pensions became available, and the impact of the allowance on the family's wellbeing. This essay offers some comparative analysis between the widows' pensions provided by the British government for military widows, and those provided under the Army Pensions Acts connected to the Irish revolution, and suggests avenues for further research.

The Army Pensions Act of 1923 provided a grant of allowances and gratuities to the widows, children, and other dependants of members of the Irish Volunteers, Irish Citizen Army, or the National Army killed in the course of duty. Family members had to prove they were dependent on the deceased and provide information on their economic circumstances. The allowance amount was calculated from the level of dependency and the family's living situation. Investigations were carried out by police and social welfare authorities, resulting in substantial files of evidence for each case and providing a significant source for historians interested in the social history of early twentieth-century Ireland. It is helpful to examine this material within the context of the unprecedented system of welfare provision established for soldiers' families during the First World War in the United Kingdom. In the United Kingdom, the wives and children of all enlisted men received allowances, while other relatives could claim based on pre-war dependency.[6] By November 1918 the British government was providing separation allowances to 3,013,800 families in the United Kingdom.[7] In common with the Army Pensions Act in the Free State, money was provided for each child of the marriage. The dependants of men killed also received pensions although this was less than the value of the separation allowance. In 1918 a war widow in Ireland would have received thirteen shillings and nine pence per week for herself and five shillings per week for the eldest child and smaller amounts for each subsequent child.[8] For many impoverished families the separation allowances and widows' pensions represented a noticeable increase in household income. It could take some time for the claims to the allowances to be processed, however.

After the outbreak of war in 1914, charities initially stepped in to provide welfare. The Soldiers' and Sailors' Families' Association was established in 1885 in the United Kingdom to provide support for soldiers' families. From 1914 to 1916 the organisation also administered the separation allowances on behalf of the War Office. Paul Huddie's work on the Dublin branch of the SSFA in 1914 highlights the significant increase in workload for the organisation after the outbreak of war. By December 1914 there were over 8,000 live cases on the books of the organisation. Like the Ministry of Pensions in the 1920s, the SSFA undertook to assess families to ascertain their level of dependency and the veracity of their claim for support, and to issue advances to women while they waited for their separation allowances to be processed.[9] Pensions for the widows of soldiers were also initially administered by charitable bodies, including the SSFA, the Royal Patriotic Corporation, and the Soldiers' and Sailors' Help Society. From 1916 the Naval and War Pensions Act brought this work under government responsibilities.

In the case of the families of men killed in the Easter Rising or War of Independence, voluntary organisations also provided the initial essential support. The Irish National Aid and Volunteer Dependents' Fund was established in August 1916, following the amalgamation of two organisations: the Irish Volunteer Dependents' Fund and the Irish National Aid Association. It aimed to offer financial support to the widows and families of those executed or killed in the Easter Rising and the families of those imprisoned or interned. By the end of 1916 the committee was paying out an average of £800 a week, mostly to

1 1911 census return, Geoghegan family, Dominick Street, Dublin (http://www.census.nationalarchives.ie/pages/1911/Dublin/Rotunda/Dominick_Street__Lower/59471/) (accessed 3 Feb. 2023).

2 Col. Michael Costello to Adjutant General, 23 Feb. 1924; Report by Sergt Thomas J. O'Neill, Store St. Station, 16 Mar. 1924, MSPC, 1D43 George Geoghegan.

3 Recommendation of Army Pensions Board, 14 Apr. 1924, ibid.

4 Margaret Geoghegan to Army Finance Office, 19 May1925, ibid.

5 Copy of death certificate of Margaret Geoghegan, 2 Jan. 1933, ibid; Michael McCormack to Dept. of Defence, 23 July 1953, MSPC, 1D66 James McCormack.

6 Susan Grayzel, 'Men and women at home' in Jay Winter (ed.), *Cambridge history of the First World War, vol. iii, civil society* (Cambridge, 2014), pp 107-8.

7 War Office, S*tatistics of the military effort of the British Empire during the Great War 1914-1920* (London, 1922), p. 570.

8 Fionnuala Walsh, *Irish Women and the Great War* (Cambridge, 2020), p. 95.

9 Paul Huddie, 'The Soldiers' and Sailors' Families Association and the separation women of Dublin in 1914' in *Dublin Historical Record*, lxxi, 2 (2018), pp 186-92. The only surviving records for the Dublin division cover the period October 1905 to November 1914.

Dublin families.[10] The Irish White Cross was another important source of financial support for widows. Intended to provide welfare for those suffering from distress during the War of Independence, the Irish White Cross was established in late 1920. The funding came from the American Committee for Relief in Ireland, founded in New York in 1920.[11] Weekly allowances were provided to the dependants of those killed in the conflict. £150,000 was set aside as a 'Children's Fund' for those whose parents were killed. The intent was to 'provide for the education and upbringing of these orphans, in a manner that shall be, at least, not inferior to that in which they would have been brought up had their fathers been left to them'.[12] Many of the women who received pensions in the 1920s had received funds from both the Irish White Cross and the INA&VDF. For example, Anne McCormack received £500 from the National Aid Association after her husband was killed serving with the Irish Citizen Army in Easter 1916 and she later received £39 from the White Cross.[13] However, Anne was nonetheless reported to be in poor circumstances when applying for a pension in 1924. She was granted £90 per annum from 1924 together with £24 per annum for each of her three children until they reached adulthood. The family remained in a difficult financial condition nonetheless: in 1928 Anne wrote to the Pensions Board stating that she was in 'debt and trouble as a result of my illness, and my affairs are in an upset way financially'.[14]

War widows' pensions from the British government came with certain conditions and a level of surveillance. They could be withdrawn from women whose behaviour was deemed unworthy of the pension, for example, if they were accused of infidelity, child neglect, prostitution, or found guilty of other offences. Allegations of immoral behaviour were investigated by the Ministry of Pensions, even if they originated from a spiteful neighbour. In Northern Ireland, the Royal Ulster Constabulary were tasked with bringing to the attention of the Ministry of Pensions any cases they had observed of 'serious or persistent misconduct' by soldiers' widows.[15] Angela Smith's important work on war widows in Britain reveals the scheme was based on a 'middle-class expectation of a sober, discreet, grieving widow who would care for the children of the fallen hero'.[16] Ideas of the deserving and undeserving poor were exploited by a government that was reluctant to spend more money than required. The allowances or pensions were in recognition of their husband's patriotic sacrifice, rather than an entitlement due to the women on their own merit. This was in common with the criteria applied to other contemporary schemes. The gratuities provided to the widows of deceased Royal Irish Constabulary members were also contingent on the moral character of the widow and were liable to be reduced or cut entirely if the widow was known to be 'intemperate … or to have borne an indifferent or bad character'.[17] Such stringent

10 Walsh, *Irish women and the Great War*, p. 182.

11 *Report of the Irish White Cross to 31 August 1922* (Dublin, 1922), pp 38-9.

12 Ibid., p.72.

13 Application form, 1 Dec. 1923, MSPC, 1D66 James McCormack.

14 Anne McCormack to Ministry of Pensions, 1 Mar. 1928, ibid.

15 Secretary of State to Chief Constable, RUC, 1925, PRONI, MIC 523/24.

16 Angela Smith, 'Discourses of morality and truth in social welfare: the surveillance of British widows of the First World War' in *Social Semiotics*, xx, no. 5 (2010), p. 528.

17 Papers relating to pensions for widows of ex-Royal Irish Constabulary, 1922, PRONI, D989/B/2/4A.

conditions do not appear to have applied to the women in receipt of the MSPC allowances. It would be interesting to explore this further, however, and to assess the extent of cases where the allowances for children were paid to a trustee rather than to the mother.

Catherine Whelan appears to be an unusual example of a woman whose pension was denied, at least partly on grounds of misconduct. For most widows, it was usually uncomplicated to prove that they had been dependent on their husband at the time of his death, the male breadwinner being the traditional arrangement of families at the time. This was not the case for Catherine. Her husband Nicholas died in 1922 serving with the National Army. Catherine and Nicholas had married in 1915, they had no children. She worked as a housekeeper several days a week and Nicholas had been a postman before joining the army. She was described as only 'partially dependent' on him before his death – claiming he gave her £1 from his weekly wage. Perhaps most importantly, they did not reside together. More damning information was contained in a report dated April 1925 arising from allegations by a Miss Buckley who worked for St Patrick's Guild. She alleged that Catherine was a bigamist, having been also married to or at least lived with a naval officer during Nicholas Whelan's military service in the Great War. A child was born of this union, a daughter. It was further alleged that Catherine had also lived with a solicitor for a time and 'ran a house of ill repute in the Pembroke District' of Dublin. This informant confirmed that Catherine and Nicholas did not live together and asserted that Catherine was known go to his house at night with 'male acquaintances' and break his windows. During Nicholas Whelan's service in the British army and subsequently in the National Army, he made his allowance over to his mother rather than his wife. The informant stated that 'Of the 1,700 cases on the books of St Patrick's Guild Mrs Catherine Whelan is regarded as the worst character.'[18] Buckley's role with St Patrick's Guild made her a respectable and trustworthy source of information, this was not just gossip from a neighbour. Catherine was denied a pension due to 'no dependency and misconduct', indicating the authorities believed Buckley's account.[19] This illustrates how the pensions application process revealed the sordid details of many marriages and laid bare the realities behind many closed doors.

Illegitimacy and its relevance for dependants' allowances and pensions was another issue that preoccupied the Pensions Board. There appears to have been some confusion and uncertainty as to whether illegitimate children of deceased National Army soldiers should be granted allowances.[20] William Williamson, from Glasgow, was killed in November 1922 in County Cork, serving with the National Army. He left behind a seven-month-old daughter; Mary Ann Williamson born in April 1922. The child's mother, Jessie Douglas, claimed they would have got married, had he not been killed.[21] Douglas consequently applied for an allowance on the child's behalf. The child was acknowledged by her paternal grandparents. Douglas was granted an allowance for the child in 1924, backdated to November 1922, but this was halted in March 1925 and stopped entirely. Douglas wrote several pleading letters inquiring about the allowance and setting out the difficulties her daughter was in since it was stopped with 'hardly

18 Note of a meeting with Miss Buckley, St Patrick's Guild, 25 Apr. 1925, MSPC, 3D37 Nicholas Whelan.

19 Recommendation of Army Pensions Board, 2 May 1925, ibid.

20 For a further discussion of this issue, see the essay by Lindsey Earner-Byrne in this book.

21 Jessie Douglas to Dept. of Defence, 9 Aug. 1924, MSPC, 2D214 William Williamson.

any food'. She repeatedly referred to the suffering of an 'innocent child' who had 'done no wrong' and argued that the allowance was for the child, not herself, perhaps an acknowledgement that her circumstances as an unwed mother made her less sympathetic.[22] She asserted that if William 'knew his child was starving he would not rest in peace till he found the person who kept it from her' and the Pensions Board was keeping 'bread from a baby's mouth'.[23] However, her pleas went unheard, and she was informed that the claim was apparently 'not allowable under the Army Pensions Act, 1923'.[24] It is not clear why the allowance was withheld after being initially granted as it was known from the outset that the child was illegitimate.

It was evident that the Williamson family acknowledged their son's child and Jessie's claim of his parentage, assisting with the initial application. In another case, the parentage of the child seemed more in doubt, the father having not publicly acknowledged the child before his death. James Ryan died in an accidental shooting in 1923 while on duty with the National Army. His mother claimed a pension as his dependant, but the army also received a letter from a woman, Miss A. O'Brien, asserting that her daughter was the illegitimate child of the deceased. The child was nine months old at the time of the letter in April 1923. O'Brien outlined in her letter (a week after Ryan died) the impact of the loss for her child: 'my baby's father is lost to me forever & to his little girl who's deprived the right of a fathers name, care & love'. They were in difficult circumstances; she had left her home twelve months previously 'never to return' and were it not for her mother's support, 'the Liffey would have covered me'. She had 'got no help from my baby's father'. She claimed she had been 'told by several to report the matter long ago, but hoping from day to day that he should come back to me, & making right his wrong, but such wasn't my good luck'. She had gone to see him in the hospital, but he died on her arrival. She wished him nothing but forgiveness but said she was 'nearly insane, now that I have to face the world pennyless, & I have no position or don't know where to get one & worst of all nobody wants you without money'. She ended her plea pitifully: 'It's a hard cruel world for me, but what you can do for me might lighten a heavy load on a broken heart & a penniless & homeless girl.'[25] The adjutant general sought to obtain the facts of the case but there are no further documents indicating the results of any investigation or what may have happened to the woman and her child.[26]

In Ireland the Military Service Pensions Board followed a similar line to that of the British government in limiting pension entitlements to women who had not remarried after their husband's death. Patrick O'Flanagan was killed in 1916 serving with the Irish Volunteers. He had worked as a poulterer and had married Mary in 1910. He had three children aged five and under with his wife Mary at the time of his death. Mary received £470 from the National Aid Association but with three children under six in 1916, she continued to struggle.[27] In 1918 she remarried, this time to Francis O'Hanlon, a bootmaker.[28]

22 Jessie Douglas to Dept. of Defence, 2 Sept. 1925, ibid.

23 Jessie Douglas to Dept. of Defence, 12 Aug. 1925 and 5 Aug. 1925, ibid.

24 J.J. Horgan to Jessie Douglas, 19 Jan. 1926, ibid.

25 A. O'Brien to the Adjutant General, n.d., MSPC, 3D205 James Ryan.

26 Note by Capt. Ó Donnchadha, 24 Apr. 1924, ibid.

27 Application form, 7 Nov. 1923, MSPC, 1D94 Patrick O'Flanagan.

As her second marriage took place before April 1922, Mary was not entitled to any pension but her children each received £24 per annum until 1931, 1932, and 1933 respectively. There were two years' back payments provided in 1924 before the annual payments began. The lump sum for the two years was paid to the family's trustee, Fr Flanagan, instead of the mother, perhaps indicating some lack of trust in her financial prudence.[29]

Women who attempted to continue claiming a pension despite remarriage were at risk of prosecution if caught. Annie McWeeney received a pension in 1924 regarding her husband Francis McWeeney who drowned in the River Shannon in Cavan in November 1922. McWeeney was serving with the National Army. The couple had only been married two years at the time and had two infant children. In letters relating to her application in June 1924 she claimed she and her two children were starving and desperate: 'May God help me and my two orphans'.[30] A letter from her parish priest Reverend F. Flynn in July 1924 further claimed that the 'poor woman and her two children are in a very poor condition and dependent on the neighbours for support'. He asked for the case to be given urgent attention as her claim was 'right and just'.[31] Annie was awarded an allowance of seventeen shillings and six pence per week during her widowhood and her two children also received allowances. However, following an 'anonymous communication' to the Department of Finance that she was claiming an allowance despite her second marriage, she was arrested on 8 May 1929.[32] She was charged with fraudulently obtaining the sum of £212 8*s*. 4*d*. from the minister for defence having not declared her remarriage to John McLoughlin on 28 February 1924. Annie pleaded guilty and sentenced to six months imprisonment. This was suspended owing to her 'delicate state of health' once she entered her own bail of £10.[33]

The anonymous letter (included in the application file) asserted that the fact of her marriage and pension claim was known to the local guards and post office authorities, and they had 'let this slip'. It was further claimed that Annie was 'almost every day in company with the guards in Drumkeeran'.[34] It was revealed during the investigation that one of the witnesses to her 1924 declaration included in the pension application, had signed her form despite being 'practically illiterate'. The witness was the local postmaster notwithstanding the alleged illiteracy. In court the witness was asked by the judge if he was in the habit of signing forgeries, to which he replied 'yes' which to the local superintendent provided proof that the witness's signature on the declaration was obtained 'through his own ignorance'.[35] The sum of £212 8*s*. 4*d*. was written off by the minister for finance in 1930 and the allowances for the

28 Report by Sergt Thomas J. O'Neill, Store St. Station, 16 Mar. 1924, ibid.

29 Recommendation of Army Pensions Board, 1 Apr. 1924, ibid.

30 Application form, 29 Apr. 1924; Annie McWeeney to Army Pensions Dept., 29 May 1924 and 10 June 1924, MPSC, 2D358 Francis McWeeney.

31 F. Flynn, P.P., to Mr Horgan, 15 July 1924, ibid.

32 Dept. of Defence to the Commissioner, Garda Síochána, 23 Feb. 1929; anonymous letter, received 12 Feb. 1929, ibid.

33 Secretary, Dept. of Defence, to Secretary, Dept. of Finance, 9 Sept. 1929, ibid.

34 Anonymous letter, received 12 Feb. 1929, ibid.

35 Superintendent M. McKenna to the Commissioner, 16 Oct. 1929, ibid. See also *Irish Independent*, 17 May 1929. The outcome of Annie's case was reported in the *Irish Independent* on 19 June 1929.

children were resumed. Despite her remarriage and the pensions, the family was reported to be 'in miserable circumstances' with the children 'badly in need of clothes' in November 1929. She owned a farm of eight acres in Killadiskert, County Leitrim, where she lived in a small, thatched house with her family. The land was described as 'very poor' and the family as living in 'very poor circumstances' by the local superintendent in August 1929. Her husband John was a civil bill officer, but his earnings were considered small. Despite her conviction for fraud the superintendent described her as a 'fit and proper person to receive the allowance on behalf of the children'. Annie died in January 1933 and payment of the allowance for her children was made to her husband John.[36]

Annie's file contained press cuttings from the *Irish Independent* from 20 May 1929 of a case involving a British army soldier's widow who was prosecuted for falsely continuing to claim a widow's pension after she had remarried in February 1920. Elizabeth Everard of Bray was charged with fraudulently obtaining £718 4*s*. 11*d*. from the British Ministry of Pensions from February 1920 to December 1928. She had been in receipt of 16*s*. 3*d*. weekly as well as a weekly sum of 10*s*. for her fourteen-year-old child. She had married Michael Convey in 1904 in Lancashire and they settled in Dublin in 1907. As a reservist Convey was called up in 1914 and he was killed in September 1917. They had four children, one of whom died in 1927. Elizabeth married Christopher Everard in 1920. Although they had children together, the couple did not reside together during the week. At Christmas 1923 he abandoned her and the children and did not return nor contribute anything further to the family. Elizabeth admitted it was wrong to pretend to be still single while claiming the pension, but she explained her dilemma in stark terms:

> My second husband would not contribute to my support and that of the children and this accounted for my downfall. I knew I was doing wrong, but I was afraid to give myself up for fear of being sent to prison, and my children would starve. The children of my second husband are Wm. Everard, 6 ½ years, and Elsie, 5 years. Four children died at birth. I am sincerely sorry for what I have done, but owing to the treatment meted out to me by my second husband I could not starve.

Elizabeth pled guilty but the case was adjourned to assess whether the offence was committed in England or in Ireland. The press report stated that she was a British subject, and the false declarations were received into the British Ministry of Pensions who issued the money.[37] It is interesting that the press cutting of this case was included in McWeeney's file, indicating it perhaps helped the Department of Defence reach a better understanding of the offence. The case took place at the same time as Annie's and, indeed, Annie's case was first reported in the *Irish Independent* a few days before, on 17 May 1929.

In Annie McWeeney's case, there was some doubt as to whether she was entitled to a pension at all when she applied in 1923. Francis was dead two months before his body was located, and there had been suspicion at the time of his disappearance that he had deserted and joined the anti-Treatyites. However, his body was wearing the National Army uniform when discovered in the River Shannon. Another key question concerned whether he was on duty at the time he drowned and whether he could be considered negligent in his own death. In the end there was insufficient evidence that he bore any culpability, and the presence of his uniform supported the case for an accidental death on duty.[38] The issue of negligence arose frequently in cases of accidental death, most notably in the case of James Conway whose widow attempted to claim a pension despite having shot him herself. James Conway was in the National Army and had been married just three weeks when he was fatally shot in his bed in his home in Cork on a May evening by his wife Ellen. She gave evidence at the inquest that she was 'playing with a revolver, the property of my husband … I pointed the revolver at him, for a joke, and pulled the trigger. The bullet struck him in the face and killed him. I thought the revolver was unloaded.'[39] The inquest returned a verdict of accidental death and Ellen subsequently applied for a pension, based on her financial dependency on James. However, James was not entitled to have a revolver in his home and was found to be negligent in his own death.[40] It is worth noting that the fact she was responsible (even if by accident) for her husband's death was not reason enough on its own to rule out a pension entitlement. A more typical case of accidental shooting led to the death of Daniel Bell in 1923. A soldier in the National Army, he was shot by a colleague in the guard room at Portarlington railway station who did not realise the gun was ready for firing. The soldier responsible went 'temporarily insane' in response and was arrested. Bell's widow Maggie received a pension as did their youngest child. The family were living in impoverished circumstances following his death.[41]

Poverty formed the backdrop to many of the applications and the desperation for a pension and sufficient financial support is very apparent. As noted by Diarmaid Ferriter, the MSPC files are 'littered with disappointment and desperate pleas against what must have seemed like a cold, harsh bureaucracy'.[42] Although many families continued to struggle financially even with the pension, the guarantee of a regular payment for the duration of widowhood and until dependent children reached adulthood was something greatly prized by applicants. By considering the husband's earnings and the economic conditions of each family in the calculation of the allowance, the pensions were often more generous than those provided by the British government to Great War widows. The British War Office initially objected to the idea of matching a soldier's wife's allowance or pension with his civilian earnings viewing enlisted men solely by their military rank and arguing that to do otherwise would imply one man's life was worth more than another's even if they died side by side. Such concerns about equality did not apply to officers of course: a colonel's widow received £200 per year compared to £13 for the widow of a private.[43] Although some provision was made for the families of privates accustomed to higher pre-war earnings, only a small percentage of those eligible successfully claimed the additional amount.[44] The

36 Superintendent M. McKenna to the Commissioner, 28 Aug. 1929, MSPC, 2D358 Francis McWeeney.

37 Clipping of *Irish Independent*, 20 May 1929, contained in McWeeney's file, ibid.

38 Eastern Command to Adjutant General, GHQ, 26 May 1924, ibid.

39 Statement by Nellie Conway, 10 June 1923, MSPC, 3D236 James Conway.

40 Findings of inquest, 29 May 1923, ibid.

41 Comdt P.R. Farrelly, O/C Thurles Command, to O/C Railway Protection, Repair and Maintenance Corps, Wellington Barracks, 21 Mar. 1923; Annie Bell to Office of Adjutant General, 30 Aug. 1922, MSPC, 3D1 Daniel Bell.

42 Diarmaid Ferriter, '"Always in danger of finding myself with nothing at all": the military service pension and the battle for material survival, 1925-1955' in Catriona Crowe (ed.), Guide to the Military Service (1916-1923) Pensions Collection (Dublin, 2012), p. 132.

43 Andrea Hetherington, *British widows of the First World War: the forgotten legion* (Barnsley, 2018), p. 5.

perception of generosity in pension provision could, however, lead to tension and resentment from those not eligible for pensions provided by the Irish state. An anonymous letter to the chairman of the Southern Loyalist Relief Association in 1924 highlighted the distress endured by British army soldiers' families in the Free State and the contrast with the families of rebels, noting the case of a 'mother and widow of a rebel executed for the murder of a soldier were granted £100 and £250 respectively and the latter on the last occasion I spoke to her also expected a pension'.[45]

The willingness of Annie MacWeeney to risk prosecution for continuing to claim after her remarriage, and the desperation and distress evident in the pleading letters from Jessie Douglas and Miss A. O'Brien regarding their illegitimate children, demonstrate the worth placed on the pensions. The vagaries of the system are also apparent, and the high burden of evidence required for a successful application. Women could only hope and pray that the application process did not reveal hitherto unknown negligence or desertion by their husbands. This burden of evidence, however, makes the MSPC an incredibly rich resource for historians. We learn much about the pre-revolutionary lives and occupations of the men, their active service and circumstances of death, and intimate details of the family situation in the decades afterwards. The MSPC is unparalleled as a source for understanding the experience of so-called 'ordinary people' in the aftermath of war and revolution.

Further reading:

Marie Coleman, 'Compensation claims and women's experiences of violence and loss in revolutionary Ireland, 1921-23' in Linda Connolly (ed.), *Women and the Irish revolution: feminism, activism, violence* (Newbridge, 2020), pp 129-47

Diarmaid Ferriter, '"Always in danger of finding myself with nothing at all": the military service pension and the battle for material survival, 1925-1955' in Catriona Crowe (ed.), *Guide to the Military Service (1916-1923) Pensions Collection* (Dublin, 2012), pp 124-35

Andrea Hetherington, *British widows of the First World War: the forgotten legion* (Barnsley, 2018)

Caoimhe Nic Dháibhéid, 'The Irish National Aid Association and the radicalization of public opinion in Ireland, 1916-1918' in *Historical Journal*, lv, no. 3 (2012), pp 705-29

Angela Smith, 'Discourses of morality and truth in social welfare: the surveillance of British widows of the First World War' in *Social Semiotics*, xx, no. 5 (2010), pp 524-32

Fionnuala Walsh, *Irish women and the Great War* (Cambridge, 2020)

44 Ibid., p. 7.

45 'An ex-loyalist' to the Duke of Northumberland, Chairman of the Southern Irish Loyalists Relief Association, 16 Dec. 1924, PRONI, D989/B/3/6 Papers of the Southern Loyalist Relief Association.

Among the widows featured in the *Catholic Bulletin* were Mrs John F. Adams and her daughter, and Mrs Geoghegan and her children.

Image courtesy of the National Museum of Ireland (NMI-HE-EW-882-5-0006).

MINUTE SHEET.

M.S.B.
(Argumist).

Reference 3.D.37.

Mrs Catherine Whelan, widow of the late Nicholas J. Whelan

—

Miss Buckley of St Patrick's Guild called here today and made the following report to me.

Mrs Catherine Whelan is a woman of bad repute and is supposed to have bigamously married, or lived with a naval officer during her husband's absence in the British Army. She has one girl of this union. She also lived for some time with a solicitor in Dublin and for a time ran a house of ill repute in the Pembroke District. Some little time ago she was thrown into the liffey by a Jew but was rescued.

The husband did not live with his wife for many years and she, accompanied by male acquaintances, has accustomed to drive to his house and break his windows. The husband while in the British Army and National Army made over his allowance to his mother and did not contribute towards the upkeep of his wife.

Of the 1,700 cases on the books of the St Patricks' Guild Mrs Catherine Whelan is regarded as the worst character.

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2066).Wt.1977—13D 50,000.8/24.

[Over

IS THE MINISTER
AWARE THAT A PENSION
IS STILL BEING DRAWN
BY ANNE M'WEENEY
OF KILNAGARDEN
CORRY P.O
THOUGH SHE IS
MARRIED AGAIN
FOR THE PAST
FIVE YEARS
TO
JOHN M'LOUGHLIN
A CIVIL BILL OFFICER
BOTH GUARDS
AND
POST OFFICE
AUTHORITIES
KNOW
THIS AND HAVE
LET THIS SLIP

THE GUARDS IN
BOTH DRUMKERIN
AND DOWRA
KNOW ALL
THIS IS GOING
ON AND HAVE
NOT NOTICED IT
AS M'LOUGHLIN
IS ALMOST
EVERY DAY
IN COMPANY
WITH THE
GUARDS
IN DRUMKEERAN

Left

Report on information received relating to Catherine Whelan, widow of Nicholas Whelan, accusing her of bigamy, running a house of 'ill repute', and being regarded as 'the worst character'.

Reference:
Nicholas Whelan 3D37.

Above

An anonymous letter sent to the Department of Finance claiming Annie McWeeney had remarried but was still drawing her pension awarded to her as a widow.

Reference:
Francis McWeeney 2D358.

'Applicant is a spinster': aspects of the cosmos of the everyday life of single women [1]

Leeann Lane

This essay is concerned to examine aspects of the later lives of women who participated in the campaigns of the revolutionary period and who did not go on to marry. Katherine Holden states that 'marital status is a vital but largely unexamined analytical category for historians'.[2] There has been attention paid to unmarried women in Britain, particularly in the context of the 'surplus' generation whose opportunity to marry was significantly lessened due to the death of nearly three-quarters of a million soldiers during the First World War. However, there has been limited analysis in the Irish context, despite the number of unmarried women at all ages in 1926 being twice that of 1841. Furthermore, it must be considered that the census area in 1926 was twenty-six, not thirty-two counties as in 1841. In relation to the population, the number of unmarried women in Ireland in 1926 was fifty per cent greater than in England and three times greater than in the US.[3]

The ideology of domesticity was pervasive in the Irish Free State; access of Irish women to paid employment was increasingly restricted in the 1920s and 1930s through legislation heavily influenced by Catholic social teaching. Reflecting on the debate on the Conditions of Employment Bill in 1935, Dorothy Macardle noted the bitter 'competition for employment' that existed in Ireland and stated that because women were 'economically and politically still more or less at the mercy of men' they were exploited in industry: women were 'paid lower wages and forced by poverty to accept them'.[4] The MSPC allows for an examination of the reality of the socio-economic and psychological experiences of unmarried women in an Ireland that prioritised the male bread-winner wage.[5] Annie Walsh, the sister-in-law of the murdered Cork lord mayor, Tomás Mac Curtáin, worked in Saxone Shoes on Grand Parade, Cork, until her 'collapse' in November 1929. Applying to the Pensions Board she wrote: 'if I were able to earn my living in any way I should not make this application'. She had, she declared, 'no intention to seek a pension or reward for having served my country'.[6] Mac Curtáin had, members of Cork Cumann na mBan wrote, 'died in her arms'. Mairghead Lucey, testified in 1937 that Walsh was 'absolutely penniless'.[7]

1 Application form, 10 Apr. 1933, MSPC, MSP34REF44427 Cecilia Hegarty. Unless explicitly stated all the women discussed in this article were unmarried.

2 Katherine Holden, *The shadow of marriage: singleness in England, 1914-60* (Manchester, 2007), p. 1.

3 *Census of population, general report, 1926* (Dublin, 1934), pp 78-9.

4 Dorothy Macardle to the Editor, *Irish Press*, 13 May 1935.

5 See Deirdre Foley, '"Their proper place": women, work and the marriage bar in independent Ireland, *c*.1924-73' in *Social History*, xlvii, no. 1 (2022).

6 Application form, 26 Apr 1935, MSPC, MSP34REF5979 Annie Walsh (Áine Ní Breathnach).

7 Statement by Mary Hegarty, Eileen Ahern, Mairghead Lucey, 19 Mar. 1938; Mairghead Lucey to Frank Aiken, 15 Apr. 1937, ibid.

While there is a diversity of personal histories of post-revolutionary life evident in the files of the MSPC, it is obvious that a significant number of individuals sought a pension to alleviate poverty. Diarmaid Ferriter states that Tom Barry's disputes with the Pensions Board 'involved the issue of status rather than money'. However, he also states that the files include 'many voices of desperation and urgent pleas for pensions due to abject circumstances'.[8] The MSPC facilitates the historian to move beyond a focus on the lives of middle-class unmarried women who, like Rosamond Jacob, left diaries and other written testimony. The lack of statutory benefits for lower-class single women who were unable to access paid employment and who did not have the requisite social insurance stamps meant that they faced a vista of poverty and dependency on charity and family members; the latter, as the MSPC files illuminate, were often begrudging and indisposed to assume the financial burden. The typical Irish rural family as it developed in the post-Famine period delineated the roles of, and opportunities for, siblings. The non-inheriting siblings who did not marry and remained on the farm 'waiting', were often reduced to 'subservience' and 'condemned … to celibacy'.[9] There was continuity in the first half of the twentieth century, particularly in rural Ireland, of marriage and inheritance patterns established after the Famine.[10] As Holden states the 'unmarried state is generally viewed as a stage or stages in the lifecycle preceding or following marriage, with never-married people seen as exceptions to the norm'.[11] The invisibility of adult dependency in Ireland was summed up in the 1926 census of population report: 'no account is taken in this inquiry of adults who may be supported out of the household income'.[12] The MSPC, as this article discusses, lays bare the brutal reality of dependency in the case of a number of single women in post-revolutionary Ireland and the loneliness and vulnerability of poverty for others.

Poverty

Mary O'Carroll, née Gahan, was arrested on 13 May 1923 and took part in the general hunger strike in November of that year. She wrote bitterly from Australia that when she was released she 'came out, not to a nursing home, but to hunger, want & hardship which has left its mark'. Protesting in 1943 that she received a Grade E – 'the humblest of all grades' – she noted that her disability pension had ceased to be paid two years previously. A mother of ten children, she lamented: 'Is this then the reward that is to be meted out to a Mother who devoted the best young years of her life to her country.'[13] As Mary O'Carroll testified, marriage was no protection for women against poverty and hardship. However, unmarried women were particularly vulnerable in a state that legislated on the basis that all women existed within

8 Diarmaid Ferriter, '"Always in danger of finding myself with nothing at all": the military service pensions and battle for material survival, 1925-55' in Diarmaid Ferriter and Susannah Riordan (eds), *Years of turbulence: the Irish revolution and its aftermath* (Dublin, 2015), p. 236. See also Marie Coleman, 'Compensating Irish female revolutionaries, 1916-1923' in *Women's History Review*, xxvi, no. 6 (2017), pp 915-34.

9 Lindsey Earner-Byrne, 'The family in Ireland 1880-2015' in Thomas Bartlett (ed.), *The Cambridge history of Ireland, IV* (Cambridge, 2018), pp 641-2.

10 Kevin Kenny, *The American Irish: a history* (Harlow, 2000), p. 183.

11 Holden, *The shadow of marriage*, p. 1.

12 *Census of population, general report, 1926*, p. 143.

13 Mary O'Carroll to the Minister of Defence, 22 June 1943, MSPC, MSP34REF10326 Mary O'Carroll (née Gahan).

the domestic paradigm. Annie Cunnane, north Roscommon Cumann na mBan, wrote beseechingly to Frank Aiken in 1937 in respect of her application for a disability pension: 'one word from you on my behalf might enable me to live in comfort and not be a burden on anybody'.[14] The effects of injuries or trauma sustained during the revolutionary period were exacerbated when unmarried women experienced poverty later in life as a result of inability to engage in paid employment. Cunnane alleged that in 1921 she had been 'taken out of bed by Tans and Police and brought in an open lorry as a hostage'. She had stood barefoot 'on numerous occasions' to give 'information about boys on the run and Keadue Ambush'. She had endured 'wettings' as she took a wounded IRA man to safety 'through fields'. As a result, she wrote, she lost her health and was unable to work.[15] A number of these women, existing on the fringes of socio-economic life with limited personal autonomy, perceived themselves as forgotten by a state which they believed owed them recognition and material recompense. The resolution of claims and appeals was a protracted process resulting in disappointment, despair, and often, incredulity. 'I fail to see how I am deprived of my rank', Ellie Tiernan wrote in 1942 on receiving a Grade E pension; 'I was appointed President of Cumann na mBan District Council Leitrim in 1920 and held that rank until 1922'.[16]

In 1911 Mary Crowley, aged twenty-eight, kept a boarding house in Langford Row, Cork.[17] Over the next number of years she combined this business with the running of a newspaper shop. One of her referees testified that she had a 'fine business the majority of her customers being the Protestant Community around the locality'. The shop was used during the War of Independence and the Civil War as an arms dump and a call house for despatches; it was subject to numerous raids.[18] In one such raid in May 1921 Patrick Lenihan, one of Crowley's 'regular boarders was shot dead'.[19] After the ceasefire her house was again raided and all her boarders arrested.[20] She stated:

> This shooting ruined my business which was a very good one as none of the local people would venture in for anything, also all my boarders left which, apart from the loss of trade which was very considerable and never recovered, involved … a loss of £8.10. per week. My trade never recovered and although years later when everything was over I still felt the price of being associated with the I.R.A. as the true blue customers never came back, and I had eventually to close my doors.[21]

In 1936, despite paying rent for thirty years, Crowley was faced with eviction. She declared that she was 'glad to sleep in the corner of a store unfit for human habitation when I could, if I had minded my own business as I did that of the I.R.A., be living in comfort'. What she described was, she stated, 'not fiction. It is stark reality.'[22] By 1951 Crowley was living in one room in 30 Dunbar Street, 'in what is little better than a hovel in which I try to make a meagre living by hawking papers round … in hail rain and sleet summer and winter early and late'.[23] The next year she wrote:

> I have waited in vain for a service pension in accord with military service rendered over the period 1918/1923 … and I now find myself compelled to apply for a disability pension as through continuous ill health due to facing severe Wintry conditions for the past three Winters I am unable to continue my present way of eking out a miserable existence and have nothing before me but the Workhouse.[24]

What is striking in Crowley's account of her descent into poverty is how alone and devoid of help she was. On her death in October 1961, she was survived by a brother, Timothy Crowley, Ballyduhig, Ballygarvan, County Cork, but, as Babbington, Clarke, and Mooney, solicitors, wrote to the Pensions Board: 'She lived alone in a room on the ground floor of a house at Dunbar Street, Cork, where she conducted a small Newsagency business and amongst her belongs were found the enclosed Pension Form and cash £39.3.3*d*. We have been supplied with Invoices for debts amounting to £49.17.4*d*.'[25]

In her application for a pension in November 1934, Mary Adrien, who was active in Fingal in 1916, noted that she was registered at the unemployment bureau in Balbriggan since December 1932 'but have not got employment, nor received Assistance from any source'.[26] When in 1945 she applied for a special allowance she had a salary of £32 7*s*. 4*d*. per annum in respect of her position as a part-time secretary to the Balrothery Old Age Pension Committee. She also had a military service pension of £17 7*s*. 4*d*. She noted that there was 'no service pension payable on retirement' which was why she had 'tried to "hold on" over the "allotted span" of 70 years'. With failing eyesight, she had no choice but to '"face up to it" & hope for the best while God leaves me here'.[27] Adrien came from a middle-class background; her father had been a surgeon. In the 1901 census, aged twenty-six, she listed her occupation as 'deriving income from land'.[28] Yet, as a single woman she faced economic difficulties on retirement. This was despite owning the home in which she resided and having 'another small house' let to tenants.[29] Writing in support of her pension claim, Margaret Pearse declared: 'I do hope her case is not to be left till all the men have been settled with. She is a most refined lady just ekeing out a bare existence'.[30] In

14 Annie Cunnane to Frank Aiken, 21 Apr. 1937, MSPC, MSP34REF57691 Annie Cunnane.

15 Statement of case by the Medical Board, 14 Dec. 1938; Annie Cunnane to the Minister of Defence, 20 Nov. 1941, ibid.

16 Ellie Tiernan to Secretary, Pensions Board, 16 Jan. 1942, MSPC, MSP34REF52964 Ellie Tiernan.

17 1911 census return, Langford Row (http://census.nationalarchives.ie/) (accessed 24 May 2022).

18 Letter of reference from Michael O'Brien, 8 Dec. 1938; Letter of reference from Bertie O'Riordan, 11 Jan. 1939; Thomas Molyneaux to the Board, 10 Jan. 1938, MSPC, MSP34REF31873 Mary Crowley.

19 Transcript of a statement by Mary Crowley, n.d., ibid.; *Cork Examiner*, 19 May 1921.

20 Sworn statement made before Advisory Committee by Mary Crowley, 13 Jan. 1939, MSPC, MSP34REF31873 Mary Crowley.

21 Transcript of a statement by Mary Crowley, n.d., ibid.

22 Mary Crowley to M. Cremin, 27 July 1942, ibid.

23 Petition to appeal, 21 Feb. 1951, ibid.

24 Mary Crowley to Secretary, Military Service Pensions Board, 6 Jan. 1952, ibid.

25 Babbington, Clarke, and Mooney, Solicitors, 48 South Mall Cork, to Secretary, Dept. of Defence, 4 Jan. 1962, ibid.

26 Application form, 21 Nov. 1934, MSPC, MSP34REF152 Mary Adrien.

27 Mary Adrien to Dept. of Defence, 29 Oct. 1945, ibid.

28 1901 census return, Mary Adrien (http://census.nationalarchives.ie/) (accessed 24 May 2022).

29 Mary Adrien to Dept. of Defence, 29 Oct. 1945; Copy of birth certificate, 18 Sept. 1945; Investigation surveyor's report, 31 Oct. 1945, MSPC, MSP34REF152 Mary Adrien.

30 Margaret Pearse to Dept. of Defence, 13 Sept. 1935, ibid.

1937 Pearse wrote again in support of Adrien's appeal: 'Surely her Services up to 1921 will be considered? She certainly did the work & is not the class of person who would make an unjust claim.'[31]

In November 1937 it was relayed to the Department of Defence that Adrien was 'in difficulties … as regards payment of Rates'.[32] In February of the next year she wrote enclosing certain documents. Although these are not extant within the file, it is most likely they refer to her liability in this context. In her correspondence she exposed the subsistence nature of her existence. She suffered from financial insecurity due to under-employment; her part-time position did not allow her to cope with any additional financial charges. The thin margins between survival and destitution were porous:

> The enclosed … speak for themselves! My sole source of income to feed clothe and keep house, for my brother and self, is what is paid to me as Secretary to Balrothery Old Age Pension Committee … and you will see how impossible it is for me to meet this liability (much as I should wish to) out of that, the increased cost of essentials this winter has barely given us an existence, which cannot be called living & this was the only course open to me to avoid the additional costs of going to Court, so, please, pardon the (apparent) liberty I have taken on the grounds 'that necessity needs no law'.[33]

Politics, gender, and perceptions of entitlement

Lindsey Earner-Byrne states that in the letters of the Irish Catholic poor it was 'male writers that conceptualised their story as one of betrayal'. She argues that they were 'more likely to root their predicament in wider political realities'.[34] In the MSPC files a number of the unmarried women examined evinced a sense of betrayal and represented it through the politics of the Civil War divide and a confused understanding of the remit of the Military Service Pensions Act, 1924, which required all applicants to have served in the National Army during the Civil War. If the assurance of Catholic piety was 'almost *de rigeur'* in the letters of the Catholic poor discussed by Earner-Byrne, displays of political fidelity mark many of the letters in the MSPC.[35] Nora McEnroy believed that those who took the anti-Treaty side in the Civil War 'lost a ten years pension'. It will, she wrote, 'soon be all over, but in the mean time I have to live on'.[36] Bridie Lane stated that she did not 'ever appy to Cosgrove for pension. I was alway wating till our Leader Eamon De Valera would return to power'.[37] Like McEnroy, she believed that had she supported Cosgrave she would 'be now 10 years enjoying pension'.[38] Such statements may reflect a vague understanding that republicans were faced with unemployment and discrimination in the early years of the state. Anne Dolan notes that anti-Treatyites 'tried to make their way in an often inhospitable civilian life'.[39] Occasionally, threats of political defection were the response to frustration at the process and/or the outcome of the application. Cissie McGowan wrote, 'I demand an answer'. If she did not receive one she intended to 'hand my case over to a member of the opposition, who will be only too pleased to have the matter thrashed out'.[40]

The four thousand letters to the archbishop of Dublin, Dr Edward Byrne, in the period 1920 to 1940, labelled 'Charity Cases' offer, Earner-Byrne states, 'one of the few traces in the history of the *experience* of poverty'.[41] The MSPC also illuminates the reality of poverty in the case of many who applied. These applications were, however, often couched in the language of rightful claim rather than charity. Earner-Byrne refers to Irish society in the first two decades of independence as 'endlessly debating the boundaries of legitimate poverty'.[42] For Margaret Pearse above, Adrien's middle-class status signified that she was amongst the deserving poor. For many others, what was more legitimate than poverty in the service of independence? Much of what Earner-Byrne identifies in the letters of the Catholic poor can also be applied to pension applications based on economic need. Earner Byrne writes: 'They wrote to differentiate themselves from the rest of the poor – they sought to say: I am genuine, I need help, I deserve help, I cannot be ignored.'[43] In response to the decision that she was not a person to whom the Military Service Pensions Act, 1934, applied, McGowan wrote: 'In making this request I am not asking a favour, only what is justly my due'.[44] That sense of entitlement was based on a perception of service in the establishment of an independent polity and, in many cases, shaded into incredulity and then despair as that service was not rewarded as expected or deemed not to meet the mark for pension purposes. Many believed that by laying bare the poverty of their later lives and placing it side by side with the record of their involvement in the revolutionary period, those who read their claim would immediately recognise that they were members of the deserving cohort. Annie Walsh wrote to the Pensions Board three years after she filed her application. During that period she found 'the increased cost of medicines and living in general very difficult to cope with'. She felt, she stated, 'hurt and disappointed at the treatment of the Board'.[45]

In many cases individuals drew on perceptions of a shared struggle as they wrote to former comrades in pursuit of references or as they attempted to negotiate leverage with the Pensions Board. There were also those that did use the language of charity, possibly a reflection of increasingly straitened economic circumstances. Bridie Lane asked Frank Aiken to:

> grant me the pension in your charity to give me some way off a living to keep me alive I haven't a boot on my foot to keep me warm God may look on me tis the poor that are forgotten will

31 Margaret Pearse to Dept. of Defence, 1 June 1937, ibid.

32 Vera MacDonnell to Éamon de Burca, Dept. of Defence, 25 Nov. 1936, ibid.

33 Mary Adrien to Dept. of Defence, 18 Feb. 1938, ibid.

34 Lindsey Earner-Byrne, *Letters of the Catholic poor: poverty in independent Ireland, 1920-1940* (Cambridge, 2017), p. 121.

35 Ibid., p. 94.

36 Nora McEnroy to Secretary, Special Allowance Branch, 4 Jan. 1967, MSPC, MSP34REF59475 Nora McEnroy.

37 Application form, 10 Sept. 1935, MSPC, MSP34REF20331 Bridie Lane.

38 Bridie Lane to Frank Aiken, 18 Mar. 1936, ibid.

39 Anne Dolan, 'Politics, economy and society in the Irish Free State, 1922-1939' in Bartlett (ed.), *The Cambridge history of Ireland IV*, p. 325.

40 Cissie McGowan to Dept. of Defence, 20 Oct. 1942, MSPC, MSP34REF47771 Cissie McGowan.

41 Earner-Byrne, *Letters of the Catholic poor*, p. 1.

42 Ibid., p. 3.

43 Ibid.

44 Cissie McGowan to the Minister of Defence, 18 Feb. 1942, MSPC, MSP34REF47771 Cissie McGowan.

45 Annie Walsh to M. Cremin, 6 Feb. 1941, MSPC, MSP34REF5979 Annie Walsh (Áine Ní Breathnach).

> you kindly say what you mean to do for me before I die of hunger and want depending on the pension of 1916 … God help the poor who has no influence …[46]

The poor punctuation and grammar in the letter indicate Lane's limited education and the language in the responses she received confused rather than enlightened her as to the progress of her application. Receiving the reply that her case would be 'dealt with as expeditiously as possible', she wrote, 'whatever those words mean I dont know'.[47] The stress endured by single women in travelling, often alone, to Dublin to meet with the Pensions Board, also needs to be considered. Annie Walsh was no stranger to travel, having participated in a republican tour of America from late December 1920 until October 1921; in later life she travelled to Spain for medical care. Yet, in 1942, aged forty-nine, she wrote of feeling 'rather anxious, owing to the delicate state of my health, arriving in Dublin at a very late hour and having to put up in a hotel'. By this date, her sister Susannah, who had been 'a great help' to her, had died.[48]

For those who perceived themselves as existing on the economic margins of society, the review of means was incomprehensible. 'I have no means of any description', Anne Murphy wrote in 1956, 'and I shall be glad to hear from you in what way the Minister has decided that there is any such improvement as alleged … there is no way in which any such improvement could come about'.[49] The lack of apparent transparency in the process caused frustration to many. 'I still claim that this is no answer to my appeal', Cissie McGowan wrote in 1942:

> I have asked again & again, why it is I am not a person to whome the act applies while my girl friend who has the exact same service as I have is in receipt of a pension. The least the Minister can do is, give a definite explanation, because no person whom applied for a Service Pension, for a moment thought that the Act was in any way different for particular individuals.[50]

As Coleman discusses, applicants were attuned to the awards of others and 'concerned to ensure equality of recognition'.[51]

Margaret Grealy wrote in 1939 that she understood 'a great number of men have got the pension'.[52] Writing in support of Grealy's application M.O.K. railed that it was a 'bad country where the men would be seen to before the girls'. The latter did feel, however, that 'those Dublin Women are all having a big pension … and poor Galway led down'.[53] There does appear to be some truth in her statement. Tadhg Mac Firbisigh, the Referee in the 1940s noted that 'the inequality of treatment meted out to Galway and Wexford and some of the Louth applicants is indefensible'.[54] Bridie Lane wondered how many women who claimed a dependant's pension had received one when she 'a poor girl' was left 'waiting'.[55] A perception that those who lived in the capital were treated more favourably by the Pensions Board appears in a number of the applications. Nita Murphy, Cobh, wrote in September 1960 out of 'necessity' asking for an increase in her pension:

> We were fools to work as we did, we gave lavish Wealth & Homes to Dublin. When those men were down & out we collected money for them weekly & sent it to Dublin to keep their families. But they have forgotten all that now they are in opulence & all their relations … It makes us very bitter against the Government, the way we were treated. I can't put the slates on my roof & they can have mansions.
> We were all accustomed to good homes, as well as they.
> The people that come from Dublin tell us about the homes in Dublin & all say well what did all of you get. You were too young & could not understand … [56]

Murphy, who had been a shop assistant and a bookkeeper, owned her own house putting her in a better position than many unmarried female applicants. The social welfare officer, however, noted that it was 'in very bad state of repair'.[57]

As well as suggesting a Dublin versus the provinces divide, Nita Murphy's statements also show an understanding of the way the official auxiliary status of Cumann na mBan was reflected in the pension awards meted out, even though many women believed that they had given full-time service often to the detriment of their economic position and health. 'I am surely entitled to it', Ellie Tiernan wrote, 'for I suffered more and did more work indirectly than some of the IRE done'.[58] While women watched the status bestowed on former female comrades as they emerged from the labyrinth of the application process, there were others who, maybe more perceptively, railed at the gendered assessment of awards. Annie Walsh wrote: 'You gentlemen, see everything from the man's point of view – you are all men on the Board – but did it never strike you that there is also the woman's?'[59] In the MSPC files one can see a significant number of women who complained of betrayal and couched that in a gendered understanding of revolutionary service, in a belief that the state valued and rewarded male service over female. A few were perceptive enough to recognise the invisibility of the female contribution to the establishment of the state in which they now resided, often in poor circumstances. While Michael Staines stated in the Senate that 'Cumann na mBan were just as useful and did as much solid work for Ireland' as the five other bodies referred to the 1934 Military Service Pensions Bill, Frank Aiken required more nuance and proposed an amendment to ensure that 'while members of Cumann na mBan' would be treated 'equally

46 Bridie Lane to Frank Aiken, 18 Apr. 1936, MSPC, MSP34REF20331 Bridie Lane.

47 Secretary, Dept. of Defence to Bridie Lane, 17 July 1936; Bridie Lane to Dept. of Defence, 13 Mar. 1939, ibid.

48 Annie Walsh to Secretary, Pensions Board, 18 June 1942; Annie Walsh to the Referee, 16 May, 1942, MSPC, MSP34REF5979 Annie Walsh (Áine Ní Breathnach).

49 Anne Murphy to Secretary, Dept. of Defence, 30 Apr. 1956, MSPC, MSP34REF12539 Anne Murphy.

50 Cissie McGowan to Dept. of Defence, 20 Oct. 1942, MSPC, MSP34REF47771 Cissie McGowan.

51 Coleman, 'Compensating female revolutionaries', p. 928.

52 Margaret Grealy to Sean Broderick, 17 Oct. [1938], MSPC, MSP34REF14668 Margaret Rose Grealy.

53 M.O.K. to Sean Broderick, 29 Oct. 1938, ibid.

54 Quoted in Coleman, 'Compensating Irish female revolutionaries', p. 926.

55 Bridie Lane to Dept. of Defence, 13 Mar. 1939, MSPC, MSP34REF20331 Bridie Lane.

56 Nita Murphy to Dept. of Defence, 8 Sept. 1960, MSPC, MSP34REF20161 Nita Murphy (Hannah Murphy).

57 Report of the Social Welfare Officer, 8 Oct. 1960, ibid.

58 Ellie Tiernan to Secretary, Dept. of Defence, 20 May 1947, MSPC, MSP34REF52964 Ellie Tiernan.

59 Statement by Annie Walsh, received 6 Sept. 1945, MSPC, MSP34REF5979 Annie Walsh (Áine Ní Breathnach).

with men, they will not be treated better'. He continued: 'If the officers of Cumann na mBan of nominal high rank were treated in the same way as officers of the Volunteers there would be a very big discrepancy, because their responsibilities were not as great.'[60]

Economic dependency

Born in 1896, Nora McEnroy last worked in 1960. Applying for a special allowance in 1967, she stated that she could not 'exist' on her 'present income'.[61] Following up on the application, she asked for her case to be given 'immediate attention'. She had an old age pension of £2 14*s*. per week and a Military Service Pension of £3 1*s*. 10*d*. per month. The rent on her flat was 30*s*. per week. Listing her sources of income she concluded: 'So were it not for my nephew (who is now making other arrangements to start his own home) I could not make ends meet.'[62] As well as rent owed, she detailed what she paid for gas and 'fires' which left her, she alleged, £1 'for food etc etc etc'. McEnroy was clearly conscious of her financial reliance on her nephew; his desire to set up his own household represented 'changes which he must as an ambitious young man needs make'.[63] He did continue, however, to offer her support; a letter in 1975 noted that he paid her rent when she suffered shock at the death of her sister-in-law, her 'dearest friend'.[64] She noted how much had been spent on the fifty-year commemoration of 1916, referring to it as the 'Golden Jubilee' and stated 'it's only fair that those who carried on the fight after 1916 should be given an decent increase – not a few shillings'.[65] She also claimed to have read in the *Irish Press* that 'a sum of thousands has gone into the Exchequer thro the deaths of the old I.R.A. It will be a marvellous saving when they are all gone.' Whether this was a comment on the disparity of pensions paid to men and women cannot be categorically stated but McEnroy clearly had a point to drive home to the minister for defence: 'I consider it is the duty of the Minister to see that justice is done to the remaining few some if not all with records (National) which might outshine some of "so said heroes" strutting their false plumage during the Golden Jubilee Celebrations.'[66] Mary Burke lost her position as a post-office employee at Kilfinane, County Limerick, during the War of Independence. It was some time, J.M. McCarthy wrote, 'before we could get an alternative appointment for her elsewhere'.[67] She herself testified that she only secured 'temporary employment'. In the period of her unemployment she had to 'depend on my relations to keep me which was a great hardship on them as well as being a source of great worry to me'.[68]

60 Michael Staines and Frank Aiken, 'Military Pensions Bill, 1934 – Committee', *Seanad Éireann Debates*, vol. xix, no. 5 (30 Aug. 1934).

61 Nora McEnroy to Secretary, Special Allowance Branch, 4 Jan. 1967, MSPC, MSP34REF59475 Nora McEnroy.

62 Nora McEnroy to Dept. of Defence, received 10 May 1967, ibid.

63 Nora McEnroy to Secretary, Special Allowance Branch, 4 Jan. 1967, ibid.

64 Nora McEnroy to Secretary, Pensions Branch, received 15 Dec. 1975, ibid.

65 Nora McEnroy to Dept. of Defence, received 10 May 1967, ibid.

66 Nora McEnroy to Secretary, Special Allowance Branch, 4 Jan. 1967, ibid.

67 Statement by J.M. McCarthy, 29 May 1940, MSPC, MSP34REF2569 Mary Bourke.

68 Mary Bourke to Secretary, Pensions Board, 12 Mar. 1942; Application form, 19 Jan. 1935, ibid.

Even unmarried women who had training could find themselves in necessitous circumstances and dependency in later life. Margaret Grealy trained as a nurse in Sir Patrick Dunn's Hospital. Writing to Sean Broderick, TD, in May 1938 aged sixty-seven she was living with a sister. Indeed, in reflection of the fact that the family home was the possession of the male, she wrote earlier to Frank Aiken that she was 'confined to my bed in a brother-in-law's house'. She wrote to Broderick that she had 'nothing to live on but on friends. Will you refer to someone who will extend a helping hand. What are they waiting for? Is it until we are dead?'[69] As in the case of McEnroy, Grealy also faced a change in her position when the circumstances of the married sister on whom she depended altered:

> This place is taken out of their hands for the last couple of months & they are not getting a penny from any sources. Mr Plunket Kenny was sent down here to examine everything two months ago. We cannot get what would buy our dinner … If I only get into the Sweep, I could have a living.[70]

The family was, she wrote in 1941, evicted; the 'place was in chancery 10 yrs'.[71] In 1947 she was living on an old age pension of 10*s*. supplemented with food vouchers of 2*s.* 6*d*.[72]

Annie Cunnane, together with her brother Owen and sister Margaret, lived 'in a few rooms' in her brother John Joe's farmhouse. The social welfare officer noted in 1950 that she had 'never worked for wages'.[73] In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century there was an expectation that women would not engage in paid labour. They were supported at home until they married. This left women in a precarious economic position in later life if they did not achieve marital status. Celia Kellaher only applied for a pension after the death of her father.[74] Agnes Boyd wrote that her father 'died suddenly during the Black & Tan terror and my mother died after the Civil War'. She herself, she wrote, was 'unable to pursue any career'.[75] She was not eligible for unemployment assistance under the Unemployment Assistance Act, 1933, which stipulated that a 'spinster' had to have fifty-two contributions in the previous four years.[76] Discussing the first decades of the new state, Mary Daly notes the 'high proportion of the population working within a family economy which had little reliance on money incomes and waged employment'. This may, as she states, 'have reduced the numbers exposed to the blunt instrument of unemployment' in the context of the 1930s' depression.[77] However, the emotional and psychological

69 Margaret Grealy to Sean Broderick, 16 May 1938; Margaret Grealy to Frank Aiken, 8 June 1936, MSPC, MSP34REF14668 Margaret Rose Grealy.

70 Margaret Grealy to Secretary, Dept. of Defence, 19 Sept. 1939, ibid.

71 Margaret Grealy to Secretary, Dept. of Defence, 7 Aug. 1941, ibid.

72 Life certificate, 10 May 1947, ibid.

73 Report of the Social Welfare Officer, 26 July 1950, MSPC, MSP34REF57691 Annie Cunnane.

74 Celia Kellaher to Minister for Defence, received 27 Feb. 1935, MSPC, MSP34REF44670 Celia Kellaher.

75 Agnes Boyd to Minister for Defence, 23 Jan. 1939, MSPC, MSP34REF57529 Agnes Boyd.

76 Unemployment Assistance Act, 1933 (https://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/acts.html) (accessed 24 May 2022).

77 Mary Daly, 'The Irish Free State and the great depression of the 1930s: the interaction of the global and the local' in *Irish Economic and Social History*, xxxviii (2011), p. 35.

effect of economic dependency have not been considered in any depth. In the case of the Cunnane family, the social welfare officer testified that maintaining his three siblings did 'impose a hardship' on John Joe Cunnane as he was a 'struggling farmer'. This was despite the fact that his farm was 'v highly valued' and the house was 'formerly a country mansion'.[78] Owen was in receipt of a disability pension and Margaret had both a military service and a disability pension. An earlier report from 1946 stated that John Joe Cunnane maintained his siblings on 'sufferance'.[79] Annie Cunnane appealed to the minister for defence in 1944 plaintively reminding him 'you said anyone who lost their health in the fight for Independence would be provided for. I am unable to work.'[80] She was sixty-four years of age in 1950 when she finally received an allowance; she died less than six weeks later on 2 October 1950.[81] Cunnane had 'Made no will and had no assets to will', making administration unnecessary.[82] Her death certificate recorded her occupation as 'housekeeper'.[83]

The brother of Bridget Mitchell, Mohill, County Leitrim, wrote on her death in 1948 to the minister for defence requesting payment of her funeral bills. He had been supporting her since 1922:

> I wish to inform you that this lady have died destitute no means no nothing only living on me and I myself are in a very bad financial circumstances and unable to meet my liabilities. This deceased lady have been unable to work as from 1922 when her mothers house was burned down and left her without [?means].[84]

An earlier letter suggests his irritation at having to maintain an economically non-productive sibling:

> Now I had to look after this girl for years as she was in bad health and had several operations which cost me an amt – which I could not very well do now if you would please look up the matter with your Minister of Defence if I had say £150 – it would leave me ok at present.

The 'girl' was fifty-two years when she died. Mitchell's use of the term to describe his sister reflected that very young married women were accorded respect and rights denied to older single women in Irish society in the period.[85] Mitchell's desire to be 'compensated' for maintaining his sister suggests that it is very likely that she was made to feel her economic dependence in the years after her revolutionary service.

78 Report of the Social Welfare Officer, 26 July 1950, MSPC, MSP34REF57691 Annie Cunnane.

79 Report of the Social Welfare Officer, 22 May 1946, ibid.

80 Annie Cunnane to Minister for Defence, 10 July 1944, ibid.

81 Award Certificate, 29 Aug. 1950; John J. Cunnane to Ministry of Pensions, 10 Oct.1950, ibid.

82 Payment of sums due at death, 30 Oct. 1950, ibid.

83 Copy of death certificate, 6 Nov. 1950, ibid.

84 Seán Mitchell to Minister for Defence, 5 Apr. 1948, MSPC, MSP34REF46780 Bridget Mitchell.

85 Seán Mitchell to Seán MacEoin, Minister for Justice, 24 Mar. 1948; Copy of death certificate, 3 Apr. 1938, ibid; Marjorie Howes, 'Public discourse, private reflection, 1916-70' in Angela Bourke et al (eds.), *The field day anthology of Irish writing, iv* (Cork, 2001), p. 929.

There were those like Bridie Lane who suggested that they had no family on whom to depend. She wrote to Aiken in 1936:

> I beg of you in God most Holy name to do something for me …I have neither house or friends to look to me in my bad health and I ask off you what are going to do for a poor creature that has nothing to live on but the crumbs that fall from the neighbours table after my work 1916.[86]

However, Lane's file includes a copy letter to de Valera from her brother. He alleged that his own poverty was made worse by having to support his sister:

> I am a very poor man … I had a letter from the Land Commission telling me they would only give me six days to pay my rent. I am asking you to give me till October till I sell my barley. My sister Bridie Lane was called to Dublin before the Pension Board … and up to the present she has got no pension. It's very hard on me to be supporting her all those years. In fact I cannot afford to put in a bag of flour or get a shelter made.[87]

He had, he claimed, 'gone into debt supporting' his sister. He wanted to know when she would receive her pension so that he could 'get my money from her all I have lost supporting her'.[88] The file also includes a note signed by Lane to her brother certifying that when she received her pension she would 'pay my brother John Lane Morrisey for my Support & Room'.[89] Writing again in 1941 Lane Morrisey bemoaned the money he had to advance to facilitate her to travel to Dublin for an interview with the Pensions Board. He noted that his sister had told him that when she received her pension she would 'go in to live in some lodegings as I am not able any further to support her'.[90] In a letter to de Valera, Bridie Lane suggested that the issue was the attitude of her brother's wife. Trying to establish a personal intimacy, she wrote to de Valera as a confidante; what she was going to tell him was 'strictly private to you as I know it will be never heard. I have a very hard time she has no wish for the 1916 girls as all belonging to her are married to English soldiers & the old RIC'. She had, she told him, determined to go into a convent.[91] Lane's file further includes a letter from 1936, the year she wrote pleadingly to Aiken, from James O'Connor, grocer in Gort, County Galway, in relation to settling her account. He had allowed her credit on the understanding that she would receive a pension and he wrote for an update: 'let me know finally if you can expect same before a week or so as otherwise I must take steps to recoup the amt due'.[92]

The later addresses of single women often include 'care of' indicating that they have moved in with relatives or friends. In some cases individuals who opened their doors, willingly or otherwise, found

86 Bridie Lane to Frank Aiken, 3 Jan. 1936, MSPC, MSP34REF20331 Bridie Lane.

87 John Lane Morrisey to Éamon de Valera, received 3 July 1940, ibid.

88 John Lane Morrisey to Office of the Referee, 22 Nov. 1940, ibid.

89 Note by Bridie Lane, 26 Nov. 1940, ibid.

90 James Lane Morrisey to Office of the Referee, [8 Feb. 1941], ibid.

91 Bridie Lane to Éamon de Valera, 19 Dec. 1936, ibid.

92 James O'Connor to Bridie Lane, 31 July 1936, ibid.

themselves under consequent economic duress. Mary Murphy had to retire from her position as assistant matron in the Cork Mental Hospital in 1927 owing to 'the state of my nerves, caused during the period of the Anglo-Irish War'. Her 'small pension' was not 'sufficient to pay expenses for treatment in Hospital and at home'.[93] By 1944 she was residing with another unmarried women, Mary Kate Harrington, at Eason's Hill, the two-room home the latter was reared in.[94] Harrington wrote:

> Miss Murphy who resides with me is now in indifferent health and she has only to depend on her meagre pension from the Cork Mental Hospital to keep her. I am sure that you will be surprised to know that my own health is failing greatly and that my business is anything but good. I am sure that you will kindly interest yourself on behalf of Miss Murphy as it would be beneficial to me also financially if she was granted her pension.[95]

In some cases single women testified to needing the pension because they were caring for family members. Annie Maria McGoldrick wrote to the minister of defence in 1942:

> Could you please hasten on my case re pension which you granted me, I was expecting to have the money for xmas because I need it badly having to look after an invalede brother, money is always needed badly … You seem to have no consideration for the Country girls that spent the best part of their life working for the [section torn away] and is now put off till last and with a small pension.[96]

A number of the women's pension applications examined for this essay testify to the manner in which they jettisoned schooling or career advancement in the service of republicanism. This resulted in the loss of full-time employment and pension rights in later life. Teresa McDermott trained as a nurse in 'Stephens Hospital, Dublin', and stated that she was 'offered great inducement to go into English service'. Refusing she took up a vacant position when a nurse in Drogheda Hospital went to England. When her republican activities became known she was threatened with dismissal but resigned and returned home to Roscommon to assist Cumann na mBan and the IRA. Applying for her pension she noted that had she remained on in the hospital she would have been promoted and 'would now have a pension'.[97] Indeed, arguably some women had been involved in republicanism from childhood. Bridget Bradley could not 'go back to School after 1923 and I lost my examinations'.[98] Agnes Boyd's brother-in-law 'had us in it since we were kids, he started Sinn Fein in Ballina'.[99]

93 Mary Murphy to the Dept. of Defence, [1940], MSPC, MSP34REF58419 Mary Murphy.

94 1911 census return, Mary Kate Harrington (http://census.nationalarchives.ie/) (accessed 24 May 2022).

95 Mary Kate Harrington to Mr Forbes, 9 Oct. 1944, MSPC, MSP34REF58419 Mary Murphy.

96 Annie Maria McGoldrick to Minister for Defence, 19 Dec. 1942, MSPC, MSP34REF56387 Annie Maria McGoldrick. See also Mary Adrien to Dept. of Defence, 4 Apr. 1948, MSPC, MSP34REF152 Mary Adrien.

97 Application form, 29 Dec. 1942; Reference by Dudley Forde, MD, 1 Feb. 1943; Summary of sworn evidence given before the interviewing officer, 3 Feb. 1943, MSPC, MSP34REF60035 Teresa McDermott (MacDermott).

98 Sworn statement made before Advisory Committee by Bridget Bradley, 8 May 1939, MSPC, MSP34REF51775 Bridget Bradley.

99 Sworn statement made before Advisory Committee by Agnes Boyd, 1 Feb. 1939, MSPC, MSP34REF57529 Agnes Boyd.

Irish society in the decades after independence venerated home and family, yet, as the MSPC files show, many cohorts were 'condemned to uncertainty and transience – to living in a space that was not a home by the discourse of the period'.[100] Single women were one such vulnerable group. Economic vulnerability was augmented by the lack of being part of the normal familial unit as enshrined in the 1937 constitution. Nora O'Sullivan, Bantry, County Cork, reacted in horror to her pension award:

> One & a quarter yrs service will only mean £5 or £6 a year pension. It wont even pay for a room for me, as I am unable to work because of this awful arthritis in my hands. … After the blowing up of my home I had to sleep & live in the open. Is it any wonder I am now a martyr to rheumatic troubles. Yes, & I gave as already stated the best of my years working for the cause.[101]

Having been refused a pension 'so often' Sarah Bonnar wrote again in 1948. She found 'courage' to do so having received a service medal. She wrote that she was in 'very bad circumstances … my Landlord has sold the house which I inhabit and leaves me … to get out without health or wealth'. She was considering applying for a disability pension but noted that it 'takes so long to get through all the formalities, and my case is urgent'.[102] Accessing relief from poverty through the Military Service Pensions Board was no different in that regard than other avenues explored by the poor. As Earner-Byrne states, people had 'to be prepared and able to fill in forms, dodge the gaps in the system, accommodate the "waiting periods"'.[103] Seven years later the social welfare officer reported that Sarah Bonnar lived alone 'in a rented room'; her only means was the old age pension.[104] Noting the protracted nature of her application process, Bridie Lane wrote: 'what is all this for or when do ye mean to pay me the pension'.[105]

Further reading:

Lindsey Earner-Byrne, *Letters of the Catholic poor: poverty in independent Ireland, 1920-1940* (Cambridge, 2017)

Deirdre Foley, '"Their proper place": women, work and the marriage bar in independent Ireland, *c*.1924-73' in *Social History*, xlvii, no. 1 (2022)

Katherine Holden, *The shadow of marriage: singleness in England, 1914-60* (Manchester, 2007)

Leeann Lane, *Rosamond Jacob: third person singular* (Dublin, 2010)

100 Leeann Lane, *Rosamond Jacob: third person singular* (Dublin, 2010), pp 180-1.

101 Nora Sullivan to the Pensions Board, 13 Oct. 1942, MSPC, MSP34REF21522 Nora Sullivan.

102 Sara Bonnar to Dept. of Defence, 14 Jan. 1948, MSPC, MSP34REF2554 Sarah Bonnar (Sara Bonnar).

103 Earner-Byrne, *Letters from the Catholic poor*, p. 56.

104 Report of the Social Welfare Officer, 30 June 1955, MSPC, MSP34REF2554 Sarah Bonnar (Sara Bonnar).

105 Bridie Lane to Dept. of Defence, 13 Mar. 1939, MSPC, MSP34REF20331 Bridie Lane.

Above

Approximately two hundred women were employed at the Dublin Dockyard War Munitions Company from 1915-19. From John Smellie, *Shipbuilding and repairing in Dublin* (Glasgow, 1935).

DPC029: Plate 89.
Reproduced courtesy of the Dublin Port Archive.

Right

An indignant letter from Ellie Tiernan in which she states 'I fail to see how I am deprived of my rank'.

Reference:
Ellie Tiernan
MSP34REF52964.

34 B1 / 52603

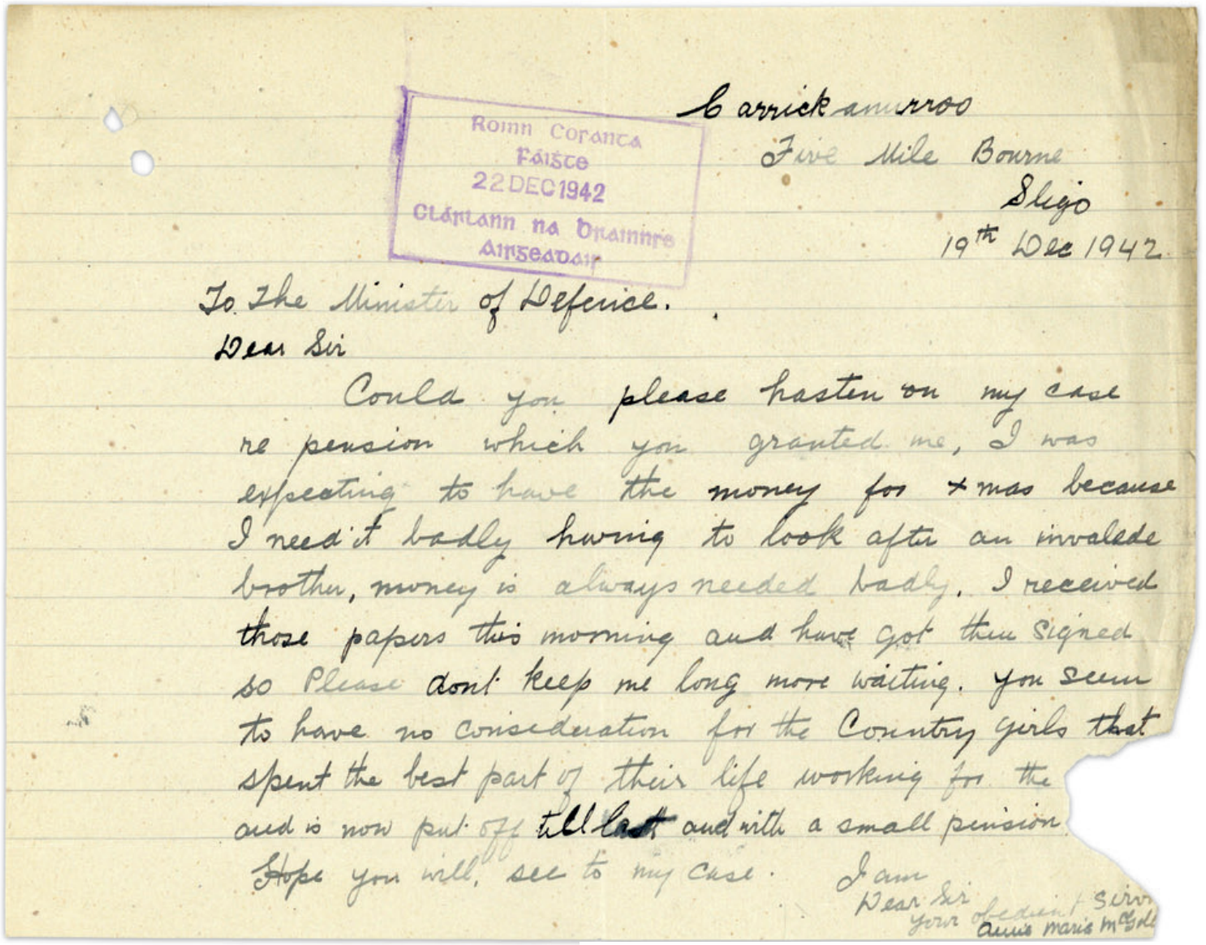
Kinkeen
Ballinamore
Co Leitrim
16.1.'42

The Secretary Military Service Pension Board Dublin
A Chara,

I am returning the Military Service Certificate which I received from you on the 3rd inst. I am very disappointed over not getting my rank. As I have already stated before your Board I was appointed President of Cumann na mBan District Council Leitrim in 1920 and held that rank until 1922. I fail to see how I am deprived of my rank and I have the officers of the Brigade to verify this for me if necessary

I hope you will see your way to give this your kind consideration

Mise le meas
(Miss) Ellie Tiernan



Roinn Cosanta
Fáisce
22 DEC 1942
Clártann na Dáimhre
Ainseadair

Carrickamurroo
Five Mile Bourne
Sligo
19th Dec 1942.

To The Minister of Defence.

Dear Sir

Could you please hasten on my case re pension which you granted me, I was expecting to have the money for Xmas because I need it badly having to look after an invalede brother, money is always needed badly. I received those papers this morning and have got them signed so Please dont keep me long more waiting. You seem to have no consideration for the Country girls that spent the best part of their life working for the and is now put off ~~till last~~ and with a small pension.

Hope you will see to my case.

I am
Dear Sir
Your obedient Servt
Annie maria McGolderick

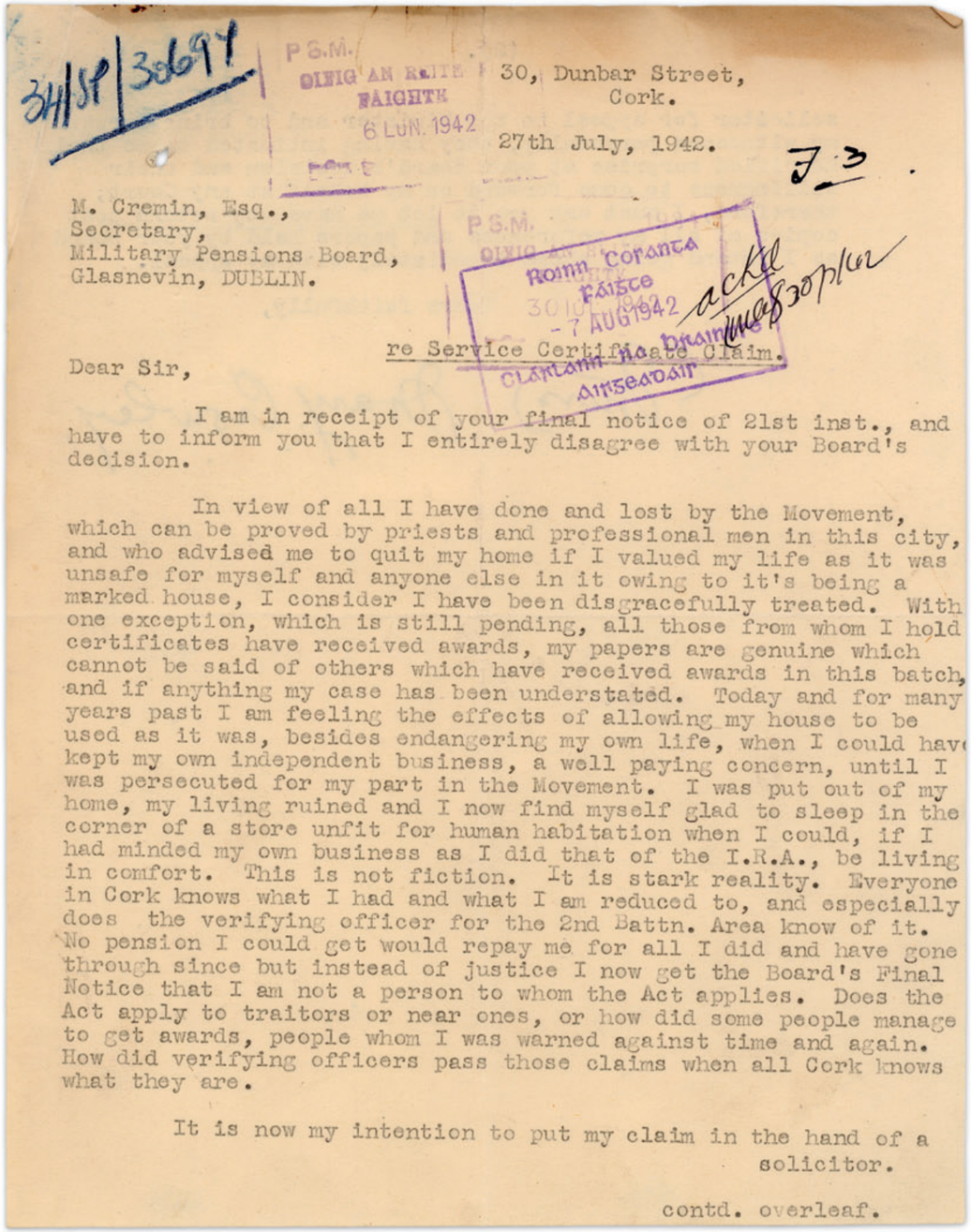
Above

Asking the minister for defence to 'hasten on my case', Annie Maria McGolderick was struggling to support herself and 'an invalede brother'. She criticises the Department for having 'no consideration for the Country girls'.

Reference:
Annie Maria McGoldrick
MSP34REF56387.

Right

Madge Ahern with milk churn working on a family farm in the late 1940s. Many single women carried out intense labour for their families who housed and supported them.



3H/SP/30697

P.S.M.
OIFIG AN RÉITE
FÁIGHTE
6 LÚN. 1942

30, Dunbar Street,
Cork.

27th July, 1942.

J.3.

M. Cremin, Esq.,
Secretary,
Military Pensions Board,
Glasnevin, DUBLIN.

P.S.M.
Roinn Cosanta
Fáilte
- 7 AUG 1942
Clárlann Ríomhaire Deimhnithe
Airgeadais

acked

re Service Certificate Claim.

Dear Sir,

I am in receipt of your final notice of 21st inst., and have to inform you that I entirely disagree with your Board's decision.

In view of all I have done and lost by the Movement, which can be proved by priests and professional men in this city, and who advised me to quit my home if I valued my life as it was unsafe for myself and anyone else in it owing to it's being a marked house, I consider I have been disgracefully treated. With one exception, which is still pending, all those from whom I hold certificates have received awards, my papers are genuine which cannot be said of others which have received awards in this batch, and if anything my case has been understated. Today and for many years past I am feeling the effects of allowing my house to be used as it was, besides endangering my own life, when I could have kept my own independent business, a well paying concern, until I was persecuted for my part in the Movement. I was put out of my home, my living ruined and I now find myself glad to sleep in the corner of a store unfit for human habitation when I could, if I had minded my own business as I did that of the I.R.A., be living in comfort. This is not fiction. It is stark reality. Everyone in Cork knows what I had and what I am reduced to, and especially does the verifying officer for the 2nd Battn. Area know of it. No pension I could get would repay me for all I did and have gone through since but instead of justice I now get the Board's Final Notice that I am not a person to whom the Act applies. Does the Act apply to traitors or near ones, or how did some people manage to get awards, people whom I was warned against time and again. How did verifying officers pass those claims when all Cork knows what they are.

It is now my intention to put my claim in the hand of a solicitor.

contd. overleaf.

Left

Having sacrificed her business, her home, and her own personal safety in order to aid the fight for independence, Mary Crowley writes that ‘I consider I have been disgracefully treated’. She refers to the ‘horrified surprise’ of witnesses to her service on hearing of the rejection of her claim.

Reference:
Mary Crowley
MSP34REF31873.

Above

Cumann na mBan veterans (Tralee Branch) march in the 1916 jubilee celebration parade; led by Miss L. A. O’Brien, Miss Nora O’Carroll, Miss Hanna O’Connor, Miss Nellie O’Sullivan, Mrs D. Mullins, Mrs T. McEllistrim, Miss K. Flemming.

Image courtesy of the Irish Capuchin Provincial Archives (IE CA CP/1/1/4/35).

'Please say who are the dependents in this case?' [1]
Female vulnerability, the male-breadwinner model, and the Military Service Pensions Collection

Lindsey Earner-Byrne

It is only in recent years following the release of various archives including the Bureau of Military History and the Military Service Pensions Collection that historians have turned to consider the longer-term impact of the Easter Rising, the War of Independence (1919-21), and/or the Civil War (1922-3) on a diverse range of people. The Army Pensions Acts of 1923 to 1980 generated a rich archive of applications made by those directly involved and their relatives.[2] Section 2 of the 1923 Act allowed for pensions to married men, while sections 7 and 8 provided for allowances for dependants of deceased officers and soldiers.[3] In order to qualify for a dependant's pension it was essential to prove total or partial dependence on the deceased or injured at the time of death or injury. Unsurprisingly, dependants were most often widows and children, however, due to the prevalence of the family economy, mothers, fathers, and siblings also appear in this archive. The design of these pensions was shaped by ideas of gender and class: daughters were considered dependent for longer than sons, while the children of officers were paid an allowance for longer than those of soldiers.[4] Similarly, assessment of these applications was informed by contemporary understandings of legitimate dependency, familial responsibility, and morality.[5] This essay offers a close reading of just one file in the MSPC archive as a script of social negotiation with a view to elucidating the dynamics at play in transforming grief into a 'claim'.[6] In the process, the everyday implications of the male-breadwinner model are considered, in particular, its consequences for women and children.

* * * * * * *

Grieving without having to weigh your loss in financial terms is a privilege experienced by relatively few. Most people are forced to endure acute emotional loss alongside disorienting and life-altering economic privation. This is generally true because a significant proportion of people, both now and in the past, rely on the family as an economic unit, particularly when raising children. The poorer a society the more prevalent this family dependency tends to be because it is not possible to earn enough to live independent of collective familial earning power. However, the male-breadwinner economic model, which became widespread in western Europe by the end of the nineteenth century, was predicated on the idea that men should be the main source of familial economic support and that women's paid labour should be subsidiary, temporary, and incidental.[7] An impact of this economic rationale was that women were framed as less valuable to the economy, less committed to the labour force, and best utilised in the domestic setting providing cost-efficient childcare. This facilitated the devaluing of female labour, the paying of poorer wages, and a contingent view of the female worker. Female care work has, thus, largely been regarded by policymakers and other commentators, including many economists, as a happy corollary of this economic model. However, as recent historical research has shown, a closer look at how people negotiated the pressures of this model within the family reveals the degree to which the policy embedded gender inequality into the economy and, thus, society.[8]

In her recent study of the Victorian economy, Emma Griffin observes that while the gendered nature of the labour market has been acknowledged, its implications have rarely been seriously explored or mapped.[9] One way of doing this is to consider what happened when the model was broken by the death of the breadwinner. As the breadwinner model was encouraged an economy that did not offer women the opportunities to earn a living wage for themselves, never mind their children, a pension upon the death of one's breadwinner was all but essential for the survival of the family. The MSPC archive constitutes a rich source for exploring one of the first attempts by the new Irish Free State to mitigate this logical outcome of the breadwinner model: the economic vulnerability of women and children upon bereavement.[10]

The Irish state was not the only one with widowhood on its mind – millions of widows had been created worldwide as a result of the Great War and the influenza pandemic of 1918-19.[11] The war was a game-changer in relation to the treatment of soldiers' dependants, largely because the British prime minister, H.H. Asquith, immediately extended the minimum separation allowances and widows' pensions to the wives of all volunteers.[12] The system was modified throughout the war, eventually resulting in a state-funded allowance and pension. However, Janis Lomas notes that through all the changes class

1 Capt. John P. Stafford, Officer in Charge of Burials, GHQ, to Adjutant General, n.d. *c*. 23 Aug. 1922, MSPC, 2D133 Patrick Perry.

2 For a contextual analysis of this legislation see Marie Coleman, 'Military service pensions for veterans of the Irish revolution, 1916-1923' in *War in History*, xx, no. 2 (2013), pp 201-21.

3 Army Pensions Act, 1923 sections 2, 7, and 8. See, https://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/1923/act/26/enacted/en/html.

4 Officers' daughters were paid an allowance until twenty-one years of age and their sons until eighteen, the gendered age differentials for soldiers' children were sixteen and eighteen years of age, respectively. For details of the requirements see, Michael Keane, 'Dependency claims for the Civil War executed in the Military Service (1916-1923) Pensions Collection' in *History Ireland,* xxvi, no. 2 (2018), pp 42-5.

5 Section 11 of the 1923 Army Pensions Act covered grounds for forfeiture of a pension, which included conviction of a crime or the undefined act of 'disgraceful conduct'.

6 I am grateful to Cécile Chemin and Leanne Ledwidge for further advice on the MSPC dependants' files.

7 Jane Humphries argues that the male-breadwinner family system was established before industrialisation in Britain. Jane Humphries, *Childhood and child labour in the British industrial revolution* (Cambridge, 2010). See also, Colin Creighton, 'The rise of the male breadwinner family: a reappraisal' in *Comparative Studies in Society and History,* xxxviii, no. 2 (1996), pp 310-37.

8 Emma Griffin, *Bread winner: an intimate history of the Victorian economy* (Yale, 2020).

9 Ibid., p. 4.

10 Lindsey Earner-Byrne, '"Parading their poverty": widows in twentieth-century Ireland' in Borbála Faragó and Moynagh Sullivan (eds.), *Facing the other: interdisciplinary studies on race, gender and social justice in Ireland* (Newcastle, 2008), pp 32-46.

11 Fionnuala Walsh, *Irish women and the Great War* (Cambridge, 2020); Caitriona Foley, *The last Irish plague: the great flu epidemic in Ireland, 1918-1919* (Dublin 2012) and Ida Milne, *Stacking the coffins: influenza, war and revolution in Ireland, 1918-19* (Manchester, 2018).

12 Janis Lomas, '"Delicate duties": issues of class and respectability in government policy towards the wives and widows of British soldiers in the era of the Great War' in *Women's History Review*, ix, no. 1 (2000), p. 127.

boundaries were maintained through higher payments for the dependants of higher ranked soldiers and women had to be deemed morally worthy of the allowance or pension.[13] Indeed, the war prompted considerable public debate about the male wage, women's needs or rights when that wage was withdrawn or absent as a result of war, and what role the state should play in monitoring 'separation women', the term used to describe women in receipt of war allowances or pensions. While these women were subjected to negative speculation in newspapers, courts, and political commentary in Britain, in Ireland this was exacerbated by the growing anti-war sentiment and, after the 1916 Easter Rising, an increasing radicalisation of the political landscape.[14] Fionnuala Walsh points out that while separation allowances were no match for inflation, they were relatively generous, which probably fed into an element of public resentment towards these women.[15]

Unsurprisingly, the Free State's Irish Army Pensions Act of 1923 was informed by the history of British war pensions, in particular, the dependants' cases were influenced by the treatment and perception of 'separation wives' during the Great War. An examination of several of these files reveals the consequences of the often-yawning gap between policy, perception, and the reality of people's lives.[16] For female applicants, in particular, the right to a dependant's pension was shaped by considerations of morality, in particular, sexual morality. This essay focuses on the file generated by Patrick Perry's death in 1922 because it combined various aspects concerning everyday family life and the new Irish state found in many other dependant files, while raising more explicit questions concerning legitimate dependency than many other cases.[17]

In August 1922, the tragic death of a young National Army soldier, Patrick Perry created an unsettling quandary for Irish army bureaucrats.[18] Patrick had signed up on the 17 July 1922 and was shot, killed, and buried in the army plot in Glasnevin Cemetery, Dublin, within the month. His burial on 14 August 1922 happened on the same day word of his death reached his wife, Rose. She was with her two children in the House of Recovery and Fever Hospital, Cork Street in Dublin, being treated for whooping cough. We know all this because on the day of Patrick's burial, Dr John Marshall Day, the medical superintendent of the Fever Hospital, wrote to Captain John P. Stafford, of burials at Army GHQ, on behalf of Rose who had 'heard today that [her husband] was killed in Cork'. He wished to know if 'this be correct?'[19] He did not get a prompt response because his letter caused considerable confusion in the Army Pensions Branch which was aware of an alternative reading of the Perry family's circumstances, provided to them by the deceased's mother.

On 23 August, Captain Stafford wrote to the adjutant general to explain that he had believed Patrick Perry to be a single man and it was on that basis that he had been dealing with his mother and sister. However, when he received Dr Day's letter he visited 'the woman mentioned', only to be told by her that she had 'lived with deceased as his wife during the past three years, and that she has two children of whom he is the Father'.[20] Rose Perry also told him that she was a 'married woman living apart from her husband'. He ended his letter with the question that would take almost four years for the Irish state to finally answer: 'Please say who are the dependents in this case'.[21]

It initially looked as though it would turn out well for Mrs Rose Perry and her children, when on 31 August 1922, the army finance officer outlined the law regarding dependants and expressed the conviction that, irrespective of legal marriage, 'A woman who has been dependent on a soldier for her maintenance and who has been supported regularly by him on a bona fide permanent domestic basis comes under this definition.'[22] He went on to specify that in this case: 'it appears clear that the man did not contribute towards the support of his mother and sister before enlistment. If, therefore, it is fully established that the man did maintain the woman and children referred to by Dr. Day, these people are the dependants.'[23] Rose and her children may well have had a very different life but for his *post scriptum* observation that it 'might be considered that there is a question of policy involved in such cases as this. If it is so considered, you will, doubtless, refer to the Minister before taking action.'[24]

It appears nothing much happened in the microcosm of army bureaucracy until it was once again prompted by a letter from Dr Day, on 2 October 1922, inquiring about what was to happen to Rose Perry's two children. The Fever Hospital had employed her that month as a servant, but the job was contingent on her ability to find care for her children. The Dublin Union (workhouse) had refused to take the children 'back' without her. Clearly, Rose had resorted to poor relief before her husband died and had been transferred from there to hospital when sick with whooping cough. Thus, her need to prove herself the legitimate dependant of Patrick Perry was an existential necessity, if she wished to keep her children

13 Ibid., p. 128.

14 Walsh, *Irish women and the Great War*, pp 108-13.

15 Ibid., p. 95.

16 The sample reviewed included: MSPC, 3D213 Michael J. Baker; MSPC, DP654 Patrick Joseph Banks; MSPC, 2D283 Michael Bannon; MSPC, DP660 Patrick Barcoe; MSPC, 3D1 Daniel Bell; MSPC, 2D22 James Byrne; MSPC, 2D213 Christopher Caffrey; MSPC, 3D293 Patrick Callaghan; MSPC, DP1542 Myles Carroll; MSPC, 2D248 John Carter; MSPC, DP2100 Margaret Doherty; MSPC, 3D245 Jeremiah Mahony; MSPC, MSP34REF64176 Maria Marren (Stenson); MSPC, 2D451 Martin Moloney; MSPC, DP5995 Ellen Murray; MSPC, 1D66 James McCormack; MSPC, 3D57 Laurence O'Connor; MSPC, DP2702 Christopher Olden; MSPC, DP2719 Thomas O'Leary; MSPC, 2D135 Michael Purcell; MSPC, 2D450 Henry Quinn; MSPC, DP3844 William Reardon; MSPC, 3D205 James Ryan; MSPC, DP7025 Patrick Stenson; MSPC, 1D127 William Thornton; MSPC, 2D188 Percy Tweedle; MSPC, 2D356 Thomas Uniacke; MSPC, 2D310 Frederick Weatherup; MSPC, 4D74 Laurence Whyte; MSPC, 3D155 Alexander Albert Williams.

17 Out of the sample above, files that explicitly raise issues concerning legitimacy and/or morality were: MSPC, 2D451 Martin Moloney; MSPC, 3D205 James Ryan; MSPC, 2D356 Thomas Uniacke.

18 I am grateful to Marie Coleman for highlighting this case. See Coleman, 'Compensation claims and women's experience of violence and loss in revolutionary Ireland, 1921-23' in Linda Connolly (ed.), *Women and the Irish revolution, 1917-1923: feminism, activism, violence* (Newbridge, 2020), pp 129-47.

19 Dr John Marshall Day, The House of Recovery and Fever Hospital, Cork Street, to O/C, Portobello Barracks, 14 Aug. 1922; see, Record of death and interment, Capt. John P. Stafford, O/C Interments, Portobello Barracks, 1 Sept. 1924, MSPC, 2D133 Patrick Perry.

20 Capt. John P. Stafford, Officer in Charge of Burials, GHQ, to Adjutant General, n.d. *c*. 23 Aug. 1922, ibid.

21 Ibid.

22 Thomas Gorman, Army Finance Office, Dublin Castle, to Adjutant General, 31 Aug. 1922, MSPC, 2D133 Patrick Perry.

23 Ibid.

24 Ibid.

with her. Day explained to the army that 'If the Authorities wish to pay for the children we will be glad to keep them on until such arrangements ascan be made.' [25]

Unbeknownst to Rose the official tide was turning against her claim: a memo on 21 October from the adjutant general, entitled 'Claim of unmarried wives', outlined that the General Staff was of the view that 'these women could not be recognised as rightful dependents'.[26] While her children were supplied with £5 for clothing out of discretionary funds, a decision regarding her wifely legitimacy hung in the confused bureaucratic balance.[27] On 4 December 1922, the deputy adjutant general noted that while he had thought the General Staff had concluded Mrs Rose Perry was not entitled as a dependant under the legislation, the minister's letter implied a change in policy. It is not clear which minister this memo referred to as no corresponding letter remains on file, however, in view of the role the minister for finance ultimately played in this case, it was most likely the minister for defence, Richard Mulcahy, who had expressed his willingness to recognise Rose as a legitimate dependant. The deputy adjutant general believed recognising Patrick Perry's 'unmarried wife' was a simple enough matter of 'instructing the PAY-MASTER accordingly'.[28]

On 25 November 1922, Rose Perry's first laboured letter in pencil landed on the army's desk. The main purpose of her letter was to protect her new job, which she feared would be jeopardised by any official investigation into her dependent status: 'please pardon me taking the liberty of writing to you', she began, 'I want to ask you a great favour…'.[29] Like thousands of other Irish people whose education stopped at primary level, Rose had little sense of punctuation and syntax, but her letter reveals articulacy and clarity of thought, as well as a keen sense of the moral status quo.[30] She was fearful that Dr Day's well-meaning letter would lead him to discover her irregular union with Patrick Perry, the father of two of her youngest children. She had no doubts that this knowledge would lead to the withdrawal of her job.

In her short letter, Rose provided a sense of the stress borne of the social lie she lived, while testifying to the limited options many mothers faced in the socio-economic climate of the 1920s. She explained:

> you will have a letter from a gentleman concerning me, about money I am a maid here and one of the ladies asked me had I got no money yet after my husband being Killed so I said no. They think here I was married and I want to ask you would you please let them think so I would have to leave the place if they found me out and I have got a nice post here I was unfortunate enough to be foolish but I suffered for it I got a very bad husband and I had to leave him and then I went and lived with this man that was killed in Cork I want to atone for the past and be good so I ask you if you get any letters concerning me and money matters that you will send some answer that will put them off the mans name was Sergant patrick perry 20 Brook Field Terrace Blackrock.
>
> I was living with him for 4 years and I hope and trust you will look after the poor little children and God will reward you. Captain Stafford will tell you about everything ~~he he~~ I have been to see him about things
>
> I remain yours
> Respectfuly
> R. perry[31]

The syntax of Rose's letter highlights the aspects of her story she wished to emphasise and, possibly, how she wished to portray or saw herself. She had not sought compensation for her 'husband being Killed', it had been another lady, someone of social status, who had alerted her to her due. This lady's concern had been predicated on a belief that Rose was legally married to her children's father. Thus, the favour Rose asked was that the army not blow her social cover, not for herself but for 'the poor little children'. Her use of the article 'the' before children, instead of 'my', left them suspended in a place of prayer, untainted by her foolishness. She would have been aware that in the moral discourse of the time, there was a concern to spare children from the consequences of their parents' 'sins'. If there was sympathy to be had, this is where it resided.

The way she framed her own role is also revealing: she had been 'unfortunate enough to be foolish', her own agency mediated by the vagaries of fate and a husband who had made her 'suffer' for her error in marrying him. Rose's legal husband had been violent forcing her to leave him. She merged her decision to go and live 'with this man that was killed in Cork' with her desire to 'atone for the past and be good', implicitly accepting that while there was some social sympathy for leaving a violent husband, there was none for establishing a second sexual partnership.[32]

Less than two months later the second female claimant in the Patrick Perry case entered the dynamic of the bureaucratic cauldron. Mrs Mary, or May, Perry, Patrick's widowed mother wrote to 'Officers in Command' on 9 February 1923, to follow up on her 'enquiries about Patrick Perry No. V. R. 1351 who was killed in action in Cork 7th August 1922 ^Dublin Guard^'.[33] The 'Deceased's mother', as she was known within the Army Pensions Branch, was evidently more *au fait* with how officialdom worked and the lexicon it demanded than Rose. She supplied all the relevant bureaucratic identifiers required: her son's army number, his unit, the place, and date of his death. She explained: 'I have not yet received any compensation for my loss; he always gave me from 12/- to 14/- per week. I mentioned in my last letter I am widow & in very poor circumstances & I would be very grateful for some help'.[34]

25 Dr Marshall Day, The House of Recovery and Fever Hospital, to Adjutant, Portobello Barracks, 2 Oct. 1922, MSPC, 2D133 Patrick Perry.

26 Adjutant General to Army Finance Officer, 21 Oct. 1922, ibid.

27 Deputy Adjutant General to Army Finance Officer, 4 Dec. 1922, ibid.

28 Ibid.

29 Rose Perry, Cork St. Dublin, to Office of the Adjutant General, received 25 Nov. 1922, MSPC, 2D133 Patrick Perry.

30 See thousands of letters written to the Archbishop Byrne between 1920 and 1940. Lindsey Earner-Byrne, *Letters of the Catholic poor: poverty in independent Ireland, 1920-1940* (Cambridge, 2017).

31 Rose Perry, Cork St. Dublin, to Office of the Adjutant General, received 25 Nov. 1922, MSPC, 2D133 Patrick Perry. Please note the letter is reproduced as faithfully as possible, no corrections have been made, but nor has [sic] been used to maintain authenticity.

32 Cara Diver, *Marital violence in post-independence Ireland, 1922-1996: 'a living tomb for women'* (Manchester, 2019).

33 Mary Perry, 20 Brookfield Terrace, Blackrock, Co. Dublin, to Officer in Command, 9 Feb. 1923, MSPC, 2D133 Patrick Perry.

34 Ibid.

The letter made a virtue of brevity and in that respect was similar to hundreds of similar letters written at this time by people forced to negotiate for survival with a myriad of charities and statutory bodies. The economy of makeshifts took time, skill, perseverance, and resilience. Mrs Mary Perry knew her readers had little interest in any emotional calculation of her loss; this was the universe of bottom lines and balance sheets, thus she provided them with a pounds and pence estimation of her son's value. *Her* loss was explicitly claimed because she was keenly aware of a competing claim on her son's lost earnings; she reinforced this by signing off 'Mary Perry (his Mother)'. Within a month she wrote again, this time solely to address the other claim: 'The late Private Patrick Perry was my son, & was not legally married to the woman he was living with, as her legal husband was & is still alive.'[35]

Patrick's mother was no stranger to struggle. According to the 1911 census, she was born in Cumberland in England in the mid-1860s and married a van driver at the age of eighteen.[36] She spent the two decades of her marriage carrying and birthing fourteen children of which eleven survived.[37] On 3 December 1917 she was widowed at fifty-four years of age.[38] At the time of Patrick's death, she still had one daughter at home and had not yet reached the qualifying age for the old age pension. Thus, she lived in a female universe of poor job prospects and even worse pay. Historians are aware of the boon the old age pension represented to so many Irish citizens, however, this archive underscores how essential non-market subsidies were to protecting women from poverty long before old age.[39] File after file highlights how many women huddled together under the slim protection of one man's earnings, often not their husband's, but a son or brother. Patrick's mother claimed she had at one point been dependent on her deceased son's weekly pension as a result of his time in the British army (Irish Guards).[40]

Rose's position was equally precarious. The bureaucratic process slowly extracted a relatively comprehensive picture of her life. The army requested Rose's local police to investigate her circumstances. This was standard in dependency cases and is a reminder of how, if you wished to make a claim on the state, you had to be prepared to surrender the details of your life conducive to a bureaucratic biography. You had to be a legible citizen. On 5 October 1924, Dún Laoghaire Dublin Metropolitan Police Inspector M. Walsh provided a classic report of Rose's situation. Employing the idioms these forms demanded, Walsh transformed Rose into 'the applicant', her dead husband 'the deceased', and their relationship into a contract of dependency, confirming 'the applicant was wholly dependent on him'.[41] He noted: 'Deceased before joining the army was a labourer at ship building work in Grenock Scotland

35 Mary Perry, 20 Brookfield Terrace, Blackrock, Co. Dublin, to Adjutant General, 7 Apr. 1923, MSPC, 2D133 Patrick Perry.

36 She gave her date of birth as 10 January 1864 in her Dependant's Allowance or Gratuity form, 6 Dec. 1923, ibid.

37 The 1911 Census of Ireland reveals the family lived at same address as Mary Perry corresponded from in the 1920s. In 1911 Patrick lived at home with seven other siblings and both parents. He was returned as fifteen years of age and a scholar, all his siblings were also scholars, except his twenty-five-year-old sister and twenty-one-year-old brother, who were a laundry maid and a general labourer, respectively.

38 William Perry's death was registered in the Dublin South Union on 4 December 1917.

39 Cormac Ó Gráda, '"The greatest blessing of all": the old age pension in Ireland' in *Past & Present,* no. 175 (2002), pp 124-61.

40 See, Army Pensions Act, 1923, Dependant's Allowance or Gratuity A.P.5. form, 6 Dec. 1923 and her letter dated 9 Sept. 1923.

41 Police Report, 5 Oct. 1924, MSPC, 2D133 Patrick Perry.

and was contributing about £3.10 weekly to his wife the applicant.'[42] This confirmed Patrick's mother's information that in between being a member of the Irish Guards and joining the Irish army, Patrick had migrated in search of work taking Rose to Scotland.

The inspector's information on Rose's situation illuminated two common strategies that widows (and some widowers) employed to survive. Rose was living with her mother and surviving on the latter's old age pension and her two youngest children, who were four and five, were in St Brigid's Orphanage on Eccles Street in Dublin city centre. Intergenerational dependency and the temporary surrendering of children to institutional care marked the lives of many of Ireland's poor. Indeed, for all the valorising of the Irish family, it was relatively routine for state subsidies to be used to pay for children in an institution so a mother could work, clearly indicating that economic self-sufficiency was more important than the survival of the family unit. The fact that Rose's job in the Cork Street Fever Hospital had not lasted was also common for mothers in the labour market – a sick child, frail parent, or personal ill-health (which was the case with Rose) or exhaustion caused repeated breaks in women's labour market participation. This fed into their treatment as unreliable, poor, or inefficient workers, not worthy of any investment, which was in turn used to pay them less, and increased the likelihood of them being unreliable and on it went. If single mothers survived life's attempts to drown them, it would surely burn them at the stake for child neglect or inadequate mothering.

On 16 January 1925 Rose was interviewed by J.J. Horgan, secretary of the Army Pensions Board, during which she told him that her first husband had joined the Royal Dublin Fusiliers in 1915 and had 'never returned to her since'.[43] This was the marriage that Rose had already intimated had been violent. Horgan noted that Rose had two older children conceived during this legal marriage. The state's first impulse in cases such as these was to ensure there was no 'able-bodied male' who could be held financially responsible for either the woman and/or the children. Hence, Horgan noted that Rose had assured him that 'All attempts to trace [the legal husband] and make him contribute to the upkeep of his children have failed.'[44] His framing was entirely consistent with gendered and class assumptions of the period. Rose was construed as a vessel of paternal property, for example, Horgan noted 'Mooney's children, aged 11 and 8, are living with Claimant's Mother.' There was no sense that these children were Rose's, she herself was reduced to a 'Claimant', her social identity centring around whether her dependency could be legally laid at the army's door. Horgan pointedly noted: 'Claimant's proper name is Mooney as she was married to a man of that name.' Rose did not tell him, she 'admitted' she was the 'un-married wife of the late Sergeant Patrick Perry, with whom she went to live about October, 1918'.[45] This decision may well have been a move of love on Rose's part, but it was also a wise strategic decision for a single mother with two children. Patrick and herself then migrated to Scotland in search of work and returned when he joined the new Irish state's army. In view of the wider economic landscape,

42 Ibid.

43 Note by J.J. Horgan on his interview with Rose Perry, 16 Jan. 1925, MSPC, 2D133 Patrick Perry.

44 Ibid.

45 Rose married James Mooney on 12 February 1911 and, according to the 1911 census, they lived in 11 Brookfield, Blackrock, the same street as Patrick Perry. When James Mooney left Rose their two children were under four years of age.

it is easy to see why the new Irish army was an attractive employer. However, for Patrick and Rose, it was a miscalculation as it took his life in less than a fortnight leaving her with four orphaned children under ten. Rose had obviously been asked to address Patrick Perry's mother's claim, as Horgan noted: 'Claimant states Perry never contributed to his Mother's upkeep.' It would appear that poverty had eroded Rose's health. Horgan concluded that she was 'ill and is now out of work and living with her Mother.'[46]

On 26 February 1925, the Army Pensions Board considered the case again, in the light of the new biographical information Horgan had gathered, and recommended: 'No grant to Claimant who was not legitimate wife of deceased.' However, it approved five shillings per week for the youngest child and three shillings and sixpence per week for the oldest, until they each reached eighteen years of age.[47] When the treasury solicitor considered the case he argued that Rose had no claims. While he could find no 'authority for payment to illegitimate children of a member of the National Army', he believed the 'position is a cruel one as on the face of it there seems no good reason why helpless children should suffer for their parents' error.' He also noted that the British army paid allowances in such cases and, thus, he believed 'a broad view might be taken of the case so as to enable the expression "child" to be read in its natural sense as opposed to its strictly legal sense'.[48] Where there was a bureaucratic will, there was a way.

Unfortunately, for the children of 'this unofficial union' their fate was referred to the minister for finance for the ultimate ruling.[49] The Department of Defence prepared the bureaucratic ground for a favourable decision. While it agreed (which was a change to its original position) as an unmarried wife, Rose was not entitled to an allowance and that it is likely the 1923 Act 'contemplates the issue of allowance to legitimate children only', it nonetheless wondered:

> Under the British Pensions Scheme allowances are made to children in analogous circumstances, and if I am correct in my interpretation that an award cannot be made under the Army Pensions Act, 1923, I am to enquire, in view of the unfortunate position of these children, whether it is desired, as a matter of policy, that an award under paragraph 2 of the Third Schedule to the Act, should be made in this case.

While the Department enclosed the negative legal opinion of the treasury solicitor, it stressed that the 'Minister favours the grant of an allowance to Perry's two children'.[50] While the minister for finance took over a year to decide, he remained true to form concluding: 'in view of the legal advice obtained in connection with the case, he regrets that he is precluded from consenting to an award under paragraph 2 of the third schedule of the Army Pensions Act, 1923'.[51] This marked the end of the line for Rose's chances of securing a pension based on the father of her children's death.

46 Note by J.J. Horgan, 16 Jan. 1925, MSPC, 2D133 Patrick Perry.

47 This decision was noted on Rose Perry's Certificate of Assessment, 26 Feb. 1925, ibid.

48 P. Coll, Treasury Solicitor, to Deputy Army Finance Officer, 6 Mar. 1925, ibid.

49 Army Finance Office, to Secretary, Minister for Defence, Dublin, 20 Mar. 1925, ibid.

50 Army Finance Office, to Secretary, Dept. of Finance, 9 Apr. 1925, ibid.

51 Dept. of Finance to Army Finance Officer, 25 May 1926, ibid.

Applying for statutory benefits or pensions required patience, tenacity, and the capacity to repeat the biography of one's grief many times. In total, five letters were filed from Mary Perry and three from Rose Perry, and both refer to letters they wrote that were no longer on file. In each of their letters they had to repeat the official information concerning Patrick's death, transforming him over and over again into an abstraction – 'the deceased' – remembered for his financial contribution to their respective lives.[52] Bureaucracy demanded particular stories that were intrinsically desensitised and desensitising. On 28 April 1924 Patrick Perry's mother was awarded a gratuity of £50.[53] It would be the only form of compensation she received from the Irish army for the death of her son.

Conclusion

The Patrick Perry case is but one example of how tenuous women's financial claims on the state were and how easily they were weakened by moral judgement and legal shadowboxing. While much about this case is unique to it, it shares many characteristics with other case files in this Collection: the gendered understanding of dependency was key to officialdom's definition of the role of the state when the family broke down; the lived experience of Irish families was considerably more complex than bureaucrats were willing to accommodate, grief was monetised and sanitised in the reductive process of 'claim-making' meaning compassion was a poor defence against bureaucracy's whims, morality frequently informed the decision-making process and this was often inflected by class, and, finally, but crucially, the idea of the law as neutral and immutable rather than man-made, biased, and subject to varying interpretation, underlay the rationale of many decisions.

While Rose and her children were ultimately denied a pension on the basis that she had not been legally married to the children's father, the evocation of the law in this case was entirely spurious. There was nothing in the Army Pensions Act of 1923 that required legal marriage to prove familial dependency prior to death. It is surely no coincidence that the minister for finance, Ernest Blythe, was the same man Walsh notes took time out to impugn the 'separation women' in his Bureau of Military History statement as 'the rabble of the city'.[54] Blythe's decision to shape the army dependants' policy along moral lines quite different to the British model, reinforces Osamu Saito's observation that the male-breadwinner model was also influenced by cultural-specific factors and government stance in relation to welfare policies and other forms of support legislation.[55] The 'personal is also institutional': the structures and institutions we build reproduce our prejudices.[56]

The MSPC also highlights how the logic of this welfare intervention was rooted in beliefs about how the family *should* work rather than how it often did work. It assumed rarefied familial experiences in which men earned enough and contributed consistently what they earned. Deborah Dinner notes

52 Mary Perry, 20 Brookfield Terrace, 10 Sept. 1923; Mary Perry, 20 Brookfield Terrace, 9 Oct. 1923, ibid.

53 Recommendation of Army Pensions Board, 25 Apr. 1924, ibid.

54 BMH, WS 939 Ernest Blythe; Walsh, *Irish women and the Great War*, p. 113.

55 Osamu Saito, 'Historical origins of the male breadwinner household model: Britain, Sweden and Japan' in *Japan Labor Review*, xi, no. 4 (2014), pp 5-20.

56 Sara Ahmed, 'Introduction: sexism – a problem with a name' in *New Formations: a Journal of Culture/Theory/Politics,* no. 86 (2015), pp 5-13.

that the 'gendered imagination' of policy makers in the first half of the twentieth century anchored law and welfare in notions of male invulnerability and female vulnerability.[57] In reality, female vulnerability was the inevitable result of this male-breadwinner fiction. In many senses this archive is the natural outcome of that model which rendered women dependants, while, as Griffin has observed of Britain, never releasing enough wealth to eliminate the necessity for mothers to find paid work.[58]

Female dominated households with young children were the most vulnerable in this economic structure. In the Patrick Perry file, the woman most financially secure was Rose's mother, simply because she was old enough to qualify for the old age pension. In other words, it was the life cycle that was critical in female financial welfare: single women, prior to marriage, and women old enough to qualify for the pension had the best chance of financial security, if not attached to an earning man.[59] Many other women were destined to struggle with poor wages, poor job opportunities and paltry, and often punitive, relief/welfare regimes. The MSPC archive, particularly the dependant files, reveals the inherent inequality of the male-breadwinner model that left countless female-headed households at the mercy of an economic model that idealised the family as a unit of stable mutual support. The gender dynamics of this system are literally performed in this archive in which the majority of decision makers were male, while the majority of those pleading dependence claims were female. It is a sad reality that a system that structurally guaranteed female dependence and poverty, was as likely to bind women together for survival as it was to pitch them against each other for the meagre resources available. Children never won in such contests.

Patrick Joyce notes it is 'in *administration* that the true life of the state' is found.[60] In many respects the MSPC files are a performance of statehood: in the paperwork of this archive the 'micro-technologies and the micro-operations of power' are played out through the tentacles of the state.[61] For the thousands of people that engaged with this administrative process the experience was a crucial encounter with their state which could change the course of their lives. This bureaucratic archive also makes explicit the profoundly human nature of economy – policies may be abstract, but their impact is personal. The imperative to transform grief into a claim of entitlement must just have added insult to injury.

Further reading:

Marie Coleman, 'Compensation claims and women's experience of violence and loss in revolutionary Ireland, 1921-23' in Linda Connolly (ed.), *Women and the Irish revolution, 1917-1923: feminism, activism, violence* (Newbridge, 2020), pp 129-47

Cara Diver, *Marital violence in post-independence Ireland, 1922-1996: 'a living tomb for women'* (Manchester, 2019)

57 Deborah Dinner, 'Vulnerability as a category of historical analysis: initial thoughts in tribute to Martha Albertson Fineman' in *Emory Law Journal,* lxvii, no. 6 (2018), pp 1149-63.

58 Griffin, *Bread winner*, pp 27-61.

59 Sara Horrell, Jane Humphries, and Jacob Weisdorf, 'Beyond the male breadwinner: life-cycle living standards of intact and disrupted English working families, 1260–1850' in *Economic History Review*, lxxv, no. 2 (2022), p. 531.

60 Patrick Joyce. *The state of freedom: a social history of the British state since 1800* (Cambridge, 2013), p. 2.

61 Ibid., p. 3.

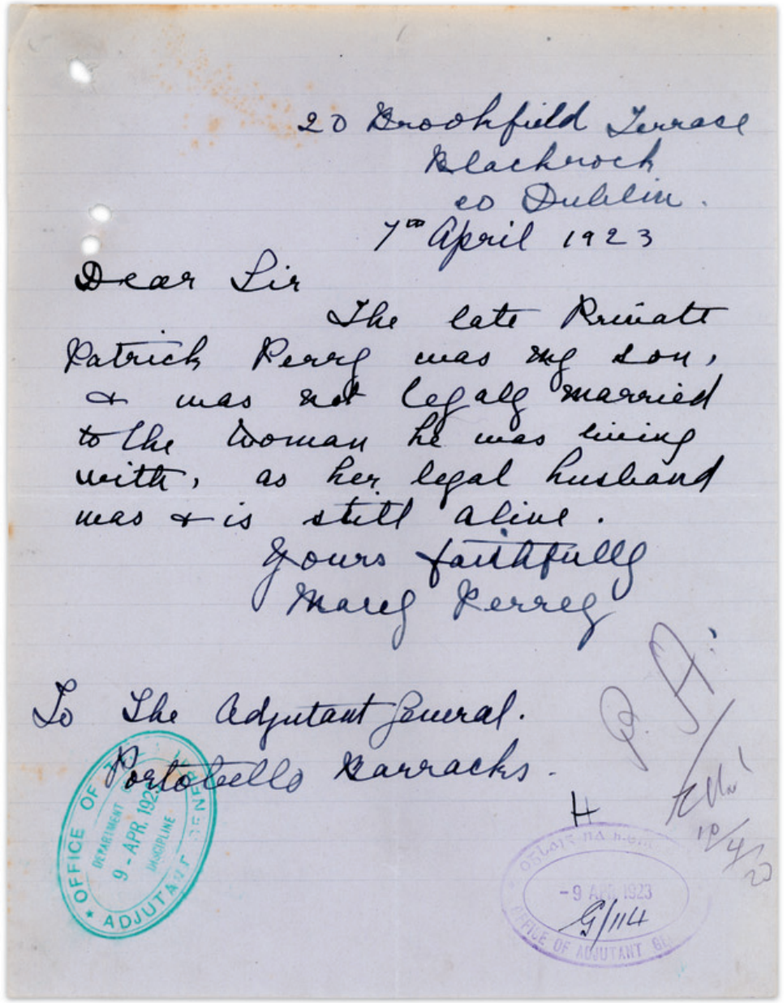
Emma Griffin, *Bread winner: an intimate history of the Victorian economy* (Yale, 2020)

Janis Lomas, '"Delicate duties": issues of class and respectability in government policy towards the wives and widows of British soldiers in the era of the Great War' in *Women's History Review*, ix, no. 1 (2000), pp 123-47

Fionnuala Walsh, *Irish women and the Great War* (Cambridge, 2020)

Nurses and patients on the 'lower landing', Cork Street Fever Hospital, 1903.

Image courtesy of the Royal College of Physicians Ireland (CSFH/1/2/1/6).



20 Brookfield Terrace
Blackrock
Co Dublin.
7th April 1923

Dear Sir

The late Private Patrick Perry was my son, & was not legally married to the woman he was living with, as her legal husband was & is still alive.

Yours faithfully
Mary Perry

To The Adjutant General.
Portobello Barracks.

OFFICE OF ADJUTANT GENERAL
DEPARTMENT
9 APR 1923
DISCIPLINE

OIFIGIG NA H-EIREANN
9 AUG 1923
G/1114
OFFICE OF ADJUTANT GENERAL

10/4/23

Left

Mary Perry asserts that her son, Patrick, was not married to 'the woman [Rose Perry] he was living with, as her legal husband was & is still alive'.

Reference:
Patrick Perry 2D133.

Right

Army Finance Officer Thomas Gorman clarifies the understanding of dependants in this case: 'a woman who has been dependent on a soldier for her maintenance...'. With no reference to marriage, this would seemingly be in Rose Perry's favour, however, the handwritten note on the document calls into question the 'policy involved in such cases'.

Reference:
Patrick Perry 2D133.

PHONE 4281.
Ex: 66.

Reference A/63.

OIFIGIG NA H-EIREANN
RE
1 SEP 1922
G. 114.
OFFICE OF ADJUTANT GENERAL

ARMY FINANCE OFFICE,
MINISTRY OF DEFENCE,
DUBLIN CASTLE,

31st August, 1922.

Adjutant General,

The basis on which the question of dependance in a case of this kind is determined is as follows:-

The "dependants" of an unmarried soldier means such members of the family or household as were wholly or in part dependent upon the earnings of the soldier for a reasonable period before enlistment and may include any person who is found as a fact to have been dependent on the soldier. A woman who has been dependent on a soldier for her maintenance and who has been supported regularly by him on a bona fide permanent domestic basis comes under this definition.

In the present case, it appears clear that the man did not contribute towards the support of his mother and sister before enlistment. If, therefore, it is fully established that the man did maintain the woman and children referred to by Dr. Day, these people are the dependants.

Thomas Gorman
Army Finance Officer.

It might be considered that there is a question of policy involved in such cases as this. If it is so considered, you will, doubtless, refer the matter before taking action.

Cork st Dublin

Sir

please pardon me taking the liberty of writing to you I want to ask you a great favour I expect you will have a letter from a gentleman concerning me, about money I am a maid here and one of the ladies asked me had I got no money yet after my husband being killed so I said no. They think here I was married and I want to ask you would you please let them think so I would have to leave the place if they found me out and I

(27052)

Sergant patrick perry
20 Brookfield Terrace
Black Rock.

I was living with him for 14 years and I hope and trust you will look after the poor little children and God will reward you. Captain Stoffar will tell you about everything I have been to see him about things I remain yours

Respectfully
R. Perry

have got a nice post here I was unfortunate enough to be foolish but I suffered for it I got a very bad husband and I had to leave him and then I went and lived with this man that was killed in Cork I want to atone for the past and be good so I ask you if you get any letters concerning me and money matters that you will send some answer that will put them off the mans name was.

Above

Fearful of losing her position, Rose Perry appeals on behalf of herself and her children to the Pensions Board to maintain her claim that she was married to Patrick Perry. She describes herself as ‘unfortunate enough to be foolish’ but pleads on behalf of ‘the poor little children’.

Reference:
Patrick Perry 2D133.

Illuminating the tragedies of Kerry: the Military Service Pensions Collection and the Civil War in Kerry

Daithí Ó Corráin

On 10 March 1923 John C. Brosnan, an undertaker on Main Street, Castleisland, County Kerry was paid £10 in cash for a coffin. John Kerry O'Connor's thriving 'The Emporium' in Castleisland supplied a hearse for £2 and other funeral requirements for a further £1 10s.[1] These sums represented a small fortune for a bereaved father with insufficient grass on his three-acre holding for his two cows. Two of the man's daughters lived at home but were unemployed and another son, Patrick, was so ill-treated at the hands of the National Army while in custody in Tralee that he never recovered and died on 25 January 1927.[2] This was the grim situation that confronted Patrick Daly of Ahaneboy, Castleisland, when he set about interring what remained of his son, John ('Jack'), in Kilbannivane cemetery outside Castleisland. The latter was one of eight prisoners infamously blown up by a landmine at Ballyseedy on 7 March 1923. While John Daly's name and gruesome end have been documented, the lives of his father and siblings have not registered in the historical record. The detail provided in military service pension applications has decisively changed this and presents a hitherto unknown opportunity to trace some of the historical contours of family, locality, and county. Drawing on examples from pension applications pertaining to deaths in Kerry in March 1923, this essay reflects on some of these new research possibilities.

The bloodshed in Kerry in March 1923 stands apart for its savagery, vengefulness, and extra-judicial nature. The sequence of events is well known.[3] In the early hours of 6 March 1923 Paddy Pats O'Connor, from Knockaunatee, Castleisland, and a second lieutenant attached to the intelligence department of the Kerry Command of the National Army, was killed instantly by a booby-trap mine in Barranarig Wood near Knocknagoshel. He had been given information that Humphrey Murphy and other prominent members of the anti-Treaty IRA were sheltering there. Captains Michael Dunne and Edward Stapleton of Dublin were also killed along with two Kerry natives, Privates Michael Galvin from Killarney and Laurence O'Connor from Causeway.[4] Over the next fortnight, nineteen republican prisoners in Kerry were killed at the hands of the National Army in three landmine explosions and in individual killings

1 Receipt from John C. Brosnan, 6 Mar. 1933; Receipt from J.K. O'Connor and Sons, The Emporium, Castleisland, 18 Dec. 1933, MSPC, DP51 John Daly.

2 Report by D. McAsey, Customs and Excise, Killarney, to Secretary, Army Pensions Board, 5 Mar. 1934; Julia Sheehan (sister of John Daly) to Dept. of Defence, 16 Oct. 1953, ibid.

3 See Niall C. Harrington, *A Kerry landing* (Dublin, 1992), pp 147-9; T. Ryle Dwyer, *Tans, terror and troubles: Kerry's real fighting story, 1913-23* (Cork, 2001), pp 367-73; Michael Hopkinson, *Green against green: the Irish Civil War* (2nd ed., Dublin, 2004), pp 240-2; Tom Doyle, *The Civil War in Kerry* (Cork, 2008), pp 271-6; Tim Horgan, *Dying for the cause: Kerry's republican dead* (Cork, 2015), pp 200-2; Gavin Foster, 'The Civil War in Kerry in history and memory' in Maurice J. Bric (ed.), *Kerry history and society: interdisciplinary essays in the history of an Irish county* (Dublin, 2020), pp 476-7; Owen O'Shea, *No middle path: the Civil War in Kerry* (Newbridge, 2022), pp 82-106.

4 Acting Command Adjutant, Southern Command, to Adjutant General, GHQ, Dublin, 16 June 1924, MSPC, 3D58 Patrick O'Connor; Barranarig Memorial, Knocknagoshel.

for allegedly attempting to escape. Revenge for Barranarig Wood came swiftly. A mine constructed in Tralee by Captains Jim Clarke and Edward Flood of the National Army was placed in a mound of stones at Ballyseedy crossroads, about three miles from Tralee.[5] Nine prisoners were selected at Ballymullen barracks. All bar John O'Connor, who was from Waterford, were Kerrymen. Stephen Fuller survived the explosion and escaped. He later recounted to Robert Kee, the British writer, journalist, and broadcaster, and to the *Kerryman* newspaper how the prisoners' ankles and knees were tied together and how the wounded were finished off by machine-gun fire.[6] John Daly had been a prisoner in Ballymullen for over a month and had no involvement with the mine at Barranarig. On the same day, a similar premeditated killing of four captives took place in Killarney at Countess Bridge with one prisoner, Tadhg Coffey, escaping. Five days later, another batch of five prisoners were shot in the legs before being placed beside a landmine at Bahaghs near Caherciveen. There were no survivors to relate what had happened. A military inquiry into the killings was little more than a whitewash as it was headed by General Paddy O'Daly who had authorised the reprisal policy in the first place.

A wide variety of disciplines use census data for the study of the past. The digitisation of the 1911 census of Ireland in 2009 and the 1901 census a year later were landmarks that have transformed our understanding of what Ireland was like. Whereas the nominative census lists allow us to see the composition and size of households, the Military Service Pensions Collection facilitates the testing of the quality of the census data. That will become more apparent when the long-wished-for 1926 census is made available to the public in January 2026. Furthermore, while census data provides a snapshot of household composition, the reports of police, social welfare officials, and customs and excise officers in the MSPC reveal how a household fared over time. They answer questions such as what became of schoolchildren listed as 'scholar' in the 1911 census when they grew up, how many acres were farmed, was the holding sufficient to sustain a family in independent Ireland, and how many offspring emigrated.

To illustrate how the MSPC can complement census data, let us take the example of John Sugrue of Canuig, Ballinaskellings, who was killed at Bahaghs on 12 March 1923. The census reveals that his parents, Patrick Sugrue and Ellen Fitzgerald, had ten children by 1911, of whom seven had survived.[7] Two more children were born before 1923. John, a nine-year-old schoolboy on census night, was the eldest child and his siblings ranged in age from seven to one. At the time of his death, the family survived on twenty-three acres of mountainy land with a poor law valuation of just £4, sufficient to maintain three cows and their calves.[8] An acre was tilled for potatoes and vegetables and there was no shortage of turf. The family income was supplemented by shore fishing which raised an estimated £15 per annum. John assisted his parents to work the holding as his father suffered from rheumatoid

5 Horgan, *Dying for the cause*, p. 202; Ryle Dwyer, 'Two weeks of bloody massacres' in Simon Brouder (ed.), *Rebel Kerry: from the pages of the Kerryman* (Cork, 2017), p. 181.

6 Fuller spoke about Ballyseedy when interviewed in 1980 by Kee for his thirteen-part documentary series *Ireland – a television history*. Fuller's contribution featured in episode ten on the Irish Civil War on 3 Feb. 1981. Fuller was interviewed at greater length about Ballyseedy by Peter Levy for the *Kerryman* in January 1981, see issue of 30 Jan. 1981.

7 Census of Ireland 1911, entry for Patrick Sugrue (http://www.census.nationalarchives.ie/pages/1911/Kerry/Ballinskelligs/Canuig/103486/) (accessed 30 Jan. 2023).

8 Memorandum by J. Lambe summarising reports of various investigating officers into claims by members of Sugrue family, 8 Oct. 1958, MSPC, DP7845 John Sugrue.

arthritis which, as his doctor certified, 'crippled him to the extent that he is unable to work'.[9] A partial dependency was demonstrated and Patrick Sugrue was awarded the maximum of £112 10*s*. under the Army Pensions Act, 1932. Ellen Sugrue also received an allowance from 1941 until it was withdrawn in 1944 as her means exceeded the maximum amount of £40. Attempts by John's sisters, Annie and Peggy, to secure awards were unsuccessful. Their claims offer fascinating insights into the family's fortunes. During the 1930s, the Fianna Fáil government established five Gaeltacht colonies in County Meath of which Ráth Cairn, populated by twenty-seven families from County Galway in 1935, was the best known.[10] Other colonies were established in the townlands of Kilbride (1937), Gibbstown (1937), Clongill (1939), and Allenstown (1940) as part of a short-lived dual policy of extending the Irish language and relieving agricultural poverty.[11] Five families from Kerry and four from Donegal migrated to Clongill and this included some of the Sugrue family who were allocated a thirty-one-acre holding by the Irish Land Commission. The new farm was valued at £20 10*s*., or four times that of the original Kerry homestead, and by the 1950s it had been transferred to Daniel Sugrue, a younger brother of John, who was married in Meath with four children. This development is a reminder that the Meath resettlement scheme was not confined solely to Irish speakers from Connemara, although they accounted for just over half.[12] It provides an unusually detailed example not only of internal Irish migration but also of upward social mobility. In addition to Daniel Sugrue's status as a landowner, Annie Sugrue became a primary school teacher in Meath. Under part two of the 1953 Army Pensions Act, Patrick Sugrue was granted £180 per annum. This was paid from August 1953 until his death in November 1957 in St Loman's psychiatric hospital in Mullingar, having been made a ward of court for being of unsound mind in August 1955.[13] One wonders if other parents of those killed during the Irish revolution suffered similarly.

The sad end to Patrick Sugrue's life is replicated in other Kerry pension applications. The ill-health and grief of parents as well as abject poverty feature prominently. For example, the police report on the circumstances of sixty-three-year-old Daniel O'Shea of Caherciveen suggest that the 'loss of his own and his wife's health' was due to the death of their son, Captain Timothy O'Shea of the National Army, who was killed on 5 March near Caherciveen. The deceased had been a shoemaker by trade and had contributed between 30*s*. and £2 a week to his parents.[14] When that delicate internal family economy collapsed, Daniel was plunged into straitened circumstances and had to employ a labourer to assist another son with the farm work. In July 1924 he was awarded a gratuity of £75.[15] In a statement signed before his solicitor in 1933, Edward Hartnett of Listowel, whose brother Patrick was killed at Ballyseedy, recounted how his father 'suffered a complete breakdown after the death of his son, and died practically of a broken heart' in March 1932. Furthermore, his mother died in April 1924 from complications arising from a knee injury sustained on a journey from Tralee after Patrick's death. That was not all, however. Edward's brother John, 'practically an invalid', died in June 1923, a short time after being taken from his bed by National Army soldiers. Edward himself was arrested in February, April, and June 1923, even though he was then just a twelve-year-old boy. Another brother Maurice was also arrested frequently at this time.[16] The entire family had depended on the wages of Patrick Hartnett who had worked as a labourer. The dependency was estimated at about £30 per annum. Edward Hartnett's claim under the 1932 Pensions Act was unsuccessful but his sister, Mary, received a partial dependant's gratuity of £112 10*s*. and a dependant's allowance of £125 per annum under the 1953 legislation.[17] The example of Timothy O'Shea reveals the stark economic dependency on their sons of ageing parents in poor health who had not yet reached seventy, the qualifying threshold for the modest security offered by an old age pension. Likewise, many sons also simultaneously supported siblings in delicate health.

Perhaps surprisingly, the families of a number of the anti-Treaty dead applied for a gratuity under the 1923 Pensions Act even though the legislation pertained only to members of the army under the control of the minister for defence and rendering service to the Irish Free State.[18] It was indicative of their dire financial circumstances. Jeremiah Tuomey of Kilflynn, whose son Timothy was blown up at Ballyseedy, was one example. Timothy had worked the family farm which comprised ninety acres, half of which was mountain, and carried a poor law valuation of £12. The application was refused in 1924 but Jeremiah was granted a gratuity of £112 10*s*. on 15 December 1933.[19] From August 1953, Timothy's mother Johanna was awarded a dependant's allowance of £180 until her death in February 1958.[20] Ellen Rearden, mother of William ('Willie') Rearden of Waterville who was killed at Bahaghs, was another who sought a gratuity in vain in the 1920s.[21] Margaret O'Donoghue of Lower New Street, Killarney, made an unsuccessful application in April 1928 in respect of her son Jeremiah, who had been killed at Countess Bridge.[22] Her circumstances were particularly difficult. Her son, an attendant at St Finian's psychiatric hospital, was her 'whole support' as her husband had died in 1923, another son and daughter were unable to work due to ill-health, and a younger child was a schoolboy. 'I am shure', she later wrote despairingly, 'there is nobody feels his [Jeremiah's] death as much as I do, for since that day I have

9 Note by Dr B. Hanley, 21 Jan. 1933, ibid.

10 See Terence Dooley, *'The land for the people': the land question in independent Ireland* (Dublin, 2004), pp 146-52; William Nolan, 'The migration policy of the Irish Land Commission in County Meath: theory and practice' in Arlene Crampsie and Francis Ludlow (eds), *Meath history and society: interdisciplinary essays on the history of an Irish county* (Dublin, 2015), pp 787-819; Suzanne M. Pegley, *The Land Commission and the making of Ráith Cairn: the first Gaeltacht colony* (Dublin, 2011).

11 *Report of the Irish Land Commissioners for the year from 1st April, 1942 to 31st March, 1943* (Dublin, 1943), pp 17-18.

12 Of a total number of 122 families in the five colonies, sixty-three were from Galway, twenty-one from Kerry, eighteen from Mayo, eighteen from Donegal and two from Cork.

13 Gerald Maguire, Office of the General Solicitor for Minors and Wards of Court, to Secretary, Dept. of Defence, pensions section, 8 Sept. 1955; death certificate for Patrick Sugrue, MSPC, DP7845 John Sugrue.

14 Report by Sergt J. Holland on circumstances of Daniel O'Shea, *c*. May 1924, MSPC, 3D63 Timothy O'Shea.

15 Army Pensions Department life certificate, 19 July 1924, ibid.

16 Statement by Edward Hartnett, 4 Apr. 1933, MSPC, DP9533 Patrick Hartnett.

17 Army Pensions Department life certificate, 1 Mar. 1954, ibid.

18 Army Pensions Act, 1923, section 16 (https://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/1923/act/26/enacted/en/print.html) (accessed 9 Feb. 2023).

19 Report by Army Pensions Board on the application of Jeremiah Tuomey, 24 Apr. 1933, MSPC, DP5819 Timothy Tuomey.

20 Secretary, Dept. of Defence, to Con Tuomey, 29 Feb. 1956; Con Tuomey to Secretary, Dept. of Defence, 3 Mar. 1958, ibid.

21 The family spelt their surname 'Rearden' which is what is entered on the 1911 census. Subsequently, the spelling 'Riordan' was used and both appear in the MSPC file along with a third rendering 'Reardon'. Application of Ellen Reardon, 13 Mar. 1933, MSPC, DP3844 William Reardon.

22 Application of Margaret O'Donoghue, 25 Apr. 1928, MSPC, DP3621 Jeremiah O'Donoghue.

put hard times over me, at times practically hungry'.[23] In December 1933 she was granted £112 10*s*. In the 1950s two of Jeremiah's siblings were granted dependants' allowances which made their final years more comfortable. In 1953 Julia O'Donoghue, who survived on weekly sickness benefit of £1 4*s*. out of which she paid her brother 6*s.* to rent a room in his house, was allowed £125 per annum until her death at the age of fifty on 31 March 1959.[24] She was thirteen when Jeremiah was killed, and ill-health had prevented her from attending school regularly. James O'Donoghue, Julia's older brother by three years, worked in Hilliard and Palmers boot factory, one of the main employers in Killarney since its establishment by Richard Hilliard in 1935. Increasing automation in the 1950s reduced the workforce and O'Donoghue was discharged in 1957. A social welfare inspector in Killarney reported that he was forced to live on his savings until they were exhausted and was not entitled to unemployment benefit or social insurance. From 18 May 1960, O'Donoghue was awarded a dependant's allowance of £125 but did not enjoy this benefit for very long as he died in May 1961 at the age of fifty-four.[25]

The circumstances of the families of National Army fatalities in Kerry were just as grim. Margaret O'Connor of Lissycurrig, Causeway, lost her son Laurence when he was killed in Barranarig Wood. A police report indicated that at the time of her application in February 1924 none of the family was employed. Her husband had no regular work and the couple had eight children, the eldest not yet seventeen. The report suggested that the family was maintained by Margaret's parents or parents-in-law.[26] To compound matters, three of the children, including the eldest girl, who had been earning 10*s.* a week, had been stricken with fever in early 1924 and required hospitalisation. This family misfortune coincided with a steady increase throughout 1924 in the cost of living, which by mid-January 1925 was ninety-five per cent above (or almost double) the baseline figure set in July 1914.[27] An initial gratuity of £30 was regarded as derisory by Mrs O'Connor and prompted her to write of her refusal to believe that the Army Pensions Board would 'estimate the life of a young Irishman as of less value than an Irish terrier for which I have often seen larger compensation awarded'.[28] On 31 July 1924 the gratuity was increased to £100. Subsequent appeals for additional financial support were declined. Cornelius Hayes, a private in the National Army from Killarney who had been a postman in civilian life, was accidentally killed in Newtownsandes on 25 March 1923.[29] He was the sole support of his three younger sisters – Norah (a twenty-four-year-old laundress), Mollie (a seventeen-year-old servant), and Nancy (a fifteen-year-old schoolgirl) – as their parents were deceased. In May 1924 Norah wrote to the military authorities that she was

> tired from writing to Portobello Barracks for help but nobody seemed to give us any satisfaction. We are orphans alone in the world with nobody to work for us and our only support killed while fighting for the Free State Army … but nobody misses him but his heartbroken sisters who are not able to work and are sometimes hungry. I am in debt everywhere in Killarney and we are threatened of being in the streets, with rent and rates calling in on us, also shopkeepers which were kind enough to give us credit are calling on us.[30]

A gratuity of £100 was awarded in June 1924: £30 payable immediately with £7 per month for ten months.[31] These examples reveal the sense of exasperation and anger with state bureaucracy. They also provide a stark insight into the subsistence-level living standards, poverty, and unemployment that many families in Kerry endured in the early decades of independence. This evidence is important because there was no Irish equivalent of the major British provincial social surveys of the 1930s which tracked questions of income, employment, housing, and differences between social classes.

Emigration provided a centuries-old means of escaping such miserable economic conditions. In 1926 the population of County Kerry was 149,171, about half that of the 1841 peak. During the quarter century following independence, the population of the county fell by fifteen per cent or 22,500 people. In absolute terms, this was almost twice the decline of Ireland as a whole.[32] The MSPC provides fascinating granular detail on IRA men and family members who emigrated, allowing the prospect of constructing microlevel histories of the prevalence of emigration in a family or locality. Strikingly, in the nominal rolls for Kerry No. 1 and Kerry No. 2 Brigades the address of several men was given simply as 'now in the U.S.A.' or in specific cities such as New York and Chicago.[33] Few of the Sugrue family discussed above remained in Kerry. By the 1930s two of John Sugrue's brothers and four sisters – half the offspring of the family – had emigrated to the United States. Just one sister was married in Kerry.[34] A sister of Norah Hayes went to the United States in June 1922 and her brothers, Michael and Christopher, were in England.[35] Four of Kate Murphy's married sons lived abroad.[36] From Knocknagoshel, her son Daniel ('Dan') was a blacksmith and was assisted in his forge by his younger brother John. Both had been in the IRA during the War of Independence. On 24 March 1923 the Murphy brothers were captured at home by a National Army detachment. Dan was accused of making the mine that was used at Barranarig; in fact, he had been on the run at the time and the device was manufactured by his brother.[37] Dan was taken to a field by Lieutenant Jeremiah Gaffney and others and shot multiple times. Gaffney became the first commissioned officer in the National Army to be executed when he was

23 Margaret O'Donoghue to Minister for Defence, n.d. [1933], ibid.

24 Application of Julia O'Donoghue, 24 Oct. 1953; payment of sum at death [of Julia O'Donoghue] to James O'Donoghue, 15 Apr. 1959, ibid.

25 Memorandum by J. Lambe summarising reports of various investigating officers into claim by James O'Donoghue, 11 Sept. 1959; Secretary, Dept. of Finance to Secretary, Dept. of Defence, 24 May 1960 regarding O'Donoghue; copy of death certificate, 9 June 1961, ibid.

26 Report by Sergt Edward O'Reilly, Garda Síochána, Causeway, 29 Feb. 1924, MSPC, 3D57 Laurence O'Connor.

27 Saorstát Éireann, Department of Industry and Commerce, *Report on the cost of living mid-January, 1925* (Dublin, 1925).

28 Margaret O'Connor to Army Finance Officer, 19 July 1924, MSPC, 3D57 Laurence O'Connor.

29 Newtownsandes is the official name but this village is better known by its Irish name of Moyvane.

30 Norah Hayes to GOC, The Royal Hospital, Kilmainham, 23 May 1924, MSPC, 3D136 Cornelius Hayes.

31 Army Pensions Board certificate of assessment, 5 June 1924, ibid.

32 James A. Walsh and Breandán Ó Caoimh, 'Population, economy and place in Kerry' in Bric (ed.), *Kerry: history and society*, p. 604.

33 See MAI, MSPC, RO/88-101A, Kerry I Brigade and RO/102-110, Kerry II Brigade.

34 Memorandum by J. Lambe summarising reports of various investigating officers into claims by members of Sugrue family, 8 Oct. 1958, MSPC, DP7845 John Sugrue.

35 Statement of claim for dependant's allowance, 27 July 1923, MSPC, 3D136 Cornelius Hayes.

36 Report by D. McAsey, Customs and Excise, Killarney, 29 Jan. 1934, MSPC, DP8259 Daniel Murphy.

hanged in Mountjoy on 13 March 1924 for the murder of Thomas Brosnan, a civilian, in Scartaglin, County Kerry, in December 1923.[38] Kate Murphy received an *ex gratia* payment of £200 on 5 July 1926 and a gratuity of £112 10*s*. in December 1935.[39]

Kerry TDs played, and were perhaps expected to play, a prominent role in advocating for constituents who made applications under the various Army Pensions Acts. Until the 1940s local political representation was dominated by Fianna Fáil which typically won three or four of the seven seats available to about two for Cumann na nGaedheal/Fine Gael. Most of the Fianna Fáil TDs were War of Independence veterans such as Tom McEllistrim who represented Kerry from 1923 until 1937 and then Kerry North until 1969. He was one of the most prominent IRA leaders in the county but never spoke publicly of his considerable exploits. In the case of Patrick Daly's application in 1935, McEllistrim emphasised the family's poor financial circumstances and that the maximum gratuity should be 'paid without delay in this most deserving case'.[40] Fred Hugh Crowley represented Kerry and later Kerry South from 1927 until his death in 1945 when he was succeeded by his wife Honor. Jack Flynn also represented Kerry and Kerry South from 1932 until 1957 but did not contest the 1943 and 1944 elections and was an independent TD for a period before re-joining Fianna Fáil. Stephen Fuller, who survived Ballyseedy, was a Fianna Fáil TD for Kerry North from 1937 until 1943. He never mentioned Ballyseedy from a public platform but was active in supporting several applications, particularly those of the relatives of the Ballyseedy atrocity killed by his side. The MSPC permits an insight into the mechanisms of political lobbying within a particular parliamentary party.

Members of the Dáil were not the only advocates. One of the most compelling was Dorothy Macardle, the journalist, writer, and former republican hunger striker.[41] In 1924 she published an exposé of the events in Kerry in March 1923, based on eyewitness accounts, called *Tragedies of Kerry*.[42] During her research for that project Macardle interviewed Ellen Reardon and a decade later received a 'distressing letter' outlining her impoverished circumstances. Macardle wrote to Frank Aiken, minister for defence, claiming that 'surely the families of prisoners murdered while in custody have or will have a claim' to a pension and asking that Mrs Reardon be reassured.[43] The minister replied that Mrs Reardon had been granted £112 10*s*. in 1932.[44] She was also subsequently awarded an allowance of £180 from 5 August 1953.

The tragedies of Kerry referred to by Macardle were not confined to March 1923 alone. Those ghastly killings occasioned a myriad of further minor tragedies and personal hardships. At a human level the granularity of the MSPC files from Kerry reveal many layers of trauma and grief: for the loss of a son or even a recognisable body to bury, for the loss of support for the household income or labour for the family farm, for the loss of personal dignity, for the loss of other family members to illness, premature death or emigration, and fear of poverty and even hunger. These strands of fresh evidence have significant implications for how we write about, conceptualise, and understand the economic lives of ordinary people (something that has been barely explored in an Irish context) as well as local and family history across the middle decades of the twentieth century. For historians and practitioners of cognate disciplines, the Military Service Pensions Collection provides the pen and ink with which to trace historical contours from challenging, uncomfortable, and different perspectives.

Further reading:

Tom Doyle, *The Civil War in Kerry* (Cork, 2008)
Gavin Foster, 'The Civil War in Kerry in history and memory' in Maurice J. Bric (ed.), *Kerry history and society: interdisciplinary essays in the history of an Irish county* (Dublin, 2020), pp 469-89
Michael Hopkinson, *Green against green: the Irish Civil War* (2nd ed., Dublin, 2004)
Tim Horgan, *Dying for the cause: Kerry's republican dead* (Cork, 2015)
Owen O'Shea, *No middle path: the Civil War in Kerry* (Newbridge, 2022)

37 Horgan, *Dying for the cause*, pp 210-12; O'Shea, *No middle path*, pp 91-2.

38 *Evening Herald*, 13 Mar. 1924.

39 Application of Kate Murphy, 3 Feb. 1933, MSPC, DP8259 Daniel Murphy.

40 Tom McEllistrim to Minister for Defence, 6 Jan. 1935, MSPC, DP51 John Daly.

41 On Macardle, see Leeann Lane, *Dorothy Macardle* (Dublin, 2019).

42 Dorothy Macardle, *Tragedies of Kerry* (Dublin, 1924).

43 Dorothy Macardle to Frank Aiken, 17 Mar. 1934, MSPC, DP3844 William Reardon.

44 Frank Aiken to Dorothy Macardle, 20 Mar. 1934, ibid.

Left, above

A prisoner being escorted by soldiers of the National Army during the Irish Civil War, 1922.

Image courtesy of the National Library of Ireland (NLI—HOG106).

Left, below

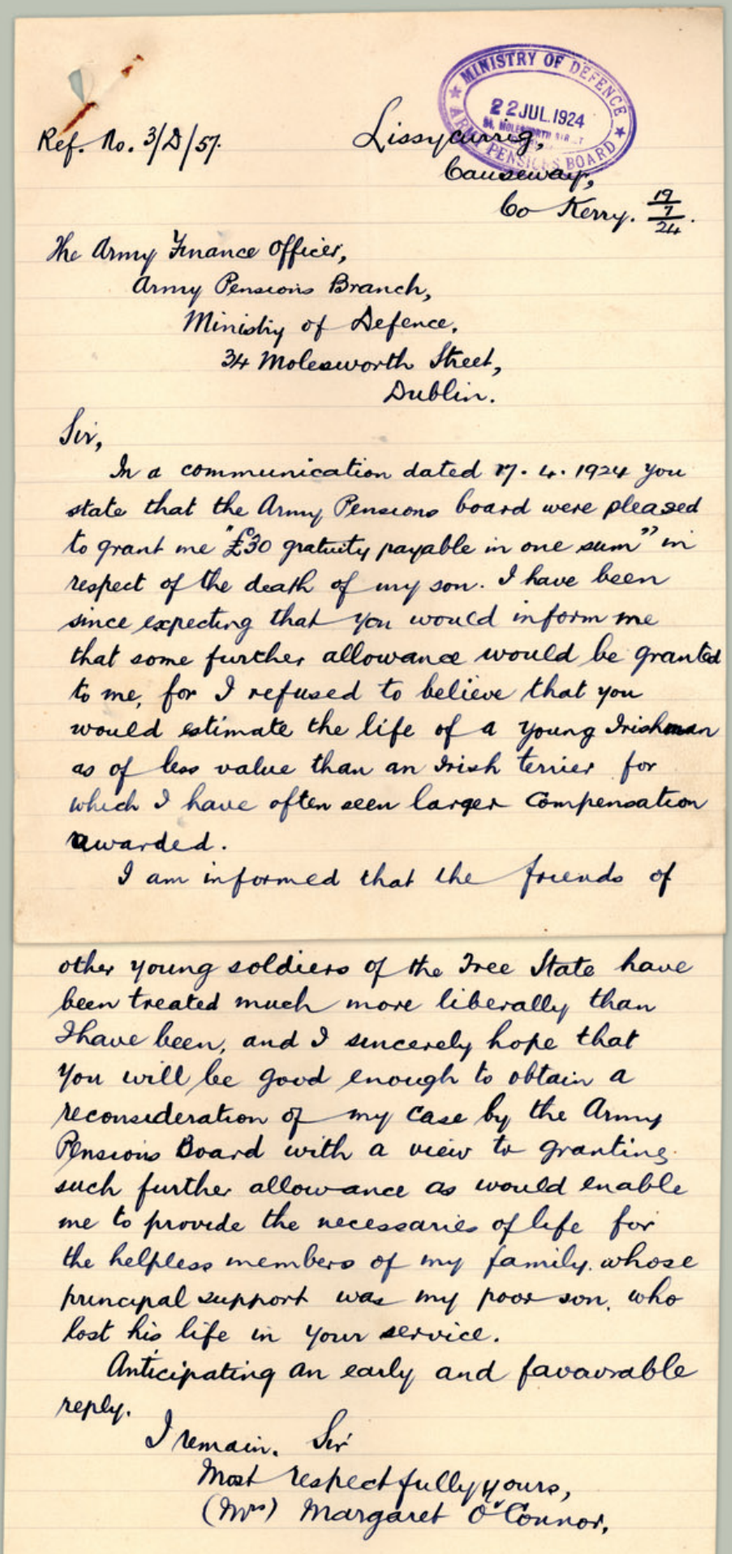
A National Army medic attends to the walking wounded in Kerry during the Irish Civil War.

Image courtesy of the National Library of Ireland (NLI – HOG96).

Right

Margaret O'Connor, mother of Laurence O'Connor, expresses her disgust at the gratuity of £30 paid in respect of the death of her son: 'I refused to believe that you would estimate the life of a young Irishman as of less value than an Irish terrier...'.

Reference:
Laurence O'Connor 3D57.



MINISTRY OF DEFENCE
22 JUL 1924
PENSIONS BOARD

Ref. No. 3/S/57.

Lissyclancy,
Causeway,
Co Kerry. 19/7/24.

The Army Finance Officer,
Army Pensions Branch,
Ministry of Defence,
34 Molesworth Street,
Dublin.

Sir,

In a communication dated 17. 4. 1924 you state that the Army Pensions board were pleased to grant me "£30 gratuity payable in one sum" in respect of the death of my son. I have been since expecting that you would inform me that some further allowance would be granted to me, for I refused to believe that you would estimate the life of a young Irishman as of less value than an Irish terrier for which I have often seen larger compensation awarded.

I am informed that the friends of other young soldiers of the Free State have been treated much more liberally than I have been, and I sincerely hope that you will be good enough to obtain a reconsideration of my case by the Army Pensions Board with a view to granting such further allowance as would enable me to provide the necessaries of life for the helpless members of my family whose principal support was my poor son, who lost his life in your service.

Anticipating an early and favourable reply.

I remain, Sir
Most respectfully yours,
(Mrs) Margaret O'Connor,

COPY

Clover's Lane.
Killarney.

23rd May,1924.

Dear General.

I would be very thankful to you if you could see into our case. I am tired from writing to Portobello Barracks for help but nobody seemed to give us any satisfaction. We are orphans alone in the world with nobody to work for us and our only support killed while fighting for the Free State Army, and we were left to the kind consideration of the Government. My brother deceased Cornelius Hayes was accidentally shot at Newtownsands on March 25th,1923, chief support to us, but nobody misses him but his heartbroken sisters who are not able to work and are sometimes hungry. I am in debt everywhere in Killarney and we are threatened of being in the streets, with rent and rates calling in on us, also shopkeepers which were kind enough to give us credit are calling on us.

Now all the ex-soldiers of the town working we have not our dear brother with them.

Dear Sir, I again ask you to try and take this letter in your interests because you are the head over all this from what I can understand. I sincerely hope you will do something for us, or if you would please tell me who to write to or where to go to put before the Government a claim for compensation for we need it more than anyone living.
I sincerely hope you will answer this letter.

I am,
Yours indebted,

S/D. Nora Hayes.

Frustrated and desperate, Nora Hayes seeks a gratuity for the loss of her brother Cornelius, a National Army private.

Reference:
Cornelius Hayes 3D136.

Right

Writing that 'he was my whole support', Margaret Donoghue highlights the dependence of so many families on the income of sons and daughters.

Reference:
Jeremiah O'Donoghue
DP3621.

To:
Lawson New St
Killarney

Sec. Minister for Defence
Irish Free State.

Sir

Re your query as to how much I was dependent on the deceased I.R.A Soldier Jeremiah Donoghue, at the time of his death he was my whole support being employed as attendant at the Killarney Mental Hosp. where he was in receipt of a salary of £60 P.A. rising by increments of £6 to £90.
My husband was then alive but died, in the Autumn of 1923 he was in failing health for some time, All the rest of the family two boys & two girls were employed thus:- one boy going to school the other unable to do any work through illhealth, one of the girls was employed as a servant with scanty wages, the other at home unable to work through ill health.
I am sure there is nobody feels his death as much as I do, for since that day I have had hard times over me, at times practically hungry.

I. am

(mother of the deceased) Mrs Margt Donoghue

Telephone
Dundrum 109.

March 17. 1934

Creevagh,
Dundrum,
Co. Dublin.

Dear Mr Aiken

I have had a very distressing letter from Kerry, from the mother of one of the prisoners blown up with bombs near Caherciveen in 1923. I met the family when I was writing my little book about those murders & they were very poor then. She says that she is desperately poor now, over seventy, & her surviving son an invalid since the Civil War owing to ill-treatment in Jail. And she says she has received no compensation of any kind.

I do not know much about the pension & compensation regulations. Surely the families of prisoners murdered while in custody have or will have a claim?

I should be very grateful if you could tell me that I may give her some reassurance.

With all good wishes

Yours sincerely

Dorothy Macardle

All news attacked.

Left

Writing to Frank Aiken, minister for defence, on behalf of Ellen Reardon, Dorothy Macardle implores that 'surely the families of prisoners murdered while in custody have or will have a claim' to a pension. William Reardon was Ellen Reardon's main source of financial support before he was killed in a mine explosion in Caherciveen, County Kerry, on 12 March 1923.

Reference:
William Reardon DP3844.

Right

Edward Hartnett catalogues the suffering in his family following the death of his brother, Patrick.

Reference:
Patrick Hartnett DP9533.

Patrick Hartnett late of Ennismore Listowel in the County of Kerry, who was blown up by a mine at Ballyseedy on the 6th March, 1923 by Free State Forces with seven of his comrades in the I.R.A. was a brother of the Applicant, Edward Hartnett.

The mother of the Applicant died in April of 1924 as a result of an injury to her knee sustained by her on a journey from Tralee after the death of her son, the subject of this claim.

The father of the Applicant died on the 17th March 1932. He sufferdd a complete breakdown after the death of his son, and died practically of a broken heart.

John, another brother of the Applicant died on the 29th June, 1923. This boy was practically an invalid and died as a result of being taken out of bed by Free State Troops in that year,

The Applicant in this case was only about 12 years 22 now of age when his brother Patrick was killed in 1923. The Applicant himself was arrested in the months of February, April, and June of 1923, when he was a mere boy, and also his brother Maurice was frequently arrested in or about the same time. There now remains a sister Maryanne aged 31, a brother Maurice, aged 27, a brother Willie aged 21 and the applicant himself who is aged about 22.

This is a case in which Part 3 of the Army Pensions Act of 1932 par 8 (Second Schedule) should it is submitted, apply.

This family is at present in very poor circumstances and it is hoped that the claim will receive sympathetic consideration. Any other information that may be required will be supplied.

Dated this 4th April, 1933.

Signed by the Applicant

Edward Hartnett

MORAN & CLARKE,
Solicitors for Applicant, Listowel.

Using the Military Service Pensions Collection to uncover a revolutionary youth and its aftermath

Marnie Hay

In the early twentieth century Irish nationalist uniformed youth groups were a nursery for future revolutionary activists. Such groups include the most obvious example, Na Fianna Éireann (also known as the Irish National Boy Scouts), as well as the Clan na Gael Girl Scouts and the Irish Citizen Army Boys Corps/Boy Scouts and Girl Guides. All of these nationalist youth groups served as training and recruitment grounds for future membership in adult organisations such as the Irish Volunteers/Irish Republican Army, the ICA, the Hibernian Rifles, and Cumann na mBan. The Military Service Pensions Collection is an invaluable source for researching former members of these youth groups and their contributions to the Irish independence movement as well as their lives after the Irish revolution. Unlike the Fianna, information relating to lesser-known nationalist youth groups, especially those for girls, is much harder to uncover in extant primary sources, which makes the MSPC all the more valuable to researchers. This essay will demonstrate how the MSPC can be used as a tool to uncover Irish nationalist youth activism and its aftermath.

This Collection of pension applications and supporting documents initially arose as a result of the 1923 Army Pensions Act which was designed 'to recognise and compensate wounded members, and the surviving dependants of deceased members, of various groups that had participated in the events of 1916 to 1923 and were deemed and proven to have had "active service" during this time'.[1] The MSPC includes applications made under this legislation from wounded former members of nationalist youth groups as well as the dependants of those who died while engaged in active service. For instance, parents of Fianna members John (Sean) Healy and Patrick (Percy) Hannafin were granted a partial dependant's allowance after their sons' deaths.[2] Healy had just turned fifteen when he was shot by British troops close to his Phibsborough home in north Dublin during the Easter Rising. Garrison commander Thomas MacDonagh had sent the boy home from Jacob's biscuit factory 'because he was too young to fight', but may have asked Healy to deliver a message warning of 'an ambush at the bridge in Phibsborough'.[3] Hannafin was shot in the head by the Black and Tans during an encounter on Edward Street in Tralee, County Kerry, in January 1922 and died a week later. His mother's application for a dependant's allowance or gratuity was initially rejected because the fatal incident occurred during the Truce.[4] These examples demonstrate the risks of youth activism as well as the challenges faced by grieving families in seeking financial compensation for the loss of their children.

1 Diarmaid Ferriter, '"Always in danger of finding myself with nothing at all": the military service pensions and the battle for material survival, 1925-55' in Diarmaid Ferriter and Susannah Riordan (eds), *Years of turbulence: the Irish revolution and its aftermath* (Dublin, 2015), p. 194.

2 See MSPC, 1D352 John (Sean) Healy and MSPC, DP4142 Patrick (Percy) John Hannafin.

3 Joe Duffy, *Children of the Rising* (Dublin, 2015), p. 226.

4 Marnie Hay, *Na Fianna Éireann and the Irish revolution, 1909-23: scouting for rebels* (Manchester, 2019 & 2021), p. 211.

The Collection also includes the files of former youth group members who applied under military service pension legislation. Former male members of Na Fianna Éireann who had later served in the National Army, and thus had fought on the pro-Treaty side in the Civil War, were eligible to apply for a service pension under the 1924 Military Service Pensions Act. As Marie Coleman has noted, the Cumann na nGaedheal government introduced this legislation in order to compensate veterans of the Irish revolution and subsequent Civil War, most of whom were 'young men in their late teens and early twenties who in other circumstances would have been starting careers, settling down in their personal lives, or pursuing studies towards a profession, all of which was interrupted by their involvement in revolutionary activity'. She also asserts that service pensions were a way of placating disgruntled members of the National Army who had been demobilised after the Civil War.[5] In 1934 under the Fianna Fáil government, the legislation was amended and extended in order to include members of the Hibernian Rifles, Na Fianna Éireann, and Cumann na mBan as well as veterans who had only served prior to the 1921 Truce or had supported the anti-Treaty side during the Civil War.[6] This gesture of reconciliation made service pensions available to a much wider group of former Fianna and ICA Boys Corps members as well as some former members of the Clan na Gael Girl Scouts, either as a result of the organisation's link with the Hibernian Rifles or their later membership in Cumann na mBan. Although both Na Fianna Éireann and Cumann na mBan were limited under the 1934 legislation 'to the two lowest possible ranks for pension purposes – D and E', the ability of Fianna members to later transfer to the ICA, the Irish Volunteers/IRA, and the National Army meant that they had the opportunity to serve in ways that could incur greater risks, and thus received greater recognition and financial compensation by the state.[7] The state also awarded medals to recognise the contribution of activists who had played more limited roles that were not of a pensionable standard. Individuals who applied solely on the basis of service with a nationalist youth group may have found it more difficult to secure a medal or a service pension, however. For instance, Philomena Conroy's application for a Service (1917-1921) Medal in respect of service with Clan na Gael was unsuccessful.[8]

Having briefly considered how the 1923 Army Pensions Act and 1924 Military Service Pensions Act related to former members of nationalist youth groups, the focus will now shift to a discussion of each organisation. The section on Na Fianna Éireann demonstrates how I used the MSPC when researching a monograph on this youth group. The section on the Clan na Gael Girl Scouts will show how pension files can illuminate the early development of this organisation and the service and experiences of its members. The final section highlights MSPC files relating to the ICA's youth groups.

5 Marie Coleman, 'Military service pensions for veterans of the Irish revolution, 1916-1923' in *War in History*, xx, no. 2 (2013), pp 205-6.

6 Ibid., pp 215-16; Ferriter, 'Always in danger', p. 195.

7 Marie Coleman, 'Compensating Irish female revolutionaries, 1916-1923' in *Women's History Review*, xxvi, no. 6 (2017), p. 924.

8 Medal application, MSPC, MD7964 Philomena Conroy.

Na Fianna Éireann

Na Fianna Éireann is the best known and most documented Irish nationalist uniformed youth group operating during the early twentieth century. Constance Markievicz and Bulmer Hobson established the organisation in 1909 as an Irish nationalist (and increasingly republican) counterblast to Robert Baden-Powell's Boy Scout movement founded in the previous year.[9] The MSPC is a rich source of information on the Fianna organisation as well as its former members. The MSPC includes the Fianna Éireann series among its organisation and membership files, which can be used to research specific Fianna units. The MSPC's pensions and awards files include applications from former Fianna members or the dependants of those who died as a result of their military service. These files provide insight into the individual's service as well as their personal circumstances. I found both types of files invaluable when I was researching my monograph, *Na Fianna Éireann and the Irish revolution, 1909-23: scouting for rebels*. I used the nominal rolls files from the Fianna Éireann series to ascertain the location and strength of different Fianna units around the country during the final years of the Irish revolution.[10] I also generated a sample of 155 male former Fianna members from pension application files that I used alongside samples derived from Bureau of Military History witness statements and *Dictionary of Irish Biography* entries in order to develop a general profile of who joined the Fianna during Ireland's revolutionary era.[11] The MSPC was particularly useful for tracking the transfer of Fianna members to adult paramilitary organisations, their attitude toward the Anglo-Irish Treaty as demonstrated by service in pro- or anti-Treaty forces during the Civil War, and future careers in the Defence Forces or An Garda Síochána. The applications for dependants' allowances and gratuities submitted by veterans' families enabled me to gather information about the circumstances surrounding the deaths and the ages of serving and former Fianna members whose loss of life was (or was perceived to be) attributed to their military service and/or imprisonment during the period 1916-23. For instance, I found that in the vast majority of cases individuals lost their lives in 1922-3 in the context of the Civil War.[12]

Since 2016, pension application files have been released online on a phased basis. This presented a challenge for me because new files were released just as I was trying to finalise my book manuscript for publication. I added these 'new' applicants to my sample; luckily, the information that I derived from their files did not change the thrust of my overall findings at such a late stage in the monograph's development, especially as I was under pressure from my publisher to submit the final manuscript. More pension files have been released since I generated my sample in July 2018, which opens up opportunities for researchers to work with a wider sample of former members of nationalist youth groups and to utilise the Collection in different ways. The nominal rolls and pension applications in the MSPC would be a useful resource for developing county or provincial studies of Na Fianna Éireann; for example, studies of Cork city and county or Munster as a whole could be undertaken. A study comparing and contrasting the profiles of Fianna officers and rank-and-file members is another possibility. Furthermore, studies of the post-revolutionary experiences of young activists would shed light on the longer-term impact of their activism on their later lives as well as social conditions in Ireland north and south from the mid-1920s onwards. For instance, the number of pension applications sent from addresses in the United States and Britain attests to common experiences of emigration and shorter-term migration.

Finding Fianna files in the MSPC

Under the 1934 legislation, a referee and a four-member Advisory Committee was constituted to decide whether applicants qualified for a certificate of military service and by extension a service pension. Under the chairmanship of Major General Aodh MacNeill, the Fianna Advisory Committee was formed in 1936.[13] It liaised with ex-Fianna representatives around Ireland to compile the membership records that make up the forty-one files (FE/1-41) in the Fianna Éireann nominal rolls which were used by the Referee and Advisory Committee to verify information contained in individuals' pension applications. The files cover Armagh, Belfast, Carlow, Cavan, Clare, Cork city and county, Derry city, Dublin city and county, Kerry, Kildare, Limerick, Louth, Mayo, Meath, Offaly, Sligo, Tipperary, Waterford, Westmeath, Wexford, and Wicklow. The Fianna Advisory Committee reported in 1938 that it was making 'strenuous efforts' to gather information from different counties in Ireland with varying degrees of success; thus records for some parts of the country are more complete than others.[14] The Fianna Éireann series is organised online by county, though there are no Fianna files for some counties, such as Down, Fermanagh, Galway, Kilkenny, Laois, Leitrim, Longford, Monaghan, and Tyrone. I found that a county search for Offaly did not generate results, even though there is a file containing a list of the names of seventeen males who belonged to a Fianna unit in Clara that was attached to the IRA's A Company, 1st Battalion, Offaly, Brigade No. 2 on 11 July 1921.[15] Although the MSPC does not include files for every Irish county, this does not necessarily mean that there was no Fianna unit in these counties during the period *c*.1916-23. Information about a Fianna unit might be listed under a different county in the MSPC; for instance, the Fianna company in Boyle, County Roscommon, was part of the Sligo Brigade, so a file relating to it can be accessed through a search for Sligo.[16] Furthermore, a nominal roll for a given county may not have been produced, even though existence of a Fianna unit there is evident from other sources, such as other types of files in the MSPC, BMH witness statements, or contemporary

9 For studies of this youth group, see Hay, *Na Fianna Éireann*; Damian Lawlor, *Na Fianna Éireann and the Irish revolution, 1909 to 1923* (Rhode, 2009); J. Anthony Gaughan, *Scouting in Ireland* (Dublin, 2006), pp 33-77; John R. Watts, 'Na Fianna Éireann: a case study of a political youth organisation' (Ph.D. thesis, University of Glasgow, 1981).

10 Hay, *Na Fianna Éireann*, pp 81, 86. Appendix IV of this book provides a table of the location and strength of Fianna companies in Ireland, *c*.1921-22, based on records in the MSPC, pp 250-5.

11 See chapter 5 of ibid. Appendix III of this book provides a table listing the former Fianna members comprising this sample from the MSPC, which was generated by an online search undertaken on 11 July 2018, pp 235-49. The table also lists each individual's years of birth and death, their MSPC file number, the result of their application and the legislation under which it was made, their pension grade (if applicable), whether or not they had Easter Rising service, and their stance on the Anglo-Irish Treaty (if known).

12 See ibid., pp 209-14.

13 Aodh MacNeill to Secretary, Military Service Pensions Board, 12 Dec. 1936, MSPC, FE/1 Dublin and General Headquarters. The committee consisted of former officers of Fianna Éireann headquarters staff and representatives of the Fianna old members association.

14 Aodh MacNeill to Secretary, Military Service Pensions Board, 24 June 1938, ibid.

15 See MSPC, FE/32 A (Clara) Company, 1st Battalion, 2 Brigade. A handwritten note dated 4 Dec. 1962 indicates that the list of Fianna members was 'found attached to A Coy (Clara) I.R.A.'.

16 See MSPC, FE/22 Sligo Brigade, Boyle Company and Bundoran Company.

newspaper accounts or police reports. An example is Edward Cullen's pension application, which notes his claim that he belonged to a Fianna unit in County Leitrim before joining the Irish Volunteers.[17] Although the Fianna nominal rolls mainly focus on the location and numerical strength of different units and provide lists of officers and members, some include other information, such as the Fianna Éireann Organisation Circular No. 1, which delineates the military structure of the youth organisation in the later years of the Irish revolution.[18]

In relation to individual applications for military service pensions, former members of Na Fianna Éireann are relatively easy to find in the pensions and awards files database because you can do an organisation search for Fianna Éireann specifically. A search undertaken on 12 May 2022 generated 215 files. Most of these files are either applications for military service pensions from former male members or applications for allowances or gratuities made by the dependants of members who had died as a result of their military service. Two of the files – those for Ellen Sarah Bushell and Dorothy Hannafin – pertain to female associates of Fianna *sluaighte* (or troops), rather than members of the youth group. Bushell made kilts for Fianna members and served as a courier for Con Colbert during the Easter Rising.[19] Hannafin, whose brothers belonged to the Fianna, recorded that she was attached to the Fianna unit in Tralee and engaged in such activities as distributing election and IRA propaganda, dispatch carrying, and intelligence work.[20] Bushell's application under the 1949 Military Pensions Act was successful whereas Hannafin's application under the more restrictive 1934 Act was unsuccessful because the legislation was deemed not to apply in her case.[21]

A search for the term Fianna Éireann or simply Fianna under 'subject information' in the MSPC catalogue can be used to elicit the names of additional members whose membership in the youth group pre-dated the military service for which they claimed. One example is Thomas Crimmins, who was a member of the Fianna in 1910-15 before joining the Irish Volunteers; he was one of four Fianna members who were presented with gold medals and certificates to recognise their bravery in assisting during a drowning incident near Sandyford in July 1913.[22] Another example is Ina Connolly-Heron, a daughter of executed 1916 leader James Connolly; she claimed for service with Cumann na mBan, but had previously belonged to one of only two Fianna troops for girls that existed *c*.1911-18, the Betsy Gray *sluagh* in Belfast.[23] A search for the term Fianna Éireann under 'subject information' undertaken on 12 May 2022 generated 457 files, but almost half of these names replicated those generated by an organisation search. The search results list shows the name of the individual, counties or countries where they lived, and the organisations for which they claimed service. If Fianna Éireann is not listed under the person's name, you need to read their 'subject information' to ascertain whether previous Fianna membership is mentioned.

Former members of Na Fianna Éireann can also be found by doing a search for the organisation in the medals database. A search of this database generated 1,703 names along with their county and whether they were awarded a 1916 Medal or a Service (1917-1921) Medal. Although medal application files have not been digitised (at least not yet), you can glean information from the database about the individual's addresses, date of birth, civilian occupation, commanding officer(s), and Fianna company, unit, and brigade. Medals were awarded to military service pension recipients as well as to those whose service was not deemed to be of a pensionable standard.

Clan na Gael Girl Scouts

In comparison to the Fianna, the Clan na Gael (or Clann na nGaedheal) Girl Scouts have generated less interest from historians, possibly because of their female gender, smaller number of members, and relative sparsity of primary sources available.[24] The MSPC pension application file for Mary Chadwick (née May Kelly), the founding member and first leader of this youth group, is thus an important source to illuminate the establishment, development, and activities of the Clan na Gael Girl Scouts. Her file also serves as an example of what kind of information can be gleaned from an individual's pension application. Further insight can be gained by supplementing her file with documents from other MSPC files, BMH witness statements, and contemporary newspaper reports. In her sworn statement to the Advisory Committee, Kelly explained that she established the Clan na Gael Girl Scouts in 1915 as an auxiliary of the Hibernian Rifles. She had initially formed a group called the 'National Girl Scouts' in 1912 with the help of fellow Drumcondra resident Seamus McGowan, who had previously been involved in organising Fianna troops on the north side of Dublin.[25] Kelly does not explain what prompted the formation of an Irish nationalist youth group for girls, but it may have been because the Dublin Fianna did not accept female members. Although Fianna troops for girls existed in Belfast *c*.1911-15 and in Waterford *c*.1916-18, they were a controversial presence within the organisation.[26]

In July 1915 the Irish National Girl Scouts were among the nationalist organisations which met at the Hibernian Hall located at 28 North Frederick Street in Dublin. The hall belonged to Division 86 (Clan na Gael) of the Ancient Order of Hibernians (Irish American Alliance), but was also used by its Ladies Auxiliary, the Hibernian Rifles, which was the military wing of the AOH (IAA), Na Fianna Éireann,

17 Application form, 18 Dec. 1924, MSPC, 24SP3438 Edward Cullen.

18 Fianna Éireann Organisation Circular No. 1, MSPC, FE/1 Dublin and General Headquarters.

19 Application form, 31 Dec. 1935, MSPC, MSP34REF22326 Ellen Sarah Bushell.

20 Application form, 1 June 1935, MSPC, MSP34REF16986 Dorothy Hannafin.

21 See MSPC, MSP34REF22326 Ellen Sarah Bushell and MSPC, MS34REF16986 Dorothy Hannafin.

22 See MSPC, MSP34REF16809 Thomas Crimmins; Hay, *Na Fianna Éireann*, pp 139-40.

23 See MSPC, MSP34REF21565 Ina Connolly-Heron. For a short biography of her, see Sinéad McCoole, *No ordinary women: Irish female activists in the revolutionary years, 1900-1923* (Dublin, 2015), pp 187-9.

24 For discussions of the Clan na Gael (or Clann na nGaedheal) Girl Scouts, see Hay, *Na Fianna Éireann*, pp 7-9, 12, 16-17, 44, 75, 113, 116, 202; McCoole, *No ordinary women*, p. 37; Ann Matthews, *Renegades: Irish republican women, 1900-1922* (Cork, 2010), pp 109, 125, 133, 339; Ann Matthews, *Dissidents: Irish republican women, 1923-1941* (Cork, 2012), pp 53, 62, 202, 254; Joseph E.A. Connell, Jr., 'Inghinidhe na hÉireann/Daughters of Ireland, Clan na nGaedheal' in *History Ireland*, xix, no. 5 (Sept./Oct. 1911), p. 66; Francis McKay, 'Clann na nGaedheal', *Irish Press*, 3 May 1966.

25 Sworn statement made before Advisory Committee by Mary Chadwick, 23 Feb. 1937, MSPC, MSP34REF20098 Mary Chadwick (née May Kelly). See also, BMH, WS 1670 Seamus Kavanagh; MSPC, MSP34REF4289 Seamus McGowan.

26 For a discussion of the Betsy Gray *sluagh* for girls in Belfast, see Hay, *Na Fianna Éireann*, pp 40, 45-6, 48-9, 112-13, 153, 191. For the girls' troop in Waterford, see ibid., pp 74-5, 113, and Leeann Lane, *Rosamond Jacob: third person singular* (Dublin, 2010), pp 122-4.

and the National Guards, an off-shoot of the Fianna.[27] Fianna member Seán Prendergast described the building as 'a hive of industry, usually of a military nature, drilling, rifle exercises etc., with a number of musical and dance social evenings thrown in to break the monotony'.[28] The change in name from Irish National Girl Scouts to Clan na Gael in 1915 may possibly reflect the youth group's connection to the Clan na Gael division (or local branch) of the IAA. In 1915 the youth group offered girls training in military drill, signalling, first aid, and the Irish language as well an opportunity to play camogie and attend Sunday night socials.[29] Among the camogie players were May Kelly herself and Eileen (Ellen) Conroy, the latter a future member of the Clann United camogie team that won the 1930 Dublin Championship and League.[30]

Mary Chadwick (née May Kelly) was among the serving and former members of the Clan na Gael Girl Scouts who participated in the Easter Rising of 1916. After following orders to light bonfires on the Dublin mountains up by the Hell Fire Club, she initially served at the General Post Office before moving on the Tuesday of Easter week to Jacob's biscuit factory, engaging in intelligence gathering, delivering ammunition, and assisting with first aid.[31] Her pension file also outlines her leading role within Clan na Gael, the expansion and activities of the organisation after 1916, and her own ongoing military support service and its consequences. She held the rank of captain within the Clan na Gael Girl Scouts from 1915 until 1919 when she assumed the rank of its commandant general after the demise of the Hibernian Rifles. She also joined the south County Dublin unit of Cumann na mBan in 1919. She claimed that around 1918-19 she formed additional branches of Clan na Gael in Cork (in Douglas and Blackpool) and in Tullamore and Athlone.[32] During the War of Independence there were three battalions of Clan na Gael in Dublin city, which provided members with training in intelligence work, drill, first aid, and signalling.[33] Kelly reported that Clan na Gael continued to train in their meeting halls during the Truce period: 'The officers were trained in the use of arms but not the rank and file – they were too young, and besides we had not the arms.'[34] She was arrested and imprisoned for about six months during the Civil War, resulting in the loss of her position at Forrest's in Grafton Street in 1923, which was followed by four years of unemployment.[35] She was still unmarried and living with her family at 40 Elizabeth Street in Drumcondra when she first applied for a military service pension in 1935, but married former IRA officer Michael Chadwick while her application was under consideration. The pair had been linked romantically since the revolutionary period and he had assisted her with organising the girl scouts.[36] In reading the couple's MSPC files, one cannot help wondering whether financial constraints due to breaks in employment arising from Kelly's period of imprisonment and Chadwick's capture on 29 June 1922 and internment until December 1923 resulted in a lengthy courtship and delayed marriage.[37]

Their relationship is not the only example that shows the Collection's potential to offer insight into the romantic lives of Irish revolutionaries. Former Clan na Gael and Cumann na mBan member Marcella Crimmins's second unsuccessful submission of a pension application was under her married name Prendergast, which enabled me to link her with former Fianna and IRA member Seán Prendergast, whom she married in 1938. After his death in 1953 she applied for an allowance as the widow of a military service pensioner; a copy of her 1987 death notice is included in his file.[38] Perhaps they first met at the Hibernian Hall on North Frederick Street as youth group members. She later served as a dispatch carrier and cook under his command during the anti-Treaty IRA's occupation of Hughes Hotel on Lower Gardiner Street in Dublin from 28 June to 2 July 1922 during the opening days of the Civil War.[39] What their files cannot tell us is when their romance blossomed.

Former members of youth groups other than the Fianna are more difficult to find in the pensions and awards files database because the specific name of the group is not included in the organisation list. Changes in surname after marriage can also make it challenging to find female veterans in database searches, though there is a space on the search form to include maiden names. One way to identify some former members of the Clan na Gael Girl Scouts is by doing a combined gender and organisation search for female Hibernian Rifles members. A search conducted on 12 May 2022 generated the names of seven women, four of whom were identified in their 'subject information' as former members of the Clan na Gael Girl Scouts: Mary Chadwick (née May Kelly), Margaret Mary MacSherry (née Fagan), Mary McLoughlin, and Cecilia O'Neill (née Conroy), all of whom participated in the Easter Rising.[40] The Clan na Gael membership of a fifth (Annie O'Hagan, née Carey) was confirmed in letters of reference included in her application file.[41] As in this case, the involvement of individuals in nationalist youth organisations

27 Pádraig Óg Ó Ruairc, 'A short history of the Hibernian Rifles, 1912–1916', 31 Mar. 2013, (https://www.theirishstory.com/2013/03/31/a-short-history-of-the-hibernian-rifles-1912-1916/#.Yo4BtqjMK3A) (accessed 25 May 2022); 'Room for all', *The Hibernian*, 10 July 1915. In this brief notice the Irish National Girl Scouts are referred to as 'the girl section of the Fianna'. For more on the Irish National Guards, which also met at the same hall, see Hay, *Na Fianna Éireann*, pp 44, 63, 75, 109, 111, 114, 116, 136. The MSPC includes the pension file of a former leader of the National Guards, MSPC, 24SP2573 John Kenny. Further information about this group is included in his BMH witness statement, BMH, WS 1693.

28 BMH, WS 755 Seán Prendergast.

29 'Irish National Girl Scouts', *The Hibernian*, 17 July 1915.

30 Michael McCrea, 'Remembering the Easter Rising 1916 – Mary O'Kelly and Eileen Conroy', 10 Apr. [no year] (https://camogie.ie/news/remembering-the-easter-rising-1916-mary-o-kelly-eileen-conroy/) (accessed 23 June 2021). Eileen Cronin (née Conroy) applied for a 1916 Medal, but it was not awarded because evidence of service was not established. See MSPC, MD42876 Eileen Cronin (née Conroy).

31 Sworn statement made before the Advisory Committee by Mary Chadwick, 23 Feb. 1937, MSPC, MSP34REF20098 Mary Chadwick (née May Kelly).

32 Ibid.

33 Note of activities by Mary Chadwick, 22 Feb. 1939, ibid.

34 Sworn statement made before the Advisory Committee by Mary Chadwick, 23 Feb. 1937, ibid.

35 Ibid.

36 BMH, WS 1768 Andrew McDonnell; Rosamond Jacob diary entry, 23 Aug. 1918, NLI, Rosamond Jacob papers, MS 32,582/34.

37 Sworn statement made before the Advisory Committee by Michael J. Chadwick, 1 May 1936, MSPC, MSP34REF18109 Michael J. Chadwick.

38 See MSPC, MSP34REF58449 Marcella Prendergast (née Crimmins) and MSPC, MSP34REF1360 Seán Prendergast. Her application for a Service (1917-1921) Medal was also unsuccessful; see MSPC, MD25976 Marcella Prendergast (née Crimmins). Her maiden name has been incorrectly transcribed as Cummins in the MSPC database.

39 Sworn statement made before the Advisory Committee by Seán Prendergast, 16 May 1935, MSPC, MSP34REF58449 Marcella Prendergast (née Crimmins); BMH, WS 802 Seán Prendergast.

40 See MSPC, MSP34REF20098 Mary Chadwick (née May Kelly); MSPC, MSP34REF54707 Margaret Mary MacSherry (née Fagan); MSPC, MSP34REF22268 Cecilia O'Neill (née Conroy); MSPC, MSP34REF15389 Mary McLoughlin.

sometimes only becomes apparent in supporting letters or statements made before the Advisory Committee. These five Clan na Gael members received a military service pension at the lowest grade, E, on the basis of their active service during Easter week. Three of these women, Chadwick (née Kelly), MacSherry (née Fagan), and McLoughlin, also received credit for later service with Cumann na mBan, demonstrating that Clan na Gael, like the Fianna, served as a training and recruiting ground for adult organisations. For O'Neill (née Conroy), the awarding of a pension in 1939 based on her 1916 service was a long-awaited godsend because her family had been struggling financially due to the ill-health of herself and her husband and the inconstancy of his employment. She had applied for a service pension in 1934, but still had not been informed of the result in April 1938 when she and her 'family of seven young children are in a bad way'.[42]

A 'subject information' search for the terms Clan na Gael and Girl Scouts found other former members of Clan na Gael. Some of these applicants also received military service pensions at Grade E, but not necessarily in respect of their involvement with the girls' nationalist youth group. May Murray, who had been a member of the Irish National Girl Scouts and the Clan na Gael Girl Scouts in 1914-15, had already transferred to the Inghinidhe na hÉireann branch of Cumann na mBan when she served during the Easter Rising of 1916.[43] Ellen (Nellie) Stynes (née Lambert) was awarded a pension on the basis of her service with the ICA during the Easter Rising and Cumann na mBan during the period 1920-3. After the events of Easter week, she had joined the Clan na Gael Girl Scouts before emigrating to Scotland. When she returned to Ireland in 1919, she joined the Dundrum branch of Cumann na mBan.[44] Anne (Annie) O'Callaghan (née Duggan) was a Cumann na mBan member who served as commandant of the Clan na Gael Girl Scouts in Cork, Cobh, and Douglas. Her application for a military service pension on the basis of her service with Cumann na mBan was initially rejected, but after her case was re-examined she was awarded a pension for her service between 1919 and 1922 during the War of Independence and the Truce.[45]

Four other former Clan na Gael members were unsuccessful in their applications for military service pensions: Marcella Prendergast (née Crimmins), a sister of Thomas Crimmins (both of whom were mentioned above), as well as Mary Jane Slevin (née Stapleton), Sarah Reardon (née O'Mara), and Theresa Thorpe (née Joyce).[46] The length of active service and the ability to provide corroborating evidence of duties undertaken seems to have been a factor in whether or not former members of Clan na Gael were awarded pensions and/or medals. Prendergast (née Crimmins), for example, was a member of the Clan na Gael Girl Scouts from July 1916 to March 1918, during which time she was engaged in such activities as collecting funds and removing war-related posters; she then joined Cumann na mBan. She was deemed ineligible for a pension because her active service was not considered continuous.[47] Slevin, who had signed the 1916 roll of honour, claimed for active service with the Clan na Gael Girl Scouts on 23-25 April 1916, but after waiting seven years for a decision on her application, was awarded neither a service pension nor a medal. Her file is stamped 'Act does not appear to apply'. On a form dated 1 September 1942 in a section headed 'observations on service', an assessor wrote 'Doubtful. Too young.'[48] Perceptions based on age and gender could colour attitudes toward the value of an applicant's service.

ICA Boys Corps/Boy Scouts and Girl Guides

Youth groups were also associated with the Irish Citizen Army, which had been established in November 1913 to protect protesting workers during the Dublin Lockout. It formed its own scout corps for boys in 1914 as part of a broader initiative to improve the efficiency of the army after the Lockout's failure. John R. Watts has suggested that the decision to form a junior section of the ICA was likely influenced by the example of the Fianna; the Scout Corps was viewed as a training ground for future ICA recruits and a way of including boys within the wider trade union family.[49] Like members of the Fianna and Clan na Gael, the ICA scouts accompanied their adult counterparts on marches, manoeuvres, and parades. They also received training in scoutcraft, military drill, and the use of revolvers.[50]

The MSPC includes pension applications from former members of the ICA Scout Corps who participated in the Easter Rising of 1916, such as Walter Patrick Carpenter, who served as captain of the 'Boys Corps' during the period 1914-17, and James Connolly's son Roderick, who was also a Fianna member.[51] A number of files refer to younger members of the ICA, both male and female, being sent home from garrisons during Easter week on account of their age.[52] For instance, one of Carpenter's referees reported that James Connolly ordered boys under the age of eighteen to leave the garrison at the GPO on the evening of Wednesday, 26 April 1916.[53] There is no consistency in how membership

41 The Clan na Gael membership of Annie O'Hagan (née Carey) was confirmed in letters written by Seán Colbert, 22 Apr. 1938, Mrs M. Chadwick, 18 Dec. 1935, and Sara Kealy, 22 Apr. 1938, MSPC, MSP34REF22054 Annie O'Hagan (née Carey).

42 Letter from Cecilia O'Neill (née Conroy), 25 Apr. 1938, MSPC, MSP34REF22268 Cecilia O'Neill (née Conroy). The O'Neill family's distress is also highlighted in her letter dated 15 Aug. 1938 and that of her sister-in-law Tessie Wynne, dated 4 Jan. 1939, ibid.

43 Application form, 8 July 1954, MSPC, 49SP7805 May Murray.

44 Application form, 5 Jan. 1938, MSPC, MSP34REF56696 Ellen (Nellie) Stynes (née Lambert).

45 See MSPC, MSP34REF8617 Anne O'Callaghan (née Duggan). Information about the Clan na Gael Girl Scouts in Cork is included in her sister Peg Duggan's witness statement, BMH, WS 1576.

46 MSPC, MSP34REF3762 Marcella Crimmins; MSPC, MSP34REF58449 Marcella Prendergast (née Crimmins); MSPC, MSP34REF21847 Mary Jane Slevin (née Stapleton). Reardon stated she was a member of Clan na Gael from June 1916 to September 1919; she later served with Cumann na mBan and was awarded a service medal. Application form, 3 Jan. 1939, MSPC, MSP34REF57545 Sarah Reardon (née O'Mara). Thorpe claimed for service with Clan na Gael and Cumann na mBan in the period 1917-23. Application form, 30 May 1935, MSPC, MSP34REF9312 Theresa Thorpe (née Joyce).

47 Application form, 11 Mar. 1935; Note by Secretary, Office of the Referee, 23 Oct. 1940, MSPC, MSP34REF3762 Marcella Crimmins.

48 Observations on service, 1 Sept. 1942, MSPC, MSP34REF21847 Mary Jane Slevin (née Stapleton). She signed the Roll of Honour of 1916 as 'M.J. Slevin Nee Stapleton'. See (https://microsites.museum.ie/rollofhonour1916/roleofwomen.aspx) (accessed 23 May 2022).

49 For a discussion of the ICA scout corps, see Appendix III of Watts, 'Na Fianna Éireann', pp 398-404.

50 Ann Matthews, *The Irish Citizen Army* (Cork, 2014), pp 48, 59, 63, 71.

51 See MSPC, MSP34REF8789 Walter Patrick Carpenter; MSPC, MSP34REF38900 Roderick Connolly.

52 For example, see MSPC, MSP34REF204 Frederick Norgrove; MSPC, MSP34REF210 Christopher Crothers; MSPC, MSP34REF56588 Joseph William Keeley; MSPC, MSP34REF980 Patrick Buttner; MSPC, MSP34REF58426 John McConville; MSPC, MSP34REF1139 Annie Collins (née Flinter); MSPC, MSP34REF8867 Mary Allen (née Devereux).

53 James O'Neill, late O/C, ICA, to Military Service Pensions Board, 14 Feb. 1936, MSPC, MSP34REF8789 Walter Patrick Carpenter.

of the ICA scout corps is described in the MSPC database. Sometimes the Boys Corps or Boy Scouts are listed as a unit or company of the Irish Citizen Army; in other cases, no unit is listed and the individual is simply referred to holding the rank of private within the ICA. Ultimately, the easiest way to find former members of the ICA Boys Corps in the MSPC is to search for names of former members mentioned in secondary sources.[54] For instance, there are MSPC files for all of the ICA Boy Scouts that Ann Matthews lists as being in action in 1916. The mother of Charles Darcy, who was killed during the rebellion, was awarded a partial dependant's allowance. The other files refer to applications for military service pensions, all but one of which was successful.[55] In common with members of the Fianna and Clan na Gael, like those from the Crimmins and Hannafin families, several members of the ICA Boys Corps had fathers and siblings who also engaged in revolutionary activism.[56]

In Cork the formation of groups of ICA Boy Scouts and Girl Guides *c*.1918 caused a split in the Fianna and Clan na Gael in that city, according to one former Fianna member.[57] The MSPC includes pension applications from three women, sisters Nora and Sheila Wallace and Mary Monica Clifford (née Vaughan), who were involved in organising these Cork-based ICA youth groups, which disbanded in 1920, with many of their members then joining the Fianna or Cumann na mBan. Youth group organisation was only one example of the women's activism. The Wallaces' newsagent shop on St Augustine Street served as a dispatch centre for Cork No. 1 Brigade of the Irish Volunteers/IRA.[58] Unlike the Wallace sisters, Clifford was a Cumann na mBan member. She reported that she was one of the founders of the ICA Girl Guides in Cork in 1918 and was elected their commandant, and that her drapery shop on Douglas Street was utilised by the Volunteers for various purposes.[59] These three women's pension applications and supporting documentation offer insight into the military support services they rendered, but provide little detail about the ICA Boy Scouts and Girl Guides, aside from their short-lived existence in Cork.

Irish nationalist uniformed youth groups played an important role in the socialisation and mobilisation of future revolutionaries. As this essay has shown, the MSPC is a valuable tool for uncovering information about these young nationalist activists and their families both during and after the Irish revolution. Files from the MSPC can be used to develop a general profile of nationalist youth group membership and leadership, undertake city, county or provincial studies, reveal the types of military service undertaken by youth group members, determine their attitudes toward the Anglo-Irish Treaty, chart aspects of their future lives, and examine the array of challenges faced by former members and/or their dependants after the revolution. These challenges included financial insecurity and poverty, health issues, bereavement, emigration, and migration. Even gaining recognition of their contributions to the Irish revolution could be a challenge, especially for female members. Moreover, applications and supporting documents in the MSPC, like BMH witness statements, could be used as a source for considering how people later in life reflect on and write about experiences of their past youth. Hopefully, this essay will inspire you to join me in using the MSPC to explore revolutionary youth activism and its aftermath in twentieth-century Ireland.

Further Reading:

Marnie Hay, *Na Fianna Éireann and the Irish revolution, 1909-23: scouting for rebels* (Manchester, 2019 & 2021)
Ann Matthews, *Renegades: Irish republican women, 1900-1922* (Cork, 2010)
Ann Matthews, *Dissidents: Irish republican women, 1923-1941* (Cork, 2012)
Ann Matthews, *The Irish Citizen Army* (Cork, 2014)

54 For instance, see Matthews, *The Irish Citizen Army*, p. 212; Jeffrey Leddin, *The Labour Hercules: the Irish Citizen Army and Irish republicanism, 1913-23* (Newbridge, 2019), pp 151-2, 168.

55 In addition to Carpenter and Connolly, Matthews lists the following ICA Boy Scouts: MSPC, MSP34REF980 Patrick Buttner; MSPC, MSP34REF2068 Louis Byrne Jr; MSPC, MSP34REF32621 Patrick Carroll; MSPC, MSP34REF210 Christopher Crothers; MSPC, MSP34REF1390 Laurence Corbally; MSPC, 1D204 Charles Darcy; MSPC, MSP34REF56588 Joseph William Keeley; MSPC, MSP34REF204 Frederick Norgrove; MSPC, MSP34REF46307 Patrick Joseph O'Neill; MSPC, MSP34REF31689 Patrick Seery; MSPC, MSP34REF37 William Edward Oman Jr. Of these, only Seery's application was unsuccessful; there was not enough evidence to corroborate his claim for service in 1916 when he was aged seventeen.

56 Examples include Walter Carpenter, Roderick Connolly, Frederick Norgrove, William Oman, and Patrick Seery.

57 BMH, WS 1628 James A. Busby. Also see Hay, *Na Fianna Éireann*, p. 76.

58 Application form, 31 Dec. 1935; letters of reference from Cathal O'Shannon, 20 May 1940, and S. Hegarty and F. O'Donoghue, 20 May 1940, MSPC, MSP34REF29323 Nora Wallace. See also, MSPC, MSP34REF29324 Sheila Wallace.

59 Petition to the Minister for Defence, 10 Sept. 1953, MSPC, MSP34REF30473 Mary Monica Clifford (née Vaughan).

Left

Some Clan na Gael Girl Scouts, like Lizzie Merrigan (pictured on the right, *c.* 1915-16), later joined Cumann na mBan and supported the anti-Treaty side during the Civil War.

Image courtesy of Kilmainham Gaol (18PO-1B53-17).

Right

Photo of a boy in Fianna Éireann uniform, probably Patrick Clarke, later of the Irish Volunteers, active in the 1916 Rising.

Image courtesy of the National Museum of Ireland (NMI-HE-EW-5575-6-001).

92 Caledon Rd
22 February 1937.

Formed Clan na gael Girl Scouts & Hiberman Rifles 1915–
With Ranks of Capt & Continued to organise & train
Easter Sunday 1916 mobolised for Parade to Mountains
Order Changed to Monday
Monday Parade to Mountains lit Fires & returned
to G. P. O Garrison
Sent to Barracks to report on movement of Troops
Sent to Drumcondra for Ammunition: assisted Doctor.
Lieut Lowe ordered to report at Jacobs.
Sent on several Missions to College of Surgeons
Sent to Stephens Green for ammunition & report
Number of Dead. at Jacobs until Surrender.
After Rising reorganised Clan na gael. Formed Companies
& was Elected Commdt.
Organisation attended all Funerals & Parades
I was arrested Aug. 1916. on Release. returned
to organise & train
Easter 1917 Helped to place Copy of Proclamation G.P.O.
Attended at Lullamore for Demonstrations
1918. Training Continued & help given at Election.

Left and right

Mary Chadwick recounts her activities including her role in forming the Clan na Gael Scouts attached to the Hibernian Rifles and forming other Clan na Gael branches in Douglas and Blackpool (Cork) and Athlone (Westmeath).

Reference:
Mary Chadwick
MSP34REF20098.

Formed Branches of Clan na gael H.R. at Cork.
Lullamore & Athlone.
Joined Cumman. na mBan. 4th County Dublin 1919.
Became Comdt Gen. Of. Clan na gael in that year.
Having three Battalions in Dublin City training
in Intelligence Work. Drill. First Aid. & Signals.
Carrying arms from. Ambushes.
Formed Scout Parties to obtain addresses of houses
visited by Black & Tans after Leaving Barracks
This Information was then transferred to
Director of Intelligence I.R.A
Civil War, Gresham Hotel. C. Y. M. S. 4th Frederick St
& Helys. Parnell St.
Afterwards Continued work in Clan na gael H.R.
& Cumman na mBan as before
Helped to Establish Communication with Liam Mellowes
in D. King Mountjoy through Free State Soldier.
Arrested Easter Saturday 1923 detained for
about 6 months & lost Position in Messrs Forrest.
Grafton St through Same.
Mary Chadwick

9th October, 1934.

A Chara,

Referring to our conversation of a few days ago, I have looked into the claim of Mrs. Margaret Hanafin, Tralee, in respect of her son, and I find that whilst the death certificate shows that he died as a result of gunshot wounds of head and laceration of brain, the Pensions Board reported that the wounds which resulted in the death of deceased were not received whilst he was engaged in military service.

I fear from what I learn here in the office that the deceased can hardly be regarded, in any circumstances, to have been carrying out a lawful order, as the Truce was in force at the time and the act which caused him to be wounded was an unlawful act even were he acting on instructions from his O.C.

Mise, le meas,

RÚNAÍ AIRE.

Sean Moynihan, Esq.,
Secretary to the Executive Council.

Perry Buildings,
Strand Street,
Tralee,
27/7/54.

The Secretary,
Department of Defence,
Dublin.

A Chara,

With reference to the claim of Mrs. Hannafin re the death of her son, Patrick, during the engagement with British Forces in Tralee in 1922, I wish to state that I am prepared to verify that Patrick Hannafin was killed in action while carrying out instructions issued by an officer of the I.R.A. I would also like to point out that from my own experience Fianna Scouts, acting on orders from their Headquarters, obeyed implicitly and without question any command which came to them from an I.R.A. officer.

I also had occasion to know the character of this Fianna Scout and I say, without hesitation that he was a credit to the organisation of Fianna Eireann, and Ireland owes a debt of gratitude to the Mother of this boy who was taken from her so early in life to join the Roll of Honour of Irish Soldiers.

Is mise, le meas,

Matthew Moroney
A. Maslu. 1st Batt.
Kerry I Brigade

Left

Patrick (Percy) J. Hannafin was shot in the head by the Black and Tans during an encounter in Tralee in January 1922 and subsequently died. His mother's application for a dependant's allowance or gratuity was initially rejected because the incident occurred during the Truce.

Reference:
Patrick J. Hannafin DP4142..

Declaring that 'Ireland owes a debt of gratitude to the Mother of this boy', Matthew Moroney writes on behalf of the mother of Patrick Hannafin for a dependant's allowance.

Reference:
Patrick J. Hannafin DP4142.

‘A hard price to pay’: the burden of revolutionary inheritance[1]

Fearghal McGarry

> History is the enemy of memory. The two stalk each other across the fields of the past, claiming the same terrain. History forges weapons from what memory has forgotten or suppressed … But there are regions of the past that only memory knows. If historians wish to go into this dense and tangled terrain, they must accept memory as a guide.[2]

The release of testimony by veterans of the Irish revolution over the Decade of Centenaries has invigorated public and scholarly interest in this formative period, allowing for the emergence of new stories and perspectives. Oral history projects, family histories, documentaries, and accounts retrieved from attics have added to this abundance of testimony, albeit increasingly in the form of narratives generated by second- or third-generation descendants rather than first-hand witnesses.[3] One consequence of the success of cataloguing and digitisation projects such as the Bureau of Military History and Military Service Pensions Collection is that archives, previously the domain of academics, are increasingly informing family histories of the revolution.[4] Conversely, historians, who once confined their research to contemporaneous archival sources, now seek to integrate memory into their interpretations.[5] This essay explores how this blurring of boundaries between archive, memory, and historiography is facilitating new approaches, such as the history of emotions and the family, which can broaden our understanding of the experience, impact, and social memory of Ireland’s revolution.

In terms of understanding the social background of revolutionaries, and their experiences after independence, few sources can rival the MSPC. For instance, it provided the only substantial source of information for two of the seven individuals who formed the subject of my 2015 collective biography of the Abbey Theatre’s Easter 1916 rebels.[6] Based in north inner-city Dublin, the social background of the Abbey rebels contributed to their anonymity. The poor, as Ciara Breathnach has observed, ‘leave a faint impression on the Irish historical record’.[7] Working-class people were less likely to generate diaries, letters, or memoirs; to have such material retained by families; or to see it preserved in archives. Nor is the social memory of the urban poor preserved to the same extent as that of lower-class people from more stable rural communities.[8] Contextualising the evidence gathered in the MSPC through additional biographical research further enhanced its value. It highlighted how the Abbey rebels’ pension claims reflected their social background, particularly their class and gender, as well as their often disappointing post-revolutionary experiences. However, this research also pointed to limitations and gaps in the evidence recorded by the MSPC, prompting further questions that are explored in this essay.

Although the applications reveal traces of the disillusionment that framed veterans’ testimony about the revolutionary era, they shed little light on the reasons for this. In contrast, family memory proved useful in understanding how post-independence developments shaped veterans’ recollections and self-constructions, highlighting revealing omissions in their testimony to the MSPC. The value of narratives recorded by family tradition, often over several generations, calls into question the idea of any straightforward dichotomy between history and memory. Archival evidence, including the testimony recorded by the MSPC (itself a form of memory), can be ‘problematized, assisted, and even corrected by memory’ which, rigorously contextualised, provides rich insights into veterans’ lived experiences.[9] Developing these themes, this essay draws on second- and third-generation narratives of two Abbey rebels – Máire Nic Shiubhlaigh and Peadar Kearney – to demonstrate the value of family memory for contextualising the MSPC, and for understanding the emotional legacy of revolutionary service.

I

Máire Nic Shiubhlaigh, the Abbey Theatre’s first leading lady, was one of many cultural nationalists politicised through participation in pre-war Dublin’s amateur theatre circles.[10] She progressed from Inghinidhe na hÉireann to Cumann na mBan with whom she served at Jacob’s factory during the Easter Rising. In her pension application, she described her participation in ‘ordinary Cumann na mBan duties’ after the insurrection:

> I was doing a lot of concert work – Volunteer concerts. Most of my time was taken up down the country – Sunday Meetings. I looked on it as volunteer work, assisting at Concerts, and then I was working in the Gaelic Press. It was raided, and closed up … I could not say what I did, whatever I was asked to do when free to do it.[11]

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1 Interview with Éanna Ó Conghaile, 25 June 2015, The 1916 Rising Oral History Collections, Irish Life and Lore (available at irishlifeandlore.com).

2 Richard White, *Remembering Ahanagran: storytelling in a family’s past* (Cork, 1998), pp 4-5.

3 Oral history projects include the UCD National Folklore Collection Irish Civil War memory project and Irish Life and Lore. Tomás Mac Conmara’s *The time of the Tans: an oral history of the War of Independence in County Clare* (Cork, 2019) explores local memory of the revolution. Recent publications by descendants include Máire Comerford, *On dangerous ground*, ed. Hilary Dully (Dublin, 2021); Myles Dungan, *Four killings: land hunger, murder and a family in the Irish revolution* (London, 2021); Frank Shouldice, *Grandpa the sniper* (Dublin, 2016); Fergal Keane, *Wounds: a memoir of war and love* (Glasgow, 2017). Nuala O’Connor’s 2019 documentary *Keepers of the Flame* explores the Military Service Pensions Collection within the context of family memory.

4 Gearóid Ó Tuathaigh, ‘The Irish revolutionary decade, 1913-23: voices, narratives and contexts’ in Ciara Boylan, Sarah-Anne Buckley and Pat Dolan (eds), *Family histories of the Irish revolution* (Dublin, 2018), p. 35.

5 See, for example, Diarmaid Ferriter, *A nation and not a rabble: the Irish revolution 1913-23* (London, 2015) and R.F. Foster, *Vivid faces: the revolutionary generation in Ireland, 1890-1923* (London, 2014).

6 Fearghal McGarry, *The Abbey rebels of 1916: a lost revolution* (Dublin, 2015).

7 Ciara Breathnach, *Ordinary lives, death, and social class: Dublin City Coroner’s Court, 1876-1902* (Oxford, 2022), p. 12.

8 See, for example, Breandán Mac Suibhne, *The end of outrage: post-Famine adjustment in rural Ireland* (Oxford, 2017).

9 Clyde A. Milner II, ‘A historian who has changed our thinking. A roundtable on the work of Richard White’ in *Western Historical Quarterly*, xxxiii, no. 2 (2002), p. 153.

10 For further on Máire and Peadar, see McGarry, *Abbey rebels*. On theatre and revolution, see Foster, *Vivid faces*, pp 75-113.

11 Sworn statement made before the Advisory Committee by Maire Price, 22 May 1936, MSPC, MSP34REF1705 Máire Price (née Nic Shiublaigh).

She served briefly as treasurer of the Irish National Aid and Volunteer Dependents' Fund, which supported the families of imprisoned and deceased rebels. She canvassed at elections and assisted at public rallies and political funerals. Like many in Cumann na mBan, she attended to the sick and dying during the influenza epidemic that claimed over twenty thousand Irish lives in 1918. Subsequently, she moved to Drogheda, and then Cavan, to work in cinemas owned by her brother-in-law Joe Stanley, where, she related, 'there was not much to be done'.[12]

In 1929 Máire married Éamonn ('Bob') Price who had also fought at Jacob's factory. A senior member of the Irish Republican Brotherhood, Price had served as director of organisation at GHQ during the War of Independence and as a major general in the National Army during the Civil War. The couple settled in Laytown, County Meath, where Máire helped her widowed sister, Patricia ('Gipsy'), to raise her son, Edward (Ted) Kenny. Like most female veterans, she received the lowest grade when she applied for a military service pension.[13] The Irish state's definition of 'active service' meant that her revolutionary activism between 1917 and 1920, which was confined to gendered auxiliary roles, did not qualify for compensation. In correspondence to the Pensions Board, she articulated her disappointment at its failure to acknowledge the value of these activities 'which if not technically "active" were voluntarily and of considerable advantage to the National Cause'.[14]

Bob's death in 1951 left Máire in a precarious position. 'I am not very well off', she informed the Department of Defence, which assessed her circumstances as poor.[15] She subsequently found work as a temporary librarian at Meath County Library until failing health necessitated her retirement.[16] Máire Nic Shiubhlaigh died on 9 September 1958. Despondent about her failure to revive her stage career, she would have welcomed the extensive coverage of her military funeral. Press reports recorded how this ceremony, marking the passing of 'one of the great Abbey actresses of the early days', was attended by the nation's leading cultural and political figures.[17]

II

A well-connected figure in the Dublin IRB, Peadar Kearney joined the Irish Volunteers on its formation. He was prominent in key events such as the landing of arms at Howth. Like Máire, he spent Easter week confined within the ineffective Jacob's factory garrison. Peadar also contributed to the revolutionary cause through his anti-British ballads, notably 'The soldier's song', later adopted as the national anthem. During the War of Independence, he formed part of an informal network of 'unknown soldiers' working out of Phil Shanahan's Foley Street pub, a haunt for sex workers, gunmen, and sketchy characters at the heart of the red-light Monto district. Describing himself as 'sort of an organiser', Peadar was responsible for 'procuring and distributing arms, collecting intelligence reports' and other jobs requiring discretion and an intimate knowledge of urban working-class networks. Arrested after 'Bloody Sunday' in November 1920, Peadar saw out the war at Ballykinlar internment camp. His close ties to Michael Collins led him to support the Treatyite cause in the Civil War during which he served as a prison censor.

While some well-placed Treatyites secured sought-after jobs in the public service, Peadar typified the many veterans who 'paid a high price for their involvement, enduring humiliation, disability, poverty, obscurity and even death'.[18] By 1926 he had fallen on hard times due to unemployment and poor health. As an appeal to the government made clear, he felt let down by former comrades:

> Michael Collins often assured me I would be all right ... When out of employment [Cumann na nGaedheal government minister] Mr. J[oe]. McGrath gave me the impression that he was very anxious to fix me up, and when *eventually* I asked him to get me fixed up he told me I would never have to work again, that he was looking after a small annuity and that as a matter of fact a cheque for a substantial sum (I heard £250) was actually drawn in my favour and was awaiting signature ... I believe I am entitled to some little consideration and my own friends can hardly credit I am penniless and go so far as to say that it serves me right for taking things so quietly but all my life I have detested publicity and sincerely hope this matter will be settled in peace and decency.[19]

Indebted, and reliant on handouts from veterans' relief schemes, Peadar outlined his circumstances in a poignant letter to a former comrade, Diarmuid O'Hegarty, who had risen to the powerful position of secretary of the Executive Council:

> I was told that I would not receive much but despite it being a pittance it is greatly and urgently needed. I am in poor health and my wife is bedridden. I am not happy to be disclosing my state of need but I have two boys to keep at school and they must be fed and clothed. If you can do anything at all to expedite my pension payment it would be the best thing you will have ever done.[20]

Peadar's contacts, and 'very needy circumstances', ensured a comparatively prompt resolution of his application. However, his clandestine revolutionary career (which hinged on undocumented IRB activities rather than his nominal service in the Irish Volunteers), and his poorly drafted application, may explain his award of the lowest pension grade.[21] The resulting annuity of £30, while welcome, did not raise his family from poverty prior to his death in 1942.[22]

12 Ibid. Máire also ran in the 1920 municipal elections in Dublin.

13 Cumann na mBan members were restricted to pensions at the two lowest grades. Marie Coleman, 'Compensating Irish female revolutionaries, 1916-1923' in *Women's History Review*, xxvi, no. 6 (2017), p. 928.

14 Máire Price to Dept. of Defence, 28 Oct. 1942, MSPC, MSP34REF1705 Máire Price (née Nic Shiublaigh).

15 Máire Price to Dept. of Defence, 10 July 1951, MSPC, 24SP5655 Eamon Price.

16 Máire Price to Mr McMahon, 11 Feb. 1958, MSPC, MSP34REF1705 Máire Price (née Nic Shiublaigh).

17 *Irish Press*, 13 Sept. 1958; *Irish Independent*, 11 Sept. 1958.

18 Ferriter, *A nation and not a rabble*, p. 321.

19 'The soldier's song', 24 Aug. 1926, NAI, Dept. of the Taoiseach, S7395A.

20 Peadar Kearney to Diarmuid O'Hegarty, 11 Oct. 1926, MSPC, 24SP3880 Peadar Kearney [translation by Éanna Ó Caollaí].

21 Colbert Kearney, *Down by the Liffeyside* (Dromore, 2019), pp 232-8; MSPC, 24SP3880 Peadar Kearney.

22 Kearney, *Liffeyside*, pp 28-9, 231-2, 246-7.

III

In the 1950s, the last decade in which idealised depictions of the revolution held sway, Máire and Peadar became the subjects of biographical accounts written, in each case, by a nephew. How do these second-generation family narratives supplement our understanding of the MSPC's evidence? What insights do they provide into the meanings that Máire and Peadar, and their families, attached to the independence struggle?

Published in 1955, *The splendid years* was written by Máire's nephew Ted Kenny.[23] Its origins lay in a talk by Máire to university graduates in 1947, and the warm public response to a rare stage appearance the following year.[24] This text sought to write Máire back into the 'story of the Irish National Theatre' (the memoir's subtitle). Máire had left the Abbey Theatre in 1906 following W.B. Yeats's commercialisation of its politically-engaged amateur ethos, and an acrimonious row over her salary. She came to resent how Yeats misleadingly depicted himself as the founding spirit of the Irish National Theatre Society ('my little theatre'), condescendingly attributing its success to his efforts to train 'shop girls' (including Máire) for the stage.[25] Gallingly, Yeats's 1923 Nobel Prize speech had overlooked her contribution, while highlighting that of her stage rivals, Sarah Allgood and Máire O'Neill, the 'players of genius' who made the Abbey a success.[26] *The splendid years* attributed Máire's break with the Abbey to her prioritisation of politics over art, a decision depicted as culminating in her role in 'the greatest drama of all' at Easter 1916.[27]

Similar themes feature in *The soldier's song: the story of Peadar Kearney*, which incorporated some of Peadar's autobiographical reminiscences. Authored by his nephew Jimmy Bourke (writing as Séamus de Burca), the biography was published in 1957 under a family imprint, P.J. Bourke.[28] The text noted Peadar's post-independence obscurity, making clear the adverse impact of his revolutionary service on his livelihood. It emphasised Peadar's modest circumstances, attributing these to his unemployment, ill-health, principled refusal to compromise his trade-union values, and unwillingness to trade off his reputation as author of the national anthem.

Both accounts share several narrative strategies, including a highly selective chronological focus. *The splendid years* concludes abruptly at the end of Easter week, overlooking Máire's subsequent anonymity. *The soldier's song* devotes less than one page to the Civil War and refers only fleetingly to Peadar's experiences after independence. While far from unusual in accounts of the revolution, its minimisation of the Civil War owed something to the family's staunch republicanism. Indeed, Peadar had returned to republican militancy, publicly supporting the IRA, by the 1930s. His anxiety about how his stance on the Treaty would be remembered is evident from his passionate defence of Collins. 'It is easy for the younger generation to question our motives', he reflected: 'The generation that will see the Republic will never appreciate the men who gave their all.'[29]

Second, both narratives aimed to secure recognition of their subjects' contribution to the struggle for independence, and place in history. In his preface to *The splendid years*, Ted describes Máire's memoir as 'a story of hard work, for little material reward; of a constant striving for recognition'.[30] Gratifyingly, this theme of unacknowledged service was widely noted in reviews of both books. Peadar, one journalist noted, 'made little or nothing from his many poetic works and ... gained equally little from a lifetime of service devoted to the cause of Irish freedom'.[31]

A third feature of both texts, as Gearóid Ó Tuathaigh has noted of testimony provided to the Bureau of Military History, is that their

> narratives were influenced (in emphasis and omission) by what had happened – in Ireland and in the life-experiences of the narrators – in the intervening period. How life had 'turned out' for Ireland and for the narrator was the canvas against which even the sharpest memory or the most scrupulous recollection shaped its narrative of earlier events.[32]

For example, both accounts largely concealed the disillusionment experienced by their subjects. Bourke downplayed the hardship endured by Peadar after independence, overlooking his humiliating campaign to secure compensation for the state's use of 'The soldier's song'. Instead, he depicted Peadar as selflessly resigned to his lack of status: 'He was never bitter about his lot, which was often hard, though he was bitter against certain old comrades who had turned into self-seeking politicians.'[33] Privately, though, Bourke recorded that Peadar, who had a strong sense of self-worth and was sensitive to perceived slights, was less sanguine: 'Peadar often said to me: "I got little out of the Soldier's Song, not even fame".'[34] Both texts presented portraits that accorded with the '"dignified" fortitude' expected of the revolutionary generation.[35] Public acknowledgement of the full cost of their revolutionary commitment would await a third-generation of family narratives.

IV

The centenary of Easter 1916 was marked by a new wave of family narratives. One valuable example is the large body of interviews recorded by Maurice O'Keeffe for the Irish Life and Lore oral history project.[36]

23 Máire Nic Shiubhlaigh, *The splendid years: Máire Nic Shiubhlaigh's story of the Irish National Theatre as told to Edward Kenny* (Dublin, 1955).

24 Máire Nic Shiubhlaigh, 'Reminiscences', NLI, MS 27,634; David Kenny, 'Introduction' in Máire Nic Shiubhlaigh with Edward Kenny, *The splendid years. the memoirs of an Abbey actress and 1916 rebel*, ed. David Kenny (Dublin, 2016), pp 61-2.

25 McGarry, *Abbey rebels*, pp 33-41.

26 Ibid., p. 329; Kenny, 'Introduction', p. 54.

27 Nic Shiubhlaigh, 'Reminiscences'.

28 Séamus de Burca, *The soldier's song: the story of Peadar Kearney* (Dublin, 1957).

29 Ibid., p. 220.

30 Edward Kenny, 'Preface', in Nic Shiubhlaigh, *Splendid years*, p. xiii.

31 On the reception of de Burca's biography, see McGarry, *Abbey rebels*, pp 334-7.

32 Ó Tuathaigh, 'The Irish revolutionary decade', p. 31.

33 De Burca, *Soldier's song*, pp 221-2.

34 Séamus de Burca to John O'Donovan, 3. Aug. 1962, NLI, MS 39/130/5.

35 Hélène O'Keeffe, *To speak of Easer week: family memories of the Irish revolution* (Cork, 2015), p. 15.

36 The 1916 Rising Oral History Collections, Irish Life and Lore (available at irishlifeandlore.com).

Drawing on interviews with twenty-five descendants of veterans (recorded as part of that project) for her publication, *To speak of Easter week*, his daughter Hélène O'Keeffe suggests that

> the value of oral testimony from the second and third layers of memory lies less in its potential for yielding an unvarnished truth about the revolutionary period, and more in its revelations about the long-term impact of political activism on the participants and their families. Equally significantly, the oral history testimonies provide an insight into how memory is transferred from one generation to the next, and reveal the personal motives for remembering, and forgetting, 1916.[37]

Enhancing the value of this testimony, many veterans had chosen not to publicly record their experiences for reasons that included 'humility and self-censorship', the republican movement's culture of secrecy, the impact of trauma, and the divisive legacy of the Civil War. Gendered ideals presented another constraint. Many men conformed to a masculine ideal of reticence, while women were discouraged from remembering activities that challenged Ireland's conservative post-independence ethos, not least because of the demonisation and marginalisation of female activists during and after the Civil War.[38]

Such reticence was not necessarily confined to the revolutionary generation. Whether sharing 'the heavy burden of expectation' articulated by their parents, affected by inherited traumas, or shielded from these by their parents, the children of revolutionaries were often 'complicit in the cultivation of silence'.[39] The concept of 'postmemory', developed by Marianne Hirsch in relation to the Holocaust but since extended to other historical experiences, provides a useful means of understanding the generational impact of this inheritance:

> Postmemory describes the relationship that the generation after those who witnessed cultural or collective trauma bears to the experience of those who came before, experiences that they 'remember' only by means of the stories, images, and behaviours among which they grew up. But those experiences were transmitted to them so deeply and affectively as to *seem* to constitute memories in their own right ... To grow up with such overwhelming memories, to be dominated by narratives that preceded one's birth or one's consciousness, is to risk having one's own stories and experiences displaced, even evacuated, by those of a previous generation.[40]

Drawing on the Irish Life and Lore interviews, Hélène O'Keeffe has identified how significant differences between second- and third-generation narrators shed light on the revolution's emotional legacy. The former were often motivated by a desire to protect their parents' reputation, and to ensure they received due recognition. Third-generation descendants were less constrained by the 'reserve, regret and practised restraint' that characterised the narratives of revolutionaries and their children: 'with the perspective that distance offers, the grandsons and granddaughters were more willing to articulate the pain, and often the resentment, felt by their parents, the children of the revolutionaries'.[41] Their willingness to break family silences also reflected their educational and cultural formation, and the impact of changing social and political mores.

V

Two new narratives, published after my book on the Abbey rebels, allow us to test whether third-generation family memory of Máire and Peadar conforms to the above schema. In 2016 the journalist David Kenny edited a second edition of his grand-aunt Máire's memoir, *The splendid years*, which had been written by his father Ted. In 2019 Colbert Kearney, a grandson of Peadar (and professor emeritus of modern English at University College Cork), published a family memoir, *Down by the Liffeyside*.

Both texts reveal significant omissions from the previous generation's biographical accounts. In his introduction to *The splendid years*, David Kenny acknowledges the 'nervous exhaustion' and 'personal trauma' experienced by Máire during and after the Rising (which saw the execution of several close friends). He records the devastating impact of the death of Crawford Neil, the lover of his grandmother Gipsy (Máire's sister) who was shot by a looter during Easter week. Family history records that after Gipsy found Crawford, as he lay dying in Jervis Street Hospital, the chaplain refused to marry 'a woman who will be a widow in a few hours'.[42] Kenny's account details how Máire's husband Bob, like many veterans, struggled to find his way in post-revolutionary Ireland. He suggests that Bob's alcoholism may have resulted from the trauma of the Civil War. Although his sister, Leslie, was married to the prominent anti-Treaty leader Tom Barry, Bob had been implicated in the Civil War's most sordid atrocity when he helped conduct a court of inquiry that covered up the murder of seventeen anti-Treaty prisoners in Kerry by former members of Collins's squad. Kenny notes how Bob's drinking impacted on his marriage, and acknowledges the professional disappointments experienced by Máire whose final years were spent 'struggling for money and work in a dreary house in Laytown'.[43] Although they 'gave everything', paying 'a huge price', and enduring 'a lot of pain', Kenny reflected in an interview to the Irish Life and Lore project, Máire and Gipsy 'ended up with absolutely nothing, scrabbling around for pensions'.[44]

Colbert Kearney paints a similarly grim picture of revolutionary afterlives. Piecing together recollections by his father, Con, and uncle, Pearse, of their father, Peadar, Colbert dismantles Jimmy Bourke's portrait of 'a veteran poet-patriot in serenely contented retirement'.[45] Refuting Bourke's hagiographical depiction of his 'good Catholic death', Peadar's infrequent trips to church occurred when anti-republican sermons offered opportunities for 'very public protest'.[46] Peadar's disillusionment with the Irish

37 O'Keeffe, *To speak of Easter week*, p. 9.

38 Ibid., pp 12-13.

39 Ibid., p. 14.

40 Marianne Hirsch, 'The generation of postmemory' in *Poetics Today*, xxix, no. 1 (2008), pp 106-7.

41 O'Keeffe, *To speak of Easter week*, p. 19.

42 Kenny, 'Introduction', p. 56.

43 Ibid., pp 60, 48.

44 Interview with David Kenny, 7 Sept. 2015, disc 2, The 1916 Rising Oral History Collections, Irish Life and Lore (available at irishlifeandlore.com).

45 Kearney, *Liffeyside*, p. 209.

state, his resentment of more successful former comrades, and his nationalist chauvinism are detailed. For example, Bourke's description of Peadar's 'lively interest in the course of the Second World War' is clarified by Con's recollection of his father 'marking on a map – and rejoicing in – the German advances', and his glee following Japan's attack on Pearl Harbour.[47]

The price paid by Peadar, and his family, for his revolutionary commitment forms the dominant motif of Colbert's memoir which assembles from fragments of family memory a portrait of Peadar as 'a broken man', crushed 'by illness, poverty, humiliation and depression'.[48] The trauma resulting from 'the savagery of the civil war', Colbert suggests, accounts for the guilt, disappointment, and alcoholism that left Peadar unable to support his family who endured emotional neglect, poverty, and eviction.[49] It may be, though, that the Civil War provides a compelling narrative to represent broader disappointments, whether other acts of violence witnessed, endured, or inflicted; subsequent lack of material success; or the failure to realise the potential of youth. Drawing attention to the dichotomy between 'exclusively traumatic' framings of the Civil War and the 'heroic template' applied to narratives of other periods of the Irish revolution, Síobhra Aiken suggests that the Civil War might be considered 'a euphemism for the many painful events, intimate conflicts and thwarted hopes during and following the strained years of the revolutionary period'.[50]

Both biographical accounts powerfully illustrate Hirsch's notion of postmemory as 'the relationship of the second generation to powerful, often traumatic, experiences that preceded their births'.[51] David Kenny records that his father Ted, who 'grew up in the shadow of the Abbey and 1916', spent 'his entire life raging' against the airbrushing of his aunt, Máire, and mother, Gipsy, from history: 'He was absolutely embittered by the fact that his family had been forgotten.'[52] Dissatisfied with his publisher's edition of *The splendid years*, Ted withdrew it from circulation, labouring on an unfinished version until his death.[53] Ted was also impacted by Crawford Neil's tragic death whose relationship with his mother, Gipsy, he attempted to narrate in a musical: 'Her sadness affected him for the remainder of his life.' David records how Ted failed to secure recognition of Gipsy's (undocumented) participation in the Rising on the Abbey Theatre memorial unveiled in 1966: 'My father, who was RTÉ's theatre critic, had to embarrass the directors into inviting her to the ceremony. He never forgot that slight.'[54] While Ted's life took meaning from his struggle to address these injustices, it also meant that he lived in their shadow:

46 Ibid., pp 20-2.

47 De Burca, *Soldier's song*, p. 228; Kearney, *Liffeyside*, p. 248.

48 Kearney, *Liffeyside*, pp 246, 232, 28-9.

49 Ibid., pp 246-7, 231.

50 Síobhra Aiken, *Spiritual wounds: trauma, testimony, and the Irish Civil War* (Newbridge, 2022), pp 6-7. On disillusioned memory, see also Foster, *Vivid Faces*, pp 289-325.

51 Hirsch, 'The generation of postmemory', p. 102.

52 Kenny, 'Introduction', pp 4, 3, 10; Interview with David Kenny.

53 Kenny, 'Introduction', p. 3; David Kenny, 'The Abbey actress and the pacifist poet: a tragic Easter Rising love story', *Irish Times*, 27 Apr. 2016.

54 Kenny, 'Introduction', p. 57.

'I think those memories actually were Dad's undoing. He lived in the past.' Like other children of revolutionaries, raised by a generation scarred by trauma and disappointment, this inheritance represented 'something that they couldn't live up to, a memory that was fading'.[55]

Colbert Kearney's account similarly attests to the burden of inheritance. In his ballad 'Daddy's Boy', Peader expresses his hope that his son, Pearse, would, if necessary, emulate the sacrifice of the executed martyr after whom he was named:

> When you're big and brave and strong
> Ireland's cause you'll carry on
> Just like Con and Tom and Seán
> Daddy's Boy.
>
> If you live these lines to read, Daddy's Boy, Daddy's Boy.
> And old Ireland still unfree, Daddy's Boy.
> There's a solemn pledge implied
> You to try as Colbert tried
> Or to die as Colbert died, Daddy's Boy.
>
> I would rather see you dead,
> Daddy boy, Daddy boy,
> In your wee and narrow bed,
> Daddy boy, Daddy boy,
> Than to think that you should grow
> And foregather with the foe
> They who laid your namesake low
> Daddy boy, Daddy boy.[56]

Peadar's most famous descendent, the playwright Brendan Behan, did win his favourite uncle's approval by participating in the IRA's 1939 bombing campaign in Britain. Colbert, however, recounts how 'the price the family had paid for Peadar's dedication' to the cause complicated his own father's revolutionary inheritance.

> For as long as I can remember I always saw Con as the son of Peadar Kearney but even as a child I had concluded that his relationship with his father involved more than adulation; it took me many years to realise how complex the connection was, involving both admiration and rejection ... Among my earliest memories was the unsettling suspicion that while my Daddy honoured his father above all other men, he did not love him as he loved me ... [57]

55 Interview with David Kenny.

56 Eddie Cairney's recording of 'Daddy's Boy' is available on YouTube (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ExRWLHZcFy0) (accessed 7 June 2022).

57 Kearney, *Liffeyside*, pp 249-50.

Colbert attributed his father's 'anguish' to the discordance between Peader's paternal shortcomings and the 'quasi-religious reverence' with which his family regarded him.[58] Colbert suggests that Con's commitment to providing the loving and stable upbringing that he experienced stemmed from his father's determination to avoid reliving 'the grim drama of his own childhood'.[59]

Colbert's memoir demonstrates how, as Caoimhe Nic Dháibhéid noted in her study of the children of Irish revolutionaries, the 'enormous weight of the paternal political legacy made independent thought difficult', constraining the 'psychological space' available to the next generation: 'Carving out one's own political identity was profoundly difficult in a system which revered one's father.'[60] Alluding to the 'heavy burden of expectation' stemming from the duty 'to build on the impossible ideals of the previous generation', Hélène O'Keeffe similarly notes how the full weight of this 'emotional inheritance' is often revealed by third-generation narratives.[61] Exemplifying this burden, Colbert Kearney describes how his father felt himself 'culturally superior to his neighbours':

> This pride was central to their inherited sense of themselves as Kearneys ... This elitism was obviously not based on wealth or social prominence, but on their connection through their father with the noble and unselfish men and women who had disdained material wealth and given their lives for the freedom of Ireland. Pearse and Con were brought up to revere the old Sinn Féin virtues of patriotism, independence and self-reliance, a reverence they sought to pass on to their own children.[62]

The reticence characterising the second-generation's recollections of their heroic parents, and the difficulties they encountered transmitting these memories to their own children, is evident from both accounts. 'Dad and I spoke, but we didn't always communicate', David Kenny recalled: 'he carried his family's sense of injustice, of being forgotten, on his shoulders all his life. This made communication about the subject with him quite difficult for me.'[63] Within the Kearney family, Peadar's glaring shortcomings went unacknowledged. Con, Colbert felt, 'would have considered any criticism of his father a form of blasphemy'. Colbert's father and uncle were 'bound by their strange childhood, by a faith in their father as a national hero that prevented them from ever disclosing any domestic detail that might sully his public reputation'. Efforts by Colbert and his cousins to elicit details about their parents' upbringing were 'invariably deflected with the proverbial observation that "a shut mouth catches no flies"'. Pressed further, Colbert's uncle Pearse 'would throw his eyes up to heaven, bless himself semi-comically, leaving you in no doubt that as a child and youth he had witnessed what was – literally – unspeakable'.[64]

58 Ibid., p. 6.

59 Ibid., pp 27, 29.

60 Caoimhe Nic Dháibhéid, 'Fighting their fathers' fight: the post-revolutionary generation in independent Ireland' in Senia Pašeta (ed.), *Uncertain futures. essays about the Irish past for Roy Foster* (Oxford, 2016), pp 160, 152.

61 O'Keeffe, *To speak of Easter week*, pp 18-19.

62 Kearney, *Liffeyside*, p. 38.

63 Kenny, 'Introduction', p. 4.

64 Ibid., pp 10-11, 8, 13.

Whilst heroic aspects of Peadar's life were obsessively recalled within the family, other important events, such as the successful resolution of his lengthy campaign for financial compensation for his authorship of the national anthem (a 'mixed blessing for a disappointed man with a drinking problem'), were never acknowledged. 'My inquiries have produced not a single word on the effects of such a bonanza on a family that had known little but poverty and humiliation.'[65]

Both biographical accounts attest to the longevity of a fraught revolutionary inheritance. Although born fifty years after the Easter Rising, David Kenny 'grew up with the whole idea of 1916'. He attributed his 'fractured' relationship with his father to his father's 'demons' which, he believes, resulted from his upbringing by damaged veterans.[66]

Although long dead, Peadar was 'permanently present' in Colbert's childhood home in Inchicore: 'it was as if he was still up there in the front bedroom'.[67] The 'cult of Peadar Kearney, a cult so internalised by the occupants as to seem natural' was instilled from childhood: 'I remember Nana – a frail lady in spectacles with rectangular rimless lenses – quivering with intensity as she chanted Peadar Kearney's songs or told me how proud he would be to see me growing up a patriotic boy who would always be faithful to Ireland'.[68] Further reinforced by the second generation, Peadar's legacy shaped Colbert's formation:

> I acquired from Con the assumption that to be *truly* Irish was to be a fervent nationalist ... I knew no other family in Finglas so committed to this faith ... Although I played soccer on the road with the other boys, my loyalty was to our own Gaelic games. I accepted Con's belief that the ultimate proof of our independence would be the revival of the Irish language and this – the guarantee of his admiration – spurred me on to learn it myself.[69]

Colbert's relationship to his mother's family, who did not share Peadar's republicanism, was also shaped by inherited prejudices:

> I was brought up by Con to think of myself as a Kearney rather than as a Kearney-Brady and, above all else, to be proud of my direct descent from Peadar Kearney. My Kearney grandfather had answered the call and played his part in the age-old fight for Irish freedom while, to their eternal shame, others had gone off to fight in the British army during the Great War. Con never said a word against Ben Brady but neither did he ever give him parity of esteem ... they lacked 'national feeling'.[70]

65 Ibid., pp 247, 242.

66 Interview with David Kenny, 7 Sept. 2015, disc 1.

67 Kearney, *Liffeyside*, p. 5.

68 Ibid., pp 35-6.

69 Ibid., p. 69.

70 Ibid., p. 22. Gender also shaped how politics intruded on these family dynamics. Con socialised with his sisters-in-law who, as women, were not expected 'to take an interest in politics and thus could not be faulted for any lack of "national feeling".' However, Con's brothers-in-law, whose failure 'to support the idea of an independent Gaelic Ireland' was betrayed by their interest in soccer, 'enjoyed no such immunity' (ibid., p. 26).

Remembering how his ex-serviceman grandfather had only visited his family home on one occasion, Colbert subsequently reflected: 'I wish we had been close enough for him to tell me his story; but in those days there was no way I could have listened sympathetically to an Old Tough and remained a true Kearney.'[71]

This insight illustrates how changing social and political values, and revised understandings of Irish history and identity, contributes to the more candid qualities of third-generation memory. As Alison Light observes, 'Family history is always part of the national story, or part of its unraveling.'[72] The fading of traditional nationalism, exemplified by the disappearance of Peadar's ballads from the airwaves after 'the North blew up',[73] enabled Colbert to identify an indoctrination that was once imperceptible: 'I was an Irish nationalist and a Catholic before I knew it, having absorbed the basic tenets so soon and so quietly that they pre-date memory'.[74]

This is not to underestimate the difficulty of breaching family silences. Interviewed in 2015 by the Irish Life and Lore project about his father's recollections of Peader, Colbert recalled that 'an absolute pride was transmitted that he was a great man'. At the same time, Colbert added – in the only tentative section of his interview – that there was 'not a great deal of playing with the kids on the floor or anything like that'.[75] The full significance of this cursory observation, which acknowledges – while simultaneously concealing – the trauma experienced by Peadar's family, was not apparent until the publication of Colbert's memoir. This was a history, moreover, that could only be narrated after the passing of Colbert's father: 'for as long as he lived, I did not feel entitled to probe'.[76] Colbert recounted a revealing exchange with his mother who, he came to realise, had never 'worshipped at the shrine of Peadar Kearney':

> I knew better than to ask her about him while Con was alive – she would never have wanted even to be thought to contradict him on such matters – and so it was several years after his death when I asked her how she had got on with Peadar. She responded with enthusiastic praise of [Peadar's wife] Eva and, having let her have her say, I repeated my question. She fell silent for a few seconds, then shrugged and muttered: 'Sure he was never there.' ... Looking back, I suspect she was going as far as she dared: she would have done anything for me, except offend Con's spirit by betraying the great name of Peadar Kearney.[77]

71 Ibid., p. 23.

72 Alison Light, 'Writing the lives of "common people": reflections on the idea of obscurity' in *The Kenyon Review*, Sept./Oct. 2019 (https://kenyonreview.org/kr-online-issue/2019-septoct/selections/alison-light-656342/) (accessed 23 Feb. 2023).

73 Interview with Colbert Kearney, 5 Aug. 2015, The 1916 Rising Oral History Collections, Irish Life and Lore (available at irishlifeandlore.com).

74 Kearney, *Liffeyside*, p. 39.

75 Interview with Colbert Kearney.

76 Kearney, *Liffeyside*, p. 10.

77 Ibid., p. 245.

VI

Family memory reveals the enduring consequences of revolutionary commitment. One hundred years after the death of his grandfather, the Abbey actor Seán Connolly (one of the Rising's first fatalities), Éanna Ó Conghaile reflected on its impact on his own family:

> I can see lines of disturbance still trickling down in today's generation from that. My father's disturbed life in terms of his father being killed at such a young age, having to go away from his mother in the early days, I think that always stayed with him, I think it made it difficult for him to be a father of a family which then cascaded on to our own family.

Echoing the quotation from W. B. Yeats's *Cathleen ni Houlihan* that adorns the Abbey Theatre's Easter 1916 memorial, 'It is a hard service they take that help me', Ó Conghaile reflected that his grandfather's sacrifice, although politically worthwhile, 'was a hard price to pay'.[78]

History can be the enemy of memory, not least when archive confounds family tradition, but this essay suggests a more complicated relationship, pointing to the value of family memory as a source for contextualising the MSPC, and for deepening our understanding of revolutionary afterlives. Transgenerational memory sources also reveal the impact of the revolution on descendants of veterans, and 'the different ways in which families have attempted to assimilate and make sense of their shared history'.[79] For the third generation, the duty 'to correct or supplement the historical record', or to testify to the impact of their own parents' revolutionary inheritance, could outweigh the desire to safeguard the reputation of celebrated forebears.[80]

The resurgence of social memory brought about by the centenary of the revolution demonstrates how memory can revive as well as fade. As Guy Beiner has noted in relation to the Bureau of Military History, 'traditions which have been collected, documented and conserved in an archive can later be resurrected and gain a "second life", once again acquiring social currency'.[81] The cataloguing and digitisation of the Military Service Pensions Collection, forming part of the broader project of 'official memory' that is the Decade of Centenaries, is reconfiguring not only the historiography but also the social memory of the revolution. Like other authors of recent family histories, David Kenny, Colbert Kearney, and Éanna Ó Conghaile relied on the records of the Military Archives to construct their family narratives. These sources, Kearney believes, are necessary to move beyond 'the authorised family narrative'.[82] In a similar fashion, the painful circumstances revealed by family memory are necessary to challenge official narratives of stoic sacrifice. This combination of archive, memory, and historical writing can break

78 Interview with Éanna Ó Conghaile.

79 Hélène O'Keeffe, quoted in *Irish Times*, 13 Oct. 2015.

80 O'Keeffe, *To speak of Easter week*, p. 20.

81 Guy Beiner, 'Probing the boundaries of Irish memory: from postmemory to prememory and back' in *Irish Historical Studies*, xxxix, no. 154 (2014), p. 302.

82 Colbert, *Liffeyside*, p. 8.

‘silences that have affected intergenerational understandings of ... the bloody foundation of the state’, revealing the full cost of commitment to an ideal.[83]

Further reading:

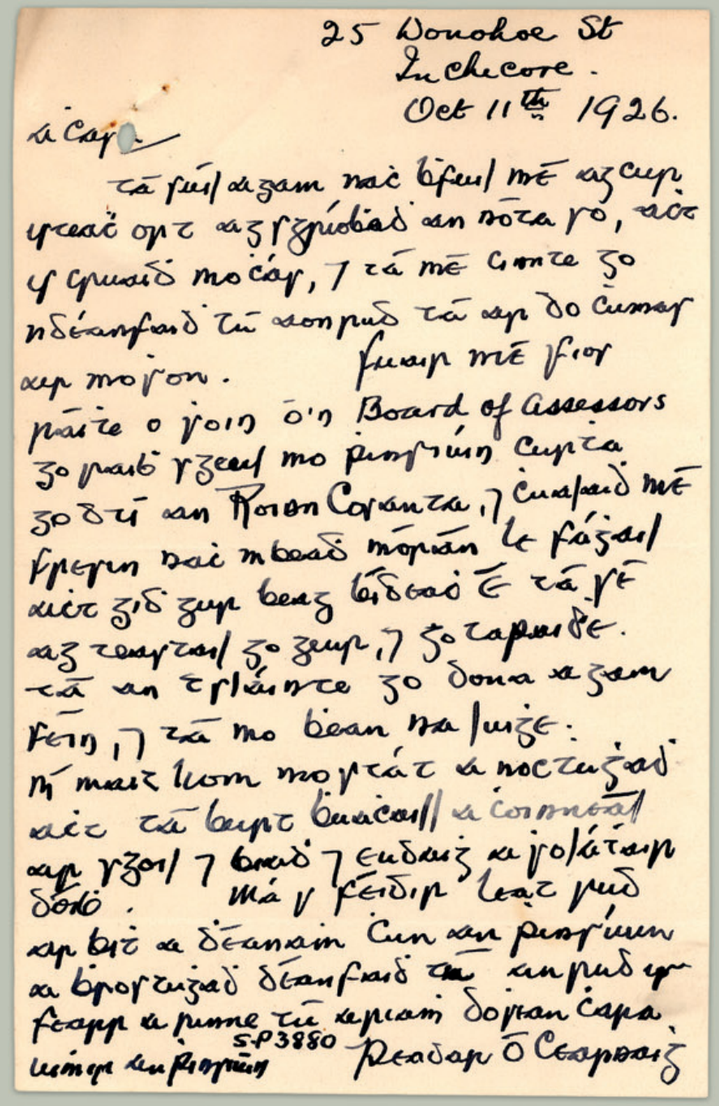
Síobhra Aiken, *Spiritual wounds: trauma, testimony, and the Irish Civil War* (Newbridge, 2022)
Marie Coleman, ‘Compensating Irish female revolutionaries, 1916-1923’ in *Women’s History Review*, xxvi, no. 6 (2017), pp 915-34
R.F. Foster, *Vivid faces: the revolutionary generation in Ireland, 1890-1923* (London, 2014)
Fearghal McGarry, *The Abbey rebels of 1916: a lost revolution* (Dublin, 2015)
Hélène O’Keeffe, *To speak of Easter week: family memories of the Irish revolution* (Cork, 2015)

Right

In Peadar Kearney’s letter his desperation is clear: ‘I was told that I would not receive much but despite it being a pittance it is greatly and urgently needed’.

Reference:
[Translation by Éanna Ó Caollaí]. Peadar Kearney 24SP3880.

83 Ciara Boylan, Sarah-Anne Buckley and Pat Dolan, ‘Introduction’, in Boylan *et al.*, *Family histories*, p. 19. I am grateful to Caoimhe Nic Dháibhéid and Liam Kennedy for their comments on this essay.


25 Donohoe St
Inchicore.
Oct 11th 1926.

A Chara

Tá súil agam nach bfuil mé agcur
greas ort ag rgríobáil an nóta ro, acht
ó cruaid mo cás, 7 tá mé cinnte go
ndéanfaidh tú aon rud tá ag do cumas
cap mo ron. Fuair mé fios
páirte o foin ón Board of Assessors
go raib rgeul mo pinrúin cuirtha
go dtí an Roinn Coimirce, 7 cuirfidh mé
fiorm nai mbeidh mórán le fáil
acht ráid gur beag bídeaí é tá yé
ag ceapadh go gcuir, 7 go caillfidh.
tá an tráinne go dona agam
féin, 7 tá mo bean na luighe.
Ní maith liom mo ráit a noctuighadh
acht tá beirt bhaicail a cionnsaí
ar rgoil 7 bráid 7 endaig a fola ár
dtó. Má v féidir leat rud
ar bit a déanamh cun an peinrúin
a bhoraighadh déanfaidh tú an rud ar
fearr a rinne tú agcian do fan cápa.
S.P3880 Peadar Ó Cearnaigh
Uimhir an Phinrúin

Left

Jimmy Bourke (Seámus de Burca), biographer of Peadar Kearney, and writer Brendan Behan view James Power's bust of their uncle, Peadar Kearney.

Image courtesy of Dublin City Library and Archive and the family of Peadar Kearney.

Above

Peadar Kearney, *c.* 1917, poses with his son Pearse (dressed in 'Gaelic' outfit of kilt, cloak, and Tara brooch). Peadar may be dressed in the suit made from Irish Volunteer material that he wore during the Easter Rising.

Photograph, and clothing details, courtesy of Colbert Kearney, private collection.

Left

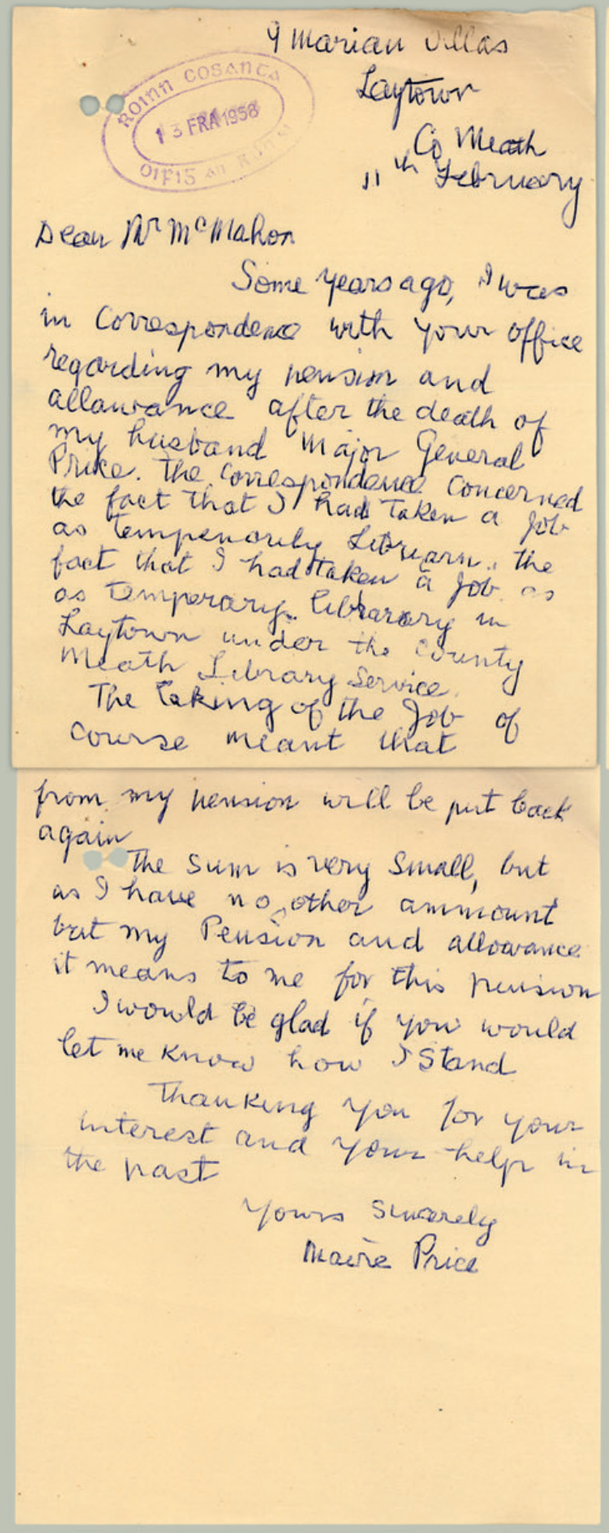
Portrait of Máire Nic Shiubhlaigh, depicted by Ben Bay as Queen Gormleith in Lady Gregory's 1905 play 'Kincora'.

Image courtesy of National Library of Ireland (NLI—PD 2159 TX).

Right

Having given up her job as a librarian due to ill-health, Máire Price (née Nic Shiubhlaigh) writes in the hope that her pension can be restored to the full 'very small' amount. At seventy-four, she wanted to 'know how I stand'.

Reference:
Máire Price MSP34REF1705.



4 Marian Villas
Laytown
Co Meath
11th February

Dear Mr McMahon

Some years ago, I was in correspondence with your office regarding my pension and allowance after the death of my husband Major General Price. The correspondence concerned the fact that I had taken a job as temporary Librarian. the fact that I had taken a job as Temporary Librarary in Laytown under the County Meath Library Service.
The taking of the job of course meant that from my pension will be put back again

The sum is very small, but as I have no other ammount but my Pension and allowance it means to me for this pension I would be glad if you would let me know how I Stand

Thanking you for your interest and your help in the past

Yours Sincerely
Maire Price

that that I Suffered a loss in my pension correspond to the Salary I got as librarn. I understood that ~~I~~ I ever gave up the job the amount which was taken off my pension would be made up again

Now owing to ill health I feel I must relinquish the post as librarian as I have been under medical care with a heart condition for almost a year which together with the fact that I am now 74 years means I am no longer able to do the work

I am so very anxious to know if I give up the post ammount which was deducted

Keepers of the Flame: bringing the Military Service Pensions archive to screen

A conversation between Diarmaid Ferriter and Nuala O'Connor

> How do I assemble all these people? How do I pressure them to give evidence? What man, now a hero and public figure, can I go to and say: 'I was in command of you.' … I had enough sense to leave Ireland when I realised that in peacetime, the country wants a different type of man to what it needs in troublesome times, but I had hoped a little would be remembered. … I am not foolish enough to attempt to organise the panorama of history in order to sustain a claim for a pension. Time is passing. I can only leave this to you now and say, if you are not satisfied I will have to bow to the inevitable and let my deeds and my memories be my reward this side of heaven.[1]

Keepers of the Flame is a feature documentary film (ninety minutes) written and narrated by Diarmaid Ferriter and directed by Nuala O'Connor. It is a South Wind Blows Production, made in 2018 with the support of the Broadcasting Authority of Ireland, in association with the Irish Film Board/Bord Scannán na hÉireann and RTÉ. The film was premiered at the Dingle Film Festival and screened at the Galway Film Fleadh in 2018 and broadcast by RTÉ in 2019.

The film is an account of the setting up of the archives of the Military Service Pensions Collection and the digitisation of the Collection allowing for phased online access. It features personal accounts contained in some of the individual files in the Collection, particularly in the letters of the correspondents and constitutes a retelling of aspects of the revolutionary decade 1913-23 in Ireland.

Featuring interviews with relatives of pension applicants and recipients, the film examines the long-term impact of reluctance to talk about the events of the period, the lack of desire to relive actions and decisions, and the secrecy and silence that sometimes further isolated individuals and families.

Featured in the film are the personal interpretations and unique accounts of the revolutionary period, and the pride, anger, despair, and bitterness left in its wake. This conversation between Diarmaid Ferriter (**DF**) and Nuala O'Connor (**NOC**) took place in Dublin in May 2022, as they looked back at the origins and development of the film.

NOC: What were your expectations of the Military Service Pensions Collection, when you first went there?

DF: Well, expectations were very high. Historians had been hearing about this archive for a long time; there was often reference to it as the last big piece in the archival jigsaw relating to the revolutionary period. We had previously had the release of the Bureau of Military History statements in 2003 but we knew the pension applications were on another level, that they would provide so much more detail. When you hear the description 'pension applications' you think of forms, so historians were expecting a lot of bureaucracy, and, of course, you get that, but what I wasn't expecting to the extent that's there, is just the scale and the intimacy and the texture of the lives of the people who were applying and the degree to which you're brought into their lives and sometimes into their living circumstances and into their medical details and all of that kind of personal detail. So we weren't quite prepared for the scale of the social history, the medical history, the housing history – all of that really rich personal material. I don't think anyone really had a grasp on just how vast individual files could be and how long they would run; I mean, even to be coming into an archive that's really still a live archive in the sense that there were still people alive for whom this pension process was relevant in the early twenty-first century. That was a reminder of the span of it and there was nothing else like it.

NOC: You came up with the title *Keepers of the Flame.* How did you come up with that or what did you mean by that exactly as it would be defined in the film?

DF: I was very conscious that there were often individuals who felt it incumbent upon themselves to keep the flag flying, or to keep the flame burning, for fear that someone's sacrifices might be forgotten, you know, or else those who might appoint themselves to the role of flame keeper within a family, or within a community, or even within a district as a local historian, or the family historian. That they would appoint themselves as keepers of the flame because it's important for them for these stories to be passed on and for there to be as much information as they can establish about particular experiences and I was very interested in how that might work when looking at a national archive like this because in a way many of these applicants are obviously trying to keep an awareness of what they did alive for the long term and keep that flame burning. In that sense filling out applications has a practical purpose by putting their experiences on the record but it's also very, very difficult to prove claims of service because someone has to verify what you did or what you claimed you have done and that's a lottery, and, I suppose, it reminds me of a wider lottery when it comes to who is remembered and who is forgotten. And what was the biggest challenge of bringing them to the screen for you?

NOC: It was challenging to wrangle the vast amount of material into a shape which I could visualise in film form. Our process, because we were doing this together, was that I was giving you files that I had found, like say the Bridget Treacy file, and then you were suggesting ways in which that and other files you had researched could be incorporated into a narrative about the archive.[2] It was one of those things honestly that formed as we did it. What if we did this? What if we did that? And it's a whittling down process and further whittling down when you get into the edit and further shaped even after that. I remember we did some post-filming recording

1 Séan McLouhlin to the Referee and Advisory Committee, 30 May 1951, MSPC, MSP34REF61056 Séan McLoughlin. McLoughlin fought with the Irish Volunteers in the 1916 Rising and during it was elevated to the rank of commandant general. A committed and campaigning socialist and then a member of the Communist Party of Ireland, he also fought with the IRA during the Civil War. Captured by the National Army in December 1922, he was sentenced to death by a court martial in 1922, but was spared and released in October 1923.

2 Application of Bridget Treacy for a dependant's allowance, MSPC, 1D458 Seán Treacy. Bridget was the mother of Seán Treacy, brigade officer commanding, South Tipperary Brigade IRA, who was shot dead in Talbot Street, Dublin, in October 1920 in an exchange of gunfire with British intelligence officers.

for you to be dropped in as voice-over where we thought more explanation was needed. Also there is always a level of intuition involved. This or that just feels right. Visually, I wanted the film to be reflective both of the archive itself, which I found a physically beautiful place actually to film, and the texture of the materials themselves, the handwriting, the old typescript, the old formats and print formats and so on. They were all very beautiful to shoot. And we did some pretty fancy filming in there with Steadicam, gimbles, and macro lenses and all sorts of different set-ups. Later when we were filming in the houses of the applicants, if you remember, we actually mocked up some of the files. The art director, Til Frohlich, hand-made copies of the files using all sorts of paper, dyed them in tea and added stains etc. We were able then to destroy them, tear them up, throw them on the floor and on one occasion have a spider walk over them. This was at the suggestion of our cameraman, Colm Hogan, and I really didn't want to do it even though I knew they were facsimiles – I did not want to destroy them, it gave me a bad feeling. But then you know when you're looking at entire files you begin to see fine details, like you know how people's handwriting deteriorates with age. And how long these files are. They close with the death certificate.

DF: It's also a reminder, and this is a universal theme across the decades, just how frustrated people get with form filling and constant bureaucracy and this process where you had to renew certain forms or confirm details every year and that frustration bubbles to the surface occasionally. But then, you know, this is the other thing about the scale of the archive: all of those who were involved in the process of generating the archive, not just the applicants, but all those who were typing up the responses and who were transcribing the evidence that was given at the oral hearings and all the support staff and those who were conducting inquiries. There's a massive amount of paperwork, which for historians, of course, is fantastic, but for those who are finding themselves at the centre of it, particularly when they don't get the result they want, that for them is a huge amount of wasted effort and when we look at the bald statistics, by the end of the 1950s you can see that there have been in the region of 82,000 applications and about 16,000 of them have been successful by 1960. The scale of the disappointment. And eventually about 18,000 pensions are awarded. The archive will always be that chronicle of a disappointment but it's a reminder that the vast majority of paperwork in this national archive, in this pension archive, refers to people who were unsuccessful in their applications.

NOC: Also though, even that accepted, the disparities within the way some people were treated and others – I'm thinking of the widow of Thomas Traynor, Elizabeth Traynor, who arguably should have been eligible for the pensions awarded to the dependants and widows of executed men because her husband was executed, but never got it … and her file goes over many, many years and it's a story of impoverishment from start to finish.[3] She was left with ten children aged from about fourteen down to an infant, and if you remember you interviewed her grandson, Leonard.

3 Application for a widow's allowance by Elizabeth Traynor, MSPC, 1D134 Thomas Traynor. A native of Carlow, Traynor was a veteran of the 1916 Rising and as an IRA volunteer was captured by British Auxiliaries in Dublin and executed in Mountjoy Jail in April 1921.

DF: Oh, I do, and he was an extraordinary interviewee.

NOC: Yes.

DF: Now, what did you think when you found Leonard. Did you expect him to give you the narrative that he did?

NOC: No, I didn't. No, not at all, and it was a complete upturn in the sense that he said – and I'll always remember it – granny was the hero of that story.

DF: He said it was alright for him [Thomas Traynor], he was executed … he got his glory, his martyrdom.

NOC: Yes, he left my granny with the burden.

DF: … and of course there's a temptation for us to think – oh, we might find out things about prominent individuals – it makes you think about a hierarchy, you know. Did some people do much better? Did the relatives of some of the icons in the revolution … do they appear and what can those files tell us about their lives? I remember one of the first files I looked at was Nora Connolly-O'Brien, the daughter of James, who described herself and her husband as 'absolutely on the racks' in 1941.[4] So nearly twenty-five years after the Rising, here is a daughter of one of the icons, the executed 1916 leader, describing herself and her family as absolutely on the racks and it's a reminder that it wasn't a guarantee of a life of privilege or comfort with that connection.

NOC: Particularly when these were the people, dependants now, who were bearing the brunt of what their relative had done and the impact of that. Like, I'm thinking here of the MacDonagh children, Donagh and Barbara.[5] We came across a very late letter from I think possibly even in the 1970s from Barbara, the daughter of Tomás and Muriel MacDonagh. She was asking for an increase in her pension allocation based on her age at this time and had been refused. There was a query about the injuries she had suffered and she said basically the injury was that myself and my brother were left orphans as a result of my father being executed and my mother drowning a year later. We were then told by her daughter Muriel, when you interviewed her, that the children were put into care because the Giffords were Protestant and the MacDonaghs were Catholic and a dreadful row broke out over the custody of the children. The children suffered very badly, were in abusive fostering situations and bore the mark for the rest of their lives.

DF: And that is really interesting and, I suppose, quite unusual correspondence for it to be referred to so explicitly. You're absolutely right about the trauma. I mean, that for me is going to be one of the great opportunities that this archive presents; for us to engage with that theme in a much wider sense – trauma and what it meant for individuals. Going through the archive

4 Application for a dependant's allowance by Nora Connolly-O'Brien, MSPC, 1D178 James Connolly. Nora Connolly-O'Brien had been involved in Cumann na mBan during the War of Independence and Civil War and remained active in republican and socialist politics and trade union affairs.

5 Application for dependants' allowances for Donagh and Barbara MacDonagh, MSPC, 1D341 Thomas (Tomás) MacDonagh. MacDonagh, as a member of the republican provisional government in 1916, was a signatory of the Proclamation and was executed on 3 May 1916. His widow, Muriel Gifford, drowned while swimming in Skerries in July 1917.

and looking for references to trauma, the language that they used, you know, people who had problems with their nerves or neurasthenia; clearly what we would call today Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. George Lennon, who was a teenage IRA leader in Waterford, who has a breakdown at the start of the Civil War, and when you trace his subsequent life, because he lived into his nineties, over so many changes of address, he cannot settle and he says at one stage that I can't hold down any job, I can't find a fixed path or a steady path and that this all refers back to 1922.[6] But he had to get that acceptance by those who were adjudicating on the pension issuing and he calls in at one stage the testimony of a doctor who specialises in Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and who had been dealing with British army veterans from the First World War, and he says, yes, this is precisely what happened to Mr Lennon as a result of his activity and it's eventually accepted but he finds himself over in America and he's back and forth. He eventually starts practising Zen Buddhism in New York! You know, even as an old man he's still trying to find peace. So, that trauma is appearing constantly throughout the files.

NOC: Yes. Barbara says in her letter 'myself and my brother are very damaged people'.[7]

DF: And for you as well, because you're a film maker, you have to visualise and the letters are being written from so many different places, and it does make you think about the landscape of this pension archive. You know, where are these people? We can now be shown maps of where all the pension applications come from. You can have all this massive documentation but you also have to find visuals for it to help place the applicants at various locations.

NOC: Yes that was a very interesting part of the job. I was delighted to discover that many of these addresses still existed, the houses were still there exactly as they had been. Two had been abandoned and derelict and we were able to film in them. I'm thinking of the house of Michael Mulvihill in Ard Uachtair in north Kerry near Ballylongford, and the house of Bridget Treacy in Soloheadbeg, which I had gone twice to look for unsuccessfully.[8] Eventually, with the help of some local historians we found it literally in a field behind a hedge, off the road, no track up to it. That was an amazing day that I found that house. It was perfect because it's not perfectly preserved, because it's falling apart but it was very redolent of the time that it was built and you could imagine Mrs Treacy in there, living alone. She was a widow from long before Seán Treacy was killed and in there, in this house that was falling apart, even when she was writing, she was writing to the Pensions Board to refuse an annuity and she was very, very angry.

DF: Yeah. She was furious. So you paint a picture of this rage boiling up in this house.

NOC: That was where it came from. This rage came from this spot.

DF: You also need to think about these people in these houses waiting; there is such a waiting game. I mean, there's efficiency across various parts of the civil service but this process by its nature was always going to be slow. We're talking about verification and in some cases having to conduct an interview with the applicant, having to wait for references to come in and for those who particularly are struggling financially waiting for that letter to drop, you know, they'd no phones most of these people, this is not about getting a call, they have to wait for a letter to arrive. So, there must have been a constant expectation of maybe today this is going to arrive and you can see the letters that they sent, follow-up letters, saying look it's been eighteen months, it's been two years since our first correspondence – where's the decision? And they often got this stark or stonewalling response, which must have seemed so cold, but that was what they had to do, you know, there was no way they could fast track the process.

NOC: Yes I'm thinking of the story of Seán McLoughlin, one of the outstanding letter writers of our tranche of files, who had come from a house in Drumcondra; a very, very old house, eighteenth-century house still very much lived in. Fortunately had never been modernised or gussied up in any way and so we were given permission to film there with his niece Christina. Seán McLoughlin's brother Christopher lived in that house – the family home in Drumcondra where Christopher basically spent all of his life trying to correct what he saw as an incorrect version of Seán McLoughlin's life that had been misrepresented according to him in the 1966 RTÉ television series *Insurrection*. Christopher's daughter Christina, whom you interviewed, recalled growing up in that house and hating everything to do with the revolutionary period. She grew up accompanied by the sound of her father's typewriter because he actually typed letters on a portable typewriter and some of those letters migrated into Seán McLoughlin's file – I don't quite know how – letters to Dev complaining about *Insurrection*, letters to the DG in RTÉ for example. He had driven out to RTÉ to deliver that one personally on the night of the transmission.

DF: And I mean that makes sense when you consider, for so many of them, it came at a particular point in their lives and it defines them in so many ways. I've often thought about people going back to the well of 1916 or 1918 or 1922 and, you know, imbibing from it, and sometimes it's a silent process but for others, as with the situation you've outlined there, it is bashed out!

NOC: Yes.

DF: This frustration and this determination to rectify inaccuracies and, of course, that can become its own form of obsession.

NOC: Oh, totally, and to the degree which it alienated his daughter completely at the time and she came back to it funnily enough through the Pensions Collection. She started then looking at her uncle Seán's pension file and that really was the first time that she reviewed and revised her own recollection of growing up in that house with an obsessed man. As a teenager that must have been, you know, very, very difficult.

DF: Yeah, and for all the focus on male wounded pride and justifiable anger in many ways there are additional barriers that women face and you start to trace them through the archives and, I suppose, what's become quite a well-known letter is from Nora Martin from the Cork Cumann na mBan, who takes the military pensions overseers to task for not having any women on their advisory committee: 'the overseers club was resolutely male' was the way I described it

6 MSPC, MSP34REF11591 George Lennon. Waterford-born Lennon founded the west Waterford flying column of the IRA during the War of Independence but left the IRA at the start of the Civil War.

7 Barbara Redmond to Dept. of Defence, 26 Sept. 1975, MSPC, 1D341 Thomas (Tomás) MacDonagh.

8 Application for a dependant's allowance by Margaret Mulvihill, MSPC, 1D208 Michael Mulvihill. Fighting with the Irish Volunteers in 1916, Mulvihill was killed while leaving the GPO on 29 April.

and she makes the point very forcefully and specifically that you lot supervising the pensions cannot envisage the feelings of these women.[9]

NOC: Also, the interesting thing about this archive is the way it led us into other archives, that if you follow, say Sighle Humphreys, we had to go to UCD where her papers are, because obviously Sighle Humphreys never applied for a pension and was totally opposed to the pensions scheme, so even though she's central to some of the stories in the pension archive, she's not in there herself and so that brought us to UCD and to film the Ernie O'Malley archive and then to the attics in St Kevin's in Glasnevin where the original military pensions archive was stored.[10] This brought up the story of how the pensions archive even came into being. From 1939 this building had been used by the finance section of the Department of Defence where military pay and pensions were processed. Those functions were subsequently decentralised in 1989 to Renmore, County Galway. So this was how the archive evolved. With so many moves and transfers of files it so easily might never have happened!

DF: It's also a reminder of the transformation in attitudes to archives. An awful lot of people have talked recently about the democratisation of access to material because it can be digitised. But the initial challenge for people like Peter Young when he was archivist in Cathal Brugha Barracks and trying to generate an interest in the 1970s, the initial challenge was to get people to take this material seriously or to generate an interest in it and we shouldn't forget that because it took the committed efforts of a small, really small, group of people to push this project and, you know, even within the Department of Defence you can be dealing with organisations that are reluctant for obvious reasons to think about widespread accessibility, but we have reached a position though where the approach of the Irish state to the release of archival material is actually a very generous one when we compare our experience to the international situation.

NOC: And of course once they had seen the response to the census archive release …

DF: And they are all linked and we can establish the linkages. Sometimes if we're looking at the evolution of the applicants' living circumstances, which for some might not be outlined in great detail in the pension applications, you can find more information in the census material and sometimes we want to see, of course, if pension applicants also gave a statement to the Bureau of Military History and, you know, whether there is cross-over or will there be differences.

NOC: Or to Ernie O'Malley's archive where you see the ones who wouldn't obviously talk to the Bureau, like my own grandfather who talked to Ernie O'Malley but he wouldn't give a statement to the Bureau. Then there are the people who never talked to anybody, you know, like Lemass. Lemass never wrote an account did he?

DF: No and it's interesting to look at Lemass.[11] He did apply for a pension and he received a pension. He didn't give a statement to the Bureau of Military History, but even when he is interviewed as part of the pensions process, he's not giving anything away, he's classic Lemass.

NOC: He's not a keeper of the flame.

DF: No and he actively downplays his role.

NOC: He's a quencher of the flame!

DF: Yeah, he's a quencher of the flame! Again, it does draw you in to 1966, fifty years after the Rising and okay, Lemass wrote a very understated personal account of his own involvement as a very young man, but he doesn't want to be waving the flag and we know now from the National Archives that he was expressing reservations about the vengeful nature of Patrick Pearse's poetry; he didn't think it was appropriate for 1966. He wants to look forward. He says at one stage, think of Ireland of the technological expert, not the Ireland of the Sean-Bhean Bhocht! He's just not interested in that, trading on that revolutionary past, but there's an onus on him as Taoiseach to genuflect to the 1916 Rising and national traditions. He does it in a very understated way.

NOC: And that brings us onto another letter – Margaret Pearse – who was particularly, you know, particularly exercised about the ignorance of the officials in the pensions office.[12]

DF: Yeah, she insists I'm not filling in any more forms! But the thing that really irritated her was a question in her renewal for her pension about her marital status, you know … 'At the age of eighty-four I can assure you I am not contemplating marriage!' or words to that effect. She essentially said of the Department of Defence civil servant 'you're a cheeky young pup who should know better!'

NOC: Very much don't you know who I am! It's very moving to witness over the duration of the files the transition from a young person writing in their thirties, say Mrs Traynor writing first when she's probably in her late thirties to late old age. She's around eighty-four when she's writing her last letter. Then there are letters saying I am writing on behalf of my mother who cannot write anymore and finally there's a death certificate. These are full lives lived out in a pension file. Some files last for thirty, forty, even fifty years. Is there any other archive that you can think of anywhere that contains that kind of range of a life? At the end of her life Mrs Traynor said my husband died for nothing.

DF: Yeah, and you see this is the thing about how some come to terms or don't come to terms with the post-revolutionary dispensation and there's an awful lot of disillusionment there obviously and there are those who can cope better with it …

NOC: Oh yeah, I mean every level of human capacity to cope or not is reflected in that archive. We

9 Nora Martin wrote to the Pensions Board on behalf of Ellen Carroll who had served under Martin in Cumann na mBan, MSPC, MSP34REF39909 Ellen Carroll.

10 A committed socialist republican, Humphreys was a leading activist in the Dublin Cumann na mBan, UCDA, Sighle Humphreys papers, P106; Assistant chief of staff of the anti-Treaty IRA during the Civil War, O'Malley later recorded interviews with many fellow anti-Treaty republicans, UCDA, Ernie O'Malley papers, P17.

11 A 1916 and Civil War veteran, Lemass served as leader of Fianna Fáil and Taoiseach from 1959-66, MSPC, MSP34REF2078 Seán Lemass.

12 Application for a dependant's allowance by Margaret Pearse, MSPC, DP1909 Patrick Henry Pearse. Margaret was a sister of Patrick and played an important role in the school he founded, St Enda's, which she kept going until 1935. She also became a Fianna Fáil TD and senator.

only touched, we only scratched the surface. So, every type of person, every psychological make-up, everything is in there.

DF: I think it brings us back to where we started and what was feasible to do in a film. We were sampling to give a sense of the different layers to this, not all the layers; you couldn't possibly do that. So it was just a kind of sampling exercise, but it also gives you an awareness of the potential and the possibilities. I mean, it's an opportunity to really excavate some of the new areas of historical inquiry. And we're phenomenally fortunate to have this. Aside altogether from the particular scheme it relates to, the pension scheme, it has thrown up all of this detail about people's lives, outlooks on life, economic and medical life and all the rest of it, health, housing, gender, women's lives, it simply couldn't be imagined … it cannot happen ever again because in a digital age this level of engagement will never happen.

Left

Military Service Pensions Collection Archives.

Photographer: Cécile Chemin.

Above

President Michael D Higgins, Diarmaid Ferriter, and camera crew at Áras An Uachtaráin.

Copyright: South Wind Blows; Photographer: Tara Thomas.

Above

Preparing to film in Kilmainham Gaol.

Copyright: South Wind Blows; Photographer: Tara Thomas.

Right, above

Diarmaid Ferriter and Cormac O'Malley, son of Ernie O'Malley.

Copyright: South Wind Blows; Photographer: Tara Thomas.

Right, below

Manchán Mangan, grandson of Sighle Humphreys.

Copyright: South Wind Blows; Photographer: Tara Thomas.

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DIARMAID FERRITER is Full Professor and Chair of Modern Irish History at UCD and author of numerous books, including *The transformation of Ireland 1900-2000* (2004), *Judging Dev* (2008), *Occasions of sin: sex and society in modern Ireland* (2009), *Ambiguous republic: Ireland in the 1970s* (2012), *The border: the legacy of a century of Anglo-Irish politics* (2019), and *Between two hells: the Irish Civil War* (2021). He is a regular television and radio broadcaster and a weekly columnist with the *Irish Times.* In 2019 he was elected a member of the Royal Irish Academy.

BRIAN HANLEY is Assistant Professor of Twentieth-Century Irish History at Trinity College Dublin. He has published widely on modern Irish republicanism and radicalism and on the conflict in Northern Ireland. His books include *The lost revolution: the story of the Official IRA and the Workers' Party* (with Scott Millar) (Penguin, 2009); *The impact of the Troubles on the Republic of Ireland, 1968-1979* (Manchester, 2018), and most recently, *Republicanism, crime and paramilitary policing, 1916-2020* (Cork, 2022). He is currently writing about the global impact of the Irish revolution.

MARNIE HAY is a lecturer in the School of History and Geography at Dublin City University where she teaches modules on aspects of modern Irish history as well as the history of children, childhood, and adolescence. Her publications include: *Na Fianna Éireann and the Irish revolution, 1909-23: scouting for rebels* (2019 and 2021); *Rebellion and revolution in Dublin: voices from a suburb, Rathfarnham, 1913-23* (2016; co-edited with Daire Keogh); and *Bulmer Hobson and the nationalist movement in twentieth-century Ireland* (2009). She has also co-edited two special issues of journals, one on the history of Irish childhoods for *Irish Economic and Social History*, xlvii, no. 1 (Dec. 2020), and one on children and childhood in Ireland for the *Journal of the History of Childhood and Youth*, ix, no. 2 (Spring 2016). Her current research examines not only the socialisation and mobilisation of Irish nationalist youth in the early twentieth century, but also how adolescents perceived and experienced the events of the Irish revolution.

BRIAN HUGHES is Assistant Professor in the Department of History at Mary Immaculate College, Limerick, and Director of the Irish Association of Professional Historians. A graduate of Maynooth University and Trinity College Dublin, Brian previously held positions at TCD, Maynooth, and the

University of Exeter. Among other publications on the Irish revolution and its aftermath, he is the author of *Defying the IRA? Intimidation, coercion, and communities during the Irish revolution* (2016, pbk 2018) and, with Conor Morrissey, editor of *Southern Irish Loyalism, 1912–1949* (2020, pbk 2021). He is currently working on the book on Dublin for the Four Courts Press *Irish revolution, 1912–1923* series, edited by Daithí Ó Corráin and Mary Ann Lyons.

LEEANN LANE is a lecturer in the School of History and Geography, Dublin City University. She is the author of *Rosamond Jacob: third person singular* (UCD Press, 2010) and *Dorothy Macardle* (UCD Press, 2019). She is currently completing a biography of Mary MacSwiney. In 2012 Dr Lane was appointed by the government to the Expert Advisory Group on the Decade of Commemorations.

FEARGHAL MCGARRY is Professor of Modern Irish History at Queen's University Belfast and a member of the Royal Irish Academy. He has written widely on modern Ireland, particularly on revolutionary and independent Ireland. He is also interested in historical memory and public history. He is the author of *The Abbey rebels of 1916: a lost revolution* (2015) and *The Rising: Ireland. Easter 1916* (2010). His most recent co-edited publications are *Ireland 1922: independence, partition, civil war* (2022), *The Irish revolution: a global history* (2022), and a special issue of *Éire-Ireland*, 'Politics and narrative in Ireland's Decade of Commemorations' (2022). He is currently writing a book exploring anxieties about modernity in inter-war Ireland, and developing a two-part RTÉ documentary series on Irish nation-building. Fearghal has been extensively involved with commemoration during the Decade of Centenaries. He advised on the development of the GPO Witness History interpretive centre and the recent redevelopment of the Troubles Gallery at the Ulster Museum. He is currently a member of the expert advisory group for the National Museum of Ireland's Twentieth-Century History Galleries.

EVE MORRISON is a twentieth-century Irish historian specialising in the independence struggle and Civil War period (1913-23), including the social and cultural memory of those events. Her research also engages with various theoretical concerns and scholarship relating to Irish history, memory studies, and oral history. She completed both her BA and PhD at Trinity College Dublin. She was both Irish Research Council postgraduate scholar and postdoctoral fellow (University College Dublin). She was Canon Murray Fellow in Irish History at the University of Oxford from 2018 to 2021.

WILLIAM MURPHY is an Associate Professor at the School of History and Geography, Dublin City University. He has written widely on prisons and the Irish revolution, including the monograph *Political imprisonment and the Irish, 1912-1921* (2014) and chapters in the *Atlas of the Irish revolution* (2017). This essay comes out of recent work, supported by the Wellcome Trust, through a Senior Investigator Award entitled, 'Prisoners, Medical Care and Entitlement to Health, 1850-2000'.

CAOIMHE NIC DHÁIBHÉID is Senior Lecturer in Modern History at the University of Sheffield. She is the author of two books, *Seán MacBride: a republican life* (2011) and *Terrorist lives: individuals and political violence since the nineteenth century* (2016). She has published on the history of Irish republicanism, the history of childhood, and the comparative history of political violence, and her current research project, which is funded by the Leverhulme Trust, is titled 'Emotions and the Irish revolution'. She has served as a member of the Centenary Historical Advisory Panel to the secretary of state for Northern Ireland during the centenary commemoration of the foundation of Northern Ireland in 2021-22, and has contributed to a number of documentaries on modern Irish history.

NUALA O'CONNOR, co-founder of South Wind Blows, is a writer and documentary filmmaker in the areas of music and the arts. Nuala was the writer of the '*Bringing It All Back Home*' six-part documentary series for BBC and RTÉ television. She is also the author of the accompanying book– *Bringing it all back home: the influence of Irish music* (1991). In 1994 she won an Emmy Award for outstanding individual achievement in cultural programming, for her writing of a one-hour version of the documentary. In 2009 with Diarmaid Ferriter she co-wrote and produced the RTÉ history series *Limits of Liberty*. In 2013 she wrote and co-directed *From Moment to Moment* with Philip King, a documentary on the critically acclaimed contemporary Irish/American music group The Gloaming. In 2014 she was a scriptwriter and co-producer on the acclaimed *Ceiliuradh* concert at the Royal Albert Hall celebrating the State visit of President Higgins to the UK. Most recently she directed the feature documentary *Keepers of The Flame* and the documentary film *Camera Tripod Bicycle* for RTÉ. She is a co- founder of *Ireland's Edge*, a multidisciplinary creative event series that makes up a distinct strand of the Other Voices Festival.

DAITHÍ Ó CORRÁIN, a Kerryman, is Associate Professor of History in the School of History and Geography at Dublin City University. He has published widely on the Irish revolution, 1912-23, and on Irish Catholicism. Daithí is co-editor with Professor Mary Ann Lyons of the acclaimed *The Irish revolution, 1912-23* series of county histories published by Four Courts Press. He is co-author with Eunan O'Halpin of the landmark *The dead of the Irish revolution* (2020). His most recent book, co-authored with Gerard Hanley, is *Cathal Brugha: 'an indomitable spirit'* (2022). An expert on Irish Catholicism, Daithí is the author of *Rendering to God and Caesar: the Irish churches and the two states in Ireland, 1949-73* (2006) and contributions to the *Cambridge history of Ireland* (2018), *Oxford history of British and Irish Catholicism* (2023), *Oxford handbook of religion in Ireland* (2023), and *British Catholic History*, among others.

FIONNUALA WALSH is Assistant Professor of Modern Irish History at University College Dublin. A graduate of Maynooth University, she completed her PhD at Trinity College Dublin in 2016 under the supervision of the late Professor David Fitzpatrick. Dr Walsh held the Irish Committee of Historical Sciences Research Studentship from 2015-2016 where she catalogued the papers of Field Marshall Hugh Gough. In 2016 she returned to Trinity College Dublin to complete an Irish Research Council postdoctoral fellowship before moving to UCD in 2017. Her first monograph, *Irish women and the Great War*, was published by Cambridge University Press in 2020. It was shortlisted for the Royal Historical Society Whitfield Prize in 2021 and was awarded the National University of Ireland Publication Prize in 2022. Dr Walsh is a Fellow of the Royal Historical Society and Secretary of the Women's History Association of Ireland. She has published extensively on the social history of Ireland during the Great War and its aftermath. In July 2024 Dr Walsh will hold a Summer Visiting Fellowship in Irish Studies at Boston College, MA.

PÁDRAIG YEATES joined the republican movement in 1964. He stayed with what became known as the Official movement in 1969-70 and worked full time from 1971-82. From 1977 to 1982 he edited the *Irish People*. Subsequently he worked as a freelance journalist before joining the staff of the *Irish Times* where he served as Community Affairs Correspondent and Industry and Employment Correspondent. He also worked briefly in the European Parliament for Proinsias De Rossa, when the latter was a Workers Party MEP for Dublin in 1989-90. In 2002 he took early retirement from the *Irish Times* and has worked since as a consultant, mainly for trade unions, state agencies, and semi-state companies. He is secretary of the Truth Recovery Process CLG. Among his published works are *Lockout: Dublin 1913* (2000), *A city in wartime: Dublin 1914-1918* (2011), *A city in turmoil: Dublin 1919-1921* (2012), and *A city in civil war: Dublin 1921-1924* (2015). Other publications include *Smack: the criminal drugs racket in Ireland* (1985) with Sean Flynn, and *Saving the future: how social partnership shaped Ireland's economic success* (2007) with Tim Hastings and Brian Sheehan. He edited *My life in the IRA: the border campaign* by Mick Ryan (2018). He holds a DLitt from the NUI.

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The following index gathers all references to individuals footnoted in this publication from the Military Service Pensions Collection (MSPC) and the Bureau of Military History Collection (BMH).