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# WAR OF INDEPENDENCE 1919 - 1921

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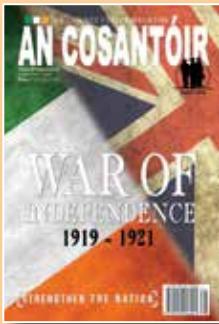
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Design concept by Sgt Wayne Fitzgerald

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# Editorial

**H**ello and welcome to our War of Independence special issue, which includes a number of articles by highly-acclaimed authors and historians looking at different aspects of Ireland's struggle for freedom.

*"You cannot conquer Ireland; you cannot extinguish the Irish passion for freedom. If our deed has not been sufficient to win freedom, then our children will win it by a better deed."*  
- Patrick Pearse at his court-martial in 1916

Some new and some old photographs set the mood in *On Parade* before our *In Focus* pages looks at an RDF volunteer who recently completed a 'Gold' Gaisce Award. John McGuigan's piece titled, 'The British Army at War in Ireland', looking at British regular forces operating in Ireland starts off our historic look at the War of Independence.

Gerard Shannon follows this with his look at the opposing Irish forces. Next, Michael Barry looks at the weapons used in the conflict and accompanies this with a short piece on the armoured cars employed at the time. American author Joseph EA Connell Jnr then looks at one of the main characters on the Republican side in his article 'Michael Collins: Shaping a Revolution'. This is added to by Dr Pádraig Ó Ruairc PhD in 'Spies and informers beware!' which examines one of the most important aspects of the conflict - the intelligence war.

Regular *An Cosantóir* contributor Paul O'Brien MA looks at the Auxiliary Division of the Royal Irish Constabulary (ADRIC), in 'Masters of Chaos: British Special Forces during the Irish War of Independence.'

Mícheál Ó Doibhilín follows this with an account of the first member of Cumann na mBan to die in the War of

Independence in 'Josie McGowan – A Willing Heart.' Next up is 'Forgotten Allies: The Dublin Fire Brigade 1919-1921', in which historian and recently retired fire fighter Las Fallon looks at this well trained, professional force. Ailbhe Rogers and Paul Gosling then combine to look at 'Cumann na mBan Regalia: Uniforms, Badges & Flags, 1914-1923.'

A regular *An Cosantóir* contributor on Irish aviation matters, Guy Warner, again looks to the skies in 'The RAF in Ireland, 1918', before our regular naval correspondent, CPO/ERA Ruairí De Barra, looks seaward for 'Cogadh na Saoirse: Ar Muir is ar Tír' (The War of Independence: On Sea and on Land). Acclaimed historian Liz Gillis looks at a pivotal moment in the War of Independence in 'The Burning of the Custom House.' OC Military Archives Captain Daniel Ayiotis brings us through some ongoing research projects in 'The Military Archives and the War of Independence.'

In 'Wexford's Military Past and Present' I write about visiting the Model County to learn about CSM Martin Doyle, who won a VC on the Western Front in 1918, came home to play his part in the War of Independence, and went on to serve in the newly formed National Army.

Finally, in our Sports pages we cast an eye back at the 1919 All-Ireland football final between Kildare and Galway, and along with Teamwear.ie we look at how sports clothing has changed in the intervening 100 years. All this, plus our regular *Tac-Aide*, *Gear Review*, *Noticeboard*, and *Book Review* features.

*"Those whom we commemorate here were doubly tragic. They fell victim to a war against oppression in Europe. Their memory too fell victim to a war for independence at home in Ireland."* – Former President of Ireland Mary McAleese at Messines Peace Tower, Belgium, 11th November 1998

**Sgt Wayne Fitzgerald**

# ON PARADE



## ▲ MICHAEL QUINN DSM REMEMBERED

On Sunday 27th January 2019, the Dublin Branch of the Irish Naval Association, named in honour of Michael Quinn DSM, assembled at the INA plaque in Drogheda. Members of the ONE, Drogheda & Slane and Erskine Childers Branches, the UN Vets, a strong contingent from the Royal Naval Association along with representatives of the Quinn family joined us on parade. A parade was formed, the Colour party marched on and wreaths laid by our President, Bryan Gildea and by ONE. Bryan then said a few words recalling Michael's bravery on the night in question along with Paul Kellett DSM, and noting that next year will be the thirtieth anniversary of Michael's passing. The ONE made a presentation to our Chairman, Brian Farrell, recalling the fateful night. The salute was given as a recording of the Last Post and Reveille was played together with Amhran Na bhFiann. Their Annual Mass and Wreath Laying Ceremony will take place in Cathal Brugha Bks on the morning of Sunday 31st March. All are most welcome to attend.

*Photo: Alan T Ryan, Secretary Michael Quinn DSM Branch, Irish Naval Association*



## ▲ NEW BLOODS ON PARADE

On 13th February 2019, members of the 153rd Recruit Platoon Passed Out in St Stephen's Bks, Kilkenny. The new 2 star privates are pictured with Lt Col Murt Larkin, OC 3 Inf Bn, Comdt B. Bouchier, Coy Comdr, A/BSM Linnane, Lt Flood, Pl Comdr, Sgt Crowe Pl Sgt and their Section Cpl's. Well done to them all and to the staff on the successful completion of this course. *Photo: Sgt Martina Cronin, 3 Inf Bn*



## ▲ RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING (RPL)

ETB/DF TOBAR Pilot Project certs were presented in Cathal Brugha Bks on 11th February 2019 as recognition of prior learning which identified the knowledge, skills and competencies of the student. Great credit is due for their achievement and positivity especially to Cpl O'Rourke who has retired since after 43 years service. Pte Montgomery, BTC – Logistics & Distribution Full Level 5, Sgt O'Sullivan, 2 CIS – Logistics & Distribution Full Level 5, Cpl O'Rourke, 2 Engr – Work Practice 6 Minor Awards Level 3 & Level 4, and Pte Tate, 7 Inf Bn – Work Practice Minor Level 5. *Photo: Comdt Padraig Kennedy, 7 Inf Bn*

## ◀ NEW PRIVATES FOR 12 INF BN

Pictured is the 151st Recruit Platoon who had their passing out parade on the 19th January 2019 in Sarsfield Barracks, Limerick. Their Platoon Commander was Lt Stapleton and Platoon Sgt was Sgt Ian Jones, both 12 Inf Bn. *Photo: Cpl Mike Kelly/ www.mikekellyweddingvideographer.com*

# ON PARADE



## ONE FR JAMES GILMORE BRANCH

Pictured are members of the ONE's Fr James Gilmore Branch who held their AGM in January 2019, in St. Pauls FC, Artane, Dublin 5. The Branch has 28 members who mostly come from the area of North County Dublin. *Photo: John Whelan*

## CISM INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR MILITARY SPORT

As part of the International Day for Military Sport, the DFPES organised a 5km running event in the DFTC on 18th February 2019. Participants from units and schools across the DFTC took part. A special thanks to Cpl Shane Stafford for organising such a successful event. *Photo: Sgt Karl Byrne*



## CALL FOR INFORMATION - ARCTIC CONVOYS 1941-45

Pictures from Arctic Convoys 1941-45 period: 'Ice forming on a 20-inch signal projector on the cruiser HMS Sheffield whilst she is helping to escort an Arctic convoy to Russia' and 'Members of the crew clearing the frozen focsle of HMS Inglefield during convoy duty in Arctic waters.' Dr Angela Byrne is the Historian-in-Residence at EPIC The Irish Emigration Museum who is planning an exhibition on the topic of the 'Irish at Sea', for temporary display in March-April 2019. Dr Byrne hopes to include some information about Irish participants in the Arctic Convoys of 1941-45 in the exhibition and would be very grateful if any reader with any information or photographs could get in touch with her.

Contact Dr Angela Byrne: [abyrne@epicchq.com](mailto:abyrne@epicchq.com) or visit <https://epicchq.com>



## DF RUGBY TEAM VS RAF HAWKS

On 20th February 2019, the Defence Forces Rugby team suffered defeat against a strong RAF Hawks team, in what was a very competitive game. The DF were leading 12 - 10 with 10 minutes to go, but a strong finish from the visitors saw them eventually win on a scoreline of 24 - 12. An excellent contest with great skill and commitment shown from both sides. Next up for the DF rugby is the French Armed Forces match on Friday 8th March 2019 in Monkstown RFC, KO 1400hrs. *Photo: Cpl Lee Coyle*

# “Sure the Infantry’s only magic”

## GREAT GAISCE FROM A 7 INF BN RESERVIST

BY PTE EOIN O'SHEA (AR), D COY, 7 INF BN

**M**ost people familiar with the Army Reserve (AR) understand that its personnel are often motivated by a genuine desire to give back to the State for which they voluntarily serve in uniform – and that such dedication spreads further than the perimeter of their home barracks.

Pte Dylan Hempenstall (AR), of D Coy, 7 Inf Bn, lives up to such an idea. On 10th December 2018, in a ceremony held at Dublin Castle, Pte Hempenstall honoured both himself and his unit by receiving the ‘Gold’ Gaisce Award. I met with Pte Hempenstall to find out more about what this auspicious achievement actually involved.

The ‘Gold’ Gaisce Award is the highest level bestowed to those who take part. The requirements for the award are to take an activity for each of the following five areas.

Community Involvement [Min. 1 Hour a week for 52 weeks]

“For this challenge area I used my role as a Cub Leader. Our weekly meetings, along with all the activities such as camps and hikes, exceeded far more time than that needed for the award. I also took on the extra challenge of trying to help some of the cubs (aged 9-11) through their Chief Scout Award, which is the highest award that can be obtained in scouting at their age. The highlight from this area was seeing five of them being presented the award after all the effort that was put in.”

Physical Recreation [Min. 1 Hour a week for 52 weeks]

“For this challenge area I took back up swimming. It was something I did a lot of when I was younger and I regretted not keeping it up – but other things got in the way. It was great doing this award as it enabled me to re-invest focus into swimming; it’s now something that I’ll keep up.”

Personal skill [Min. 1 Hour a week for 52 weeks]

“For this, I used the RDF where I attend training every week. Some of the training I completed over the course of my gold Gaisce included FIBUA [Fighting in Built Up Areas], LFTT [Live Fire Tactical Training] and Intro to CRC [Crowd and Riot Control].”

Adventure Journey [cover a distance of greater than 80km over a min. 4 days & 3 nights]

“I planned a route from Kilternan to Glendalough over the Dublin Mountain, and Wicklow, Ways. I completed this with two friends, carrying all the gear we needed for the 4 days (including food, tents, cooking equipment, etc). The biggest challenge was the fact my boots were actually pretty worn and ended up causing problems. From both the RDF and the Scouts, I was able to look after my feet properly, enabling me to complete the adventure journey.”

Interestingly, Pte Hempenstall originally undertook the Bronze, Silver, and Gold Gaisce awards to aid him in joining the PDF as a cadet. However – through the

completion of his accountancy course and year-long internship – he made the decision to ‘go down the accountancy route’ whilst still training in the RDF. On being asked what he has taken from completion of the year involved, he states: “The Gaisce as a whole has taught me so many valuable skills. It made me realise that if I set my mind to a goal, and plan and work towards this, it could be achieved. It helped me with organisation and managing my time.” Such determination seems to both assist in, and be further developed through, Pte Hempenstall’s reservist activities.

Pte Hempenstall currently works in ‘Audit - Financial Services’ for Deloitte. As part of his training contract, he is also studying to achieve his Chartered Accountant qualification. However, his Army Reserve involvement and Gaisce Awards are not the only features, which mark him out as ‘not your typical accountant’. Throughout his four years in the RDF, Pte Hempenstall has also established a name for himself as a ‘magician’ of sorts! No D Coy social event is complete without watching him perform some genuinely inconceivable card tricks.

Pte Hempenstall is one of many reservists who have managed to juggle (magician pun intended) the challenges of family and friends, civilian career, community involvement, and army training. We wish him the very best in his continued involvement in D Coy. ■



Pte Hempenstall at Dublin Castle to receive his award.



Pte Hempenstall, D Coy, 7 Inf Bn, receives his Gold Gaisce Award from President Michael D. Higgins on 10th December 2018.



Pte Hempenstall during FIBUA [Fighting in Built Up Areas] training.



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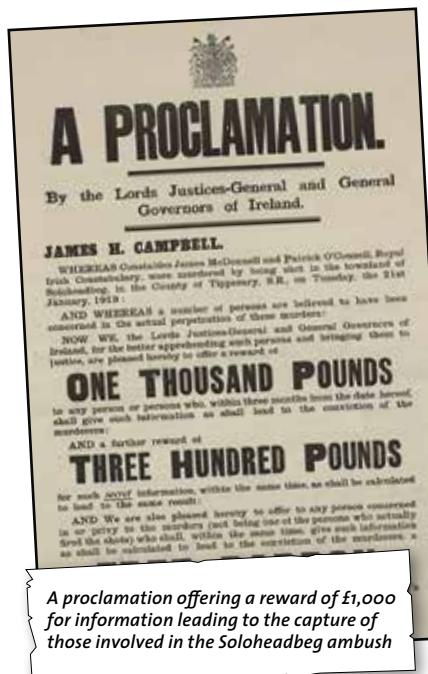
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STRENGTHEN THE NATION



# THE BRITISH ARMY AT WAR in Ireland

BY JOHN MCGUIGGAN



valuable training exercise", rather than a war, and "magnificent training for the men." Many of the soldiers were veterans of the Great War, who had witnessed killing on a massive scale; many wore medal ribbons not just from World War One, but from campaigns on the Indian Frontier, the Boer War, Mesopotamia, and Palestine, with a healthy sprinkling of gallantry medals and the oak leaves of those mentioned in despatches.

True, there were also new soldiers, post-war recruits, untempered in war, but the core of the army were veterans and for most of them service in Ireland was more remembered as



**O**n the first day of the Battle of the Somme, the British Army suffered 57,400 casualties, while they lost only 177 men in the three years of the Irish War of Independence. This of course is a reflection that the principal war against the British was fought between the IRA and the Royal Irish Constabulary, which lost some 500 officers.

For the British army then, many thought it hardly a war at all. Bernard Montgomery, who served during the War of Independence as a brigade major in Cork, thought it was all "an invaluable training exercise", rather than a war, and "magnificent training for the men." Many of the soldiers were veterans of the Great War, who had witnessed killing on a massive scale; many wore medal ribbons not just from World War One, but from campaigns on the Indian Frontier, the Boer War, Mesopotamia, and Palestine, with a healthy sprinkling of gallantry medals and the oak leaves of those mentioned in despatches.

frustrating, tedious, even boring; an endless series of guard duties, sweeps and searches, most of which found nothing, escorts, cordons, curfews, poor accommodation, poor food, and rain. They were unaccompanied by families and the old days of visiting towns, drinking in the pubs, going to the races and dances, and meeting local girls, were invariably replaced by stultifying confinement to barracks, meeting no one and engaging with nobody but their fellow soldiers.

They were not the teeth of the war; that was the RIC. When the police began to falter and faced being overwhelmed then it was the armed and ferocious Auxiliaries and the 'Tans, commissioned as policemen, who took the fight to the IRA. The army remained, almost throughout, a backup force, an insurance policy, a support force. The army did not like the 'Tans and the Auxies; they thought them undisciplined and were wary of their reputation for hard drinking, retaliation, murder and mayhem.

Army barracks were not attacked, for fairly obvious reasons. In a typical attack on an RIC barracks 20 or more IRA men would open fire on the police. Fire might be returned by as few as six police officers, and such a gunfight might last several uninterrupted hours, with little hope of relief. You could not do that to a military barracks, where a hundred or more rifles would return fire, with perhaps two or three machine guns and even grenades and mortar fire. No, the army lost their men in ambushes, while they went to church, while drinking in pubs, or caught in isolated places, kidnapped while fishing, and a dozen other un-military situations.

It was guerrilla warfare and the British were attacked at their weakest points; hence the high RIC casualties and the relatively low army casualties. This form of fighting almost naturally induced anger and hatred against the Irish, as it was intended to do so. There were retaliations and revenge. The





RIC, the 'Tans and Auxies were unrestrained in their retaliations and response. It was the police, not the army, who burned Cork, who opened fire at Croke Park, who looted and burnt villages and towns, who took out suspects and murdered them in fields and barns and ditches.

There are well-recorded instances of army retaliation, but they were of a lesser brutality and were not generally widespread or 'approved' or encouraged, or policy driven. One such incident took place in Fermoy as a result of an attack on a Sunday church parade. While most of the regiment involved, the King's Shropshire Light Infantry, were Church of England and attended the Garrison church, the Catholic troops marched to Mass in town, and the Methodists to the little chapel on Patrick Street. It was the Methodists who were attacked. As they entered the chapel an IRA team opened fire on them, shooting them in the back. The troops carried rifles but not ammunition and a Private Jones died on the chapel steps. A wave of revulsion ran through Fermoy Barracks, anger, bitter and vengeful. The town was attacked, but it was not official; it was organised by the NCOs, no officers were involved. They broke windows, tossed the stock of the shops into the Blackwater, smashed up the homes of those members of the coroner's jury who had declined to find the killing a murder. But no one was killed; there were assaults and no doubt great fear but no fatalities. Some of the soldiers were disciplined following a military enquiry, as there was a standing army order forbidding such retaliations and it was considered a breakdown in discipline.

There were other retaliations by the army, but they were never of the scale or brutality of the Auxies and the 'Tans. After the assassination of an RIC officer in Listowel, Co Kerry, lorry loads of Auxies and 'Tans arrived intent on bloody revenge, but were stopped by a captain of the Loyal North Lancashire Regiment. But for the presence of the army, Listowel would have burned as had Cork and its streets would have run with blood.

After a local 'Tan officer was ambushed and killed by the IRA on his way home after attending a dinner at the RAF aerodrome in Tallaght, officers at the aerodrome, fuming with outrage, called out the RAF band and marched behind them to the village square, where they sang patriotic songs such as Rule Britannia, Land of Hope and Glory, and God Save the King. The only violence occurred when the commanding officer Brian Baker (later Air Marshall Sir Brian Baker) noticed that some of the locals had not taken off their hats when the band played the national anthem and proceeded to knock their hats off before the group marched back to their base, still singing their patriotic songs. Even this mild, almost comical retaliation was disapproved of by the military high command and a number of officers were reprimanded.

Of course not all army retaliations were quite so benign and for the Irish victims of British brutality it would be hard to discriminate between the army and the 'Tans. And even if the army managed to retain its discipline and not indulge in widespread brutality, they must have turned the blind eye when, if they really wanted to, they could have put a stop to the undisciplined retaliations of the 'Tans and Auxies.

By 1921 the army began to operate far more effectively and to play a more significant role in the fight against the IRA. Martial law gave them much wider powers and much wider scope to carry out real military operations; they also assumed command of the police. By this time ambushes had lost their edge as an IRA tactic after the army started tying captured IRA volunteers to the front of their vehicles. More significantly, in May 1921 they had taken delivery of a hundred armoured cars and the same number of armoured lorries, which provided good protection against small-arms fire and effective platforms for counter operations.

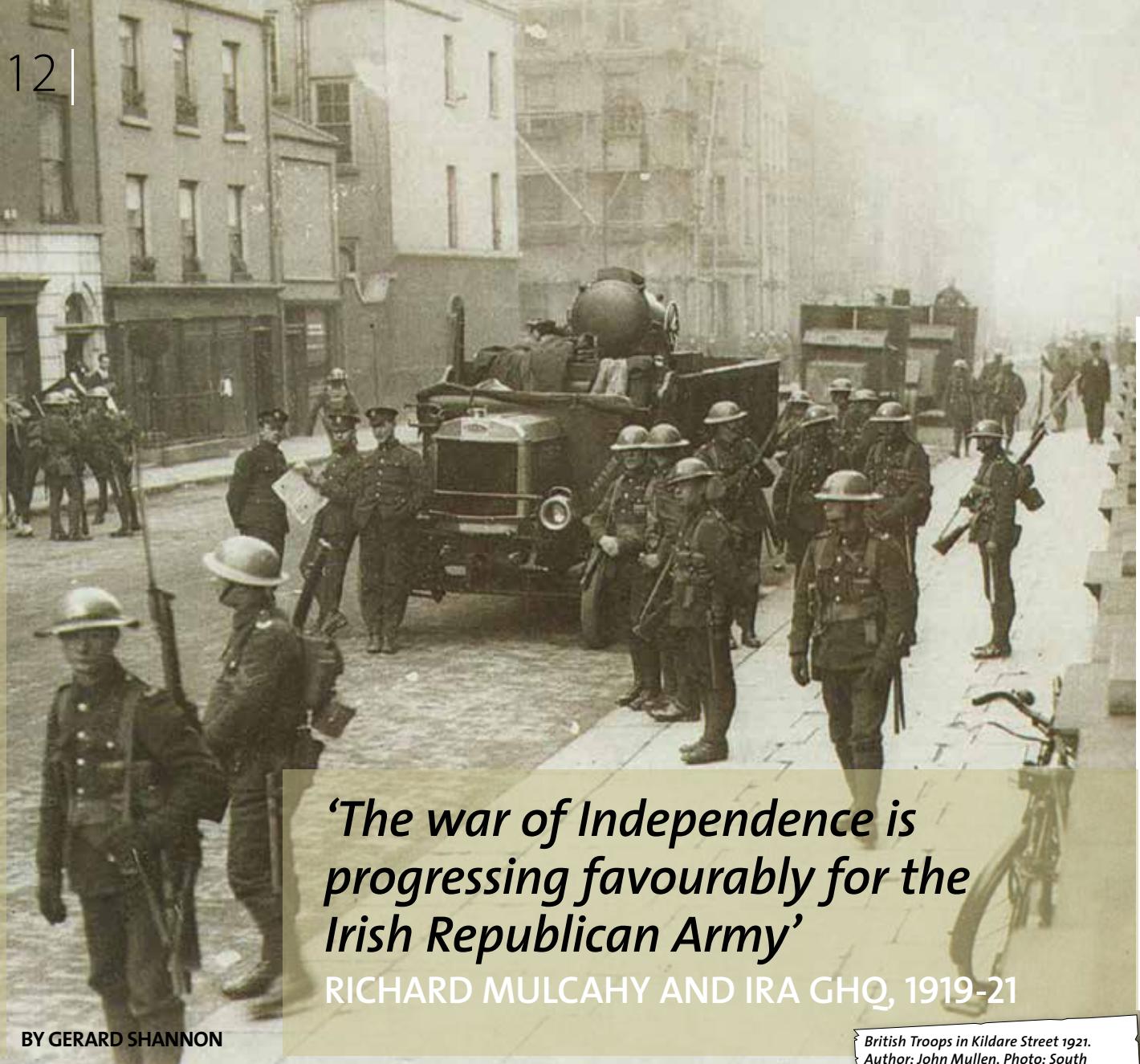
New battalions were pouring in and the army deployed their own highly mobile flying columns, staying out in the field, able to travel fast by foot and bicycle, to be a real counter to the IRA's deadly effective flying columns, and severely disrupting the ability of the IRA to mount effective attacks.

Besides, by now some 4,000 captured IRA volunteers were interned in the Curragh.

By the time of the ceasefire in July 1921, the vast resources of the Empire were beginning to turn the war in the favour of the British and many senior figures in the military felt the political initiatives that brought the war to an end were premature. But for most, they were glad to get out and leave the dreadful place to the Irish. As an officer of the Essex Regiment put it: *"We did not like ourselves in Ireland. I don't think anyone else did either."*

**About the Author:** John McGuigan is a barrister practising out of the Law Library at Dublin's Four Courts. He was educated at Ruskin College, Oxford, and University College Cork, and is a former British trade union official with NUPE. ■





## *'The war of Independence is progressing favourably for the Irish Republican Army'*

RICHARD MULCAHY AND IRA GHQ, 1919-21

BY GERARD SHANNON

British Troops in Kildare Street 1921.  
Author: John Mullen. Photo: South  
Dublin Libraries/wm\_scanoogb

**T**he IRA General Headquarters Staff was formed in March 1918 at the suggestion of the Irish Volunteer executive, following the rebuilding of the organisation through 1917 in the aftermath of the Easter Rising. The intention behind the formation of a General Headquarters Staff was to provide a central focus for the Irish Volunteers and to co-ordinate the work of various Volunteer units throughout the country. For the position of its central role, the Chief-of-Staff, Richard Mulcahy emerged as the most viable candidate – an important phase in Mulcahy's tenure in public life that would endure in one form or another for another fifty years.

Born in 1886, and originally from Waterford, Richard Mulcahy's career as a post office clerk took him to various locales across the country. During this time, Mulcahy had his first brush with advanced nationalism, becoming a keen Gaelic League activist. Mulcahy also became an admirer of the separatist ideals espoused in the writings of the prominent radical journalist Arthur Griffith. On arrival to Dublin in 1907, Mulcahy joined the Keating Branch of the Gaelic League. Here, he met several noted figures, such as Michael Collins, with whom Mulcahy became closely as-

sociated with in the revolutionary period. Mulcahy would also join the Irish Volunteers, on their founding in 1913 and likely joined the secret society known as the Irish Republican Brotherhood (the IRB) at this time. Rising through their ranks as a second lieutenant in the Dublin Brigade, Mulcahy would assist the Volunteers during the Easter Rising of 1916. Mulcahy served as second-in-command to Commandant Thomas Ashe during the Battle of Ashbourne and emerged with high military reputation that led to his appointment as Chief-of-Staff. Subsequently imprisoned with the defeat of the rebellion, on his release at the end of 1916, Mulcahy would prove to be an important and dedicated worker on the rebuilding of the revolutionary movement through 1917-18.

While in retrospect Michael Collins may have seemed a more obvious choice, Mulcahy was better known than Collins in Dublin during 1917-18. This had the effect of freeing up Collins in his various roles in the revolutionary movement that would mark his leadership during the war, including Director of Intelligence for IRA GHQ. Mulcahy's working relationship with Collins was his most crucial throughout 1919-22; this would later prove pivotal to the formation of

the new National Army in the run-up to the Civil War. The men had been closely associated following their appointments to the Volunteer executive in October 1917. Collins' role as Director of Intelligence was aided by Collins' central role in the Supreme Council of the secret society known as



*An t-Óglach is often described as a successor to the Irish Volunteer publication, and was also referred to as the old IRA's newspaper during the War of Independence and contained the tagline 'The Official Organ of the Irish Volunteer'.*

the Irish Republican Brotherhood (or the IRB). Mulcahy's son, Risteárd, interviewing his father for a later memoir, noted Mulcahy did not express resentment at Collins's larger reputation during the War of Independence even though in that conflict Mulcahy was supposed to be Collins' direct military superior. On this working relationship with Collins from 1919-21, Mulcahy recalled: "I opened and kept open for him all the doors and pathways he wanted to travel – our relations were always harmonious and frank and we didn't exchange unnecessary information. We knew what the other was at, and particularly in his domain on intelligence, I had no occasion to be questioning him."

The initial staff for GHQ included Mulcahy as Chief-of-Staff, Collins was initially Director for Organisation and adjutant-general, Rory O'Connor as director of engineering and Dick McKee as director-of-training as well as succeeding Mulcahy as head of the Dublin Brigade. JJ O'Connell was assistant chief-of-staff, and Diarmuid O'Hegarty as Director of Organisation. (Over time additional roles were to be added to GHQ). While the Volunteer Executive would control general policy of the organisation, GHQ would direct military activities. GHQ would begin to hold frequent meetings, discussing military problems and encourage suggestions, and demand regular reports from each of the directors on the staff. GHQ envisioned an army on very

traditional lines, divided into units, companies, battalions and brigades – structures that would be in place by the time of the outbreak of conflict in January 1919. As Chief-of-Staff, Mulcahy was to direct IRA military policy against British police and military to enforce the sovereignty of the independent Irish Republic. As IRA Chief-of-Staff, Mulcahy was to stress GHQ policy in various communications to the IRA units across the country.

Mulcahy had to also deal with requests for funds and arms from the IRA brigades through the conflict. (Worth noting in this period Mulcahy also sat as an elected deputy for Dublin Clontarf in Dáil Éireann).

With the beginning conflict in 1919, GHQ engaged with IRA leaders and ordinary variety Volunteers through a variety of means. This level of engagement and communication with the Volunteer body was to

be important with the heightening of guerrilla warfare into 1920 and the beginning of the boycott and disruption of the Royal Irish Constabulary. The Volunteers, soon to be known as the Irish Republican Army, regarded themselves as the legitimate army of the Irish Republic proclaimed by Dáil Eireann. In terms of how IRA GHQ was to work with the Dáil cabinet, technically, they were sub-ordinate to the Minister of Defence, who of course was Cathal Brugha. Mulcahy, as Chief-of-Staff, would consistently argue the Volunteers were subordinate to the Dáil and this was the accepted view of the Volunteers. To quote Mulcahy in later years: "From the moment the government was appointed, the policy and work of the General Headquarters staff was carried on with ministerial understanding, approval and control, and with financial support authorised by the Dáil" adding that "complete confidence and closest possible understanding and co-operation existed between the army and the government." Of course, Mulcahy was likely being overly optimistic with this statement, given the attitude of some IRA figures that the army and government should remain separate. Looming over the period was the existence of the Irish Republican Brotherhood, where both Mulcahy, and particularly Collins, were major leadership figures. Brugha's distrust of the IRB would later result in GHQ issuing an order a July 1920 that all Volunteers were to swear an oath





levels of activity and their ambushes – Mulcahy regularly would complain to IRA leaders for their lack of activity in their local areas or mistakes made in operations involving ambushes or the seizure of arms. (Often these opinions were reflected in the pages of *An tÓglách*). For instance, in a document issued by GHQ to Cork No. 1 Brigade, criticising a failed ambush in February 1921, it reads: 'An



Leo Whelan's painting now hanging in the National History Museum, Collins Barracks. The painting is called 'IRA GHQ, 1921'. Those depicted in the painting - and their roles in GHQ - are as follows: Sitting L/R: Michael Collins (Dir of the Intelligence), Richard Mulcahy (Chief-of-Staff), Gearóid O'Sullivan (Adjutant-General), Eamon Price (Dir of Organisation), Rory O'Connor (Dir of Engineering, O/C of IRA in Britain), Eoin O'Duffy (Asst Chief-of-Staff), Séan Russell (Dir of Munitions), and Seán McMahon (Quartermaster-General). Standing L/R: JJ 'Ginger' O'Connell (Dir of Training), Emmet Dalton (operational training), Séan Donovan (Dir of Chemicals), Liam Mellows (Dir of Purchases), and Piaras Béaslaí (Dir of Publicity).

entire week in ambush position in one area is too long: after such a length of time there is no chance of the complete surprise that should always be

aimed at. At most only a partial surprise can be obtained, and besides the enemy is certain to have planned some counterstroke if it gets a warning of that kind.'

Further in the report, it says: 'The following points should be rectified: Bad scouting, bad inter-communication between Units, Bad Control of Units, lack of initiative and Sense of Responsibility on the part of subordinate Commanders. A critical examination of this action shows that it might easily have been a disaster only for hold and steady action of small groups, which did not operate as one whole, but in isolation. This is skating on very thin ice indeed.'

Memorandum and General Orders from GHQ would be regularly issued to local units. Many of these refer to minutiae matters of communications and general army conduct, often they refer to how Volunteers should respond in certain situations. General Order No. 3, for example, issued on the 21st May 1920, reads as follows: 'No Volunteer shall under any circumstances make a statement to any policeman or other English official as to his whereabouts at any particular time, or as to the whereabouts or actions of any other persons.' General Order No. 6 refers to the boycott of the RIC, reading: 'Volunteers shall have no intercourse with the RIC and shall stimulate and support in every way the boycott of this force ordered by the Dáil. These persons who associate with the RIC shall be subjected to the same boycott, and the fact of their association with, and toleration of this infamous force shall be kept public in every

to the Republic and the government of the Republic. Hence, for Brugha and the cabinet, the Volunteers had legitimately become the army of the Irish Republic, the IRA.

In August 1918, with the rapid expansion of the Volunteers during the conscription crisis, GHQ had decided to publish a secret Volunteer newspaper, known as *An tÓglách* (the Volunteer) – this publication reflecting the views of the GHQ staff towards the ordinary Volunteers. Piaras Béaslaí, the Volunteers' Director of Publicity, was appointed editor. *An tÓglách*'s chief aim was of course for propaganda purposes, and copies were often sought by the international press. Each issue contained an editorial, brief reports of Volunteer activities and training notes written by JJ 'Ginger' O'Connell. It was in this paper that the early recorded instances from 1919-21 of the conflict being referred to as a 'war of independence' can be found. To give one example, the editorial in the May 1st, 1921 edition literally begins a sentence with: 'The war of Independence is progressing favourably for the Irish Republican Army.' The editorial goes on to say, 'Things have developed for the most part in accordance with our calculations, while the enemy calculations have been pretty badly upset. It can be said, however, that the development of military efficiency on the part of our officers and men in some of the most active areas has greatly exceeded our expectations.'

Throughout the conflict, GHQ would encourage regular reports and communications with brigade areas on their

possible way. Definite lists of such persons in the area of his command shall be retained by each Battalion and Brigade Commander.'

With the introduction by the British administration in Ireland of the Black and Tans in 1920, and the Auxiliaries by 1921, the conflict entered into a more deadly and violent phase. The development of IRA flying columns was very much a local initiative with local units in the southwest



Richard Mulcahy

level, although it was with Macready, who was the general officer commanding the British troops in Ireland... I was told by Cathal Brugha it wasn't necessary for me to attend (we may have been kept 'under cover')." Mulcahy nonetheless was unsure how long the truce was to last, and many IRA figures were left with the impression that GHQ were to take advantage of the truce period for "breathing room", i.e. training and re-armament. The day after the truce, Michael Brennan, an IRA commandant in Clare, visited Dublin. Given an account of his interaction which GHQ, Brennan said: "... reported to GHQ. Collins, Mulcahy, Gearóid O'Sullivan and others all emphasised that they didn't expect the Truce to last very long and that it must be used to improve our organisation and training. I left them quite convinced that we had only got a

Richard Mulcahy in his uniform as Commander-in-Chief of the National Army, which he commanded from 1922 - 24.



breathing space and that a resumption of the fighting was an absolute certainty."

Though no one on the IRA GHQ staff then realised it, the truce of course marked the end of what its newspaper often proudly referred as the War of Independence. For the men of the IRA GHQ staff however, a different conflict loomed in the near future. All who are depicted in Leo Whelan's famous painting of the IRA GHQ staff in mid-1921 (see pictured) were to play pivotal roles in the uncertain period leading to the Civil War – in which Mulcahy and GHQ were central as ructions engulfed the revolutionary movement over the Anglo-Irish Treaty. The next phase of conflict was to see an enhanced military role for Mulcahy in the new National Army of the Irish Free State, a result of his success as IRA Chief of Staff from 1919-21. Ultimately, it was this later period of military command that was to have a more substantial effect on his political legacy.

taking the lead, though an example of with their success, IRA GHQ supporting these endeavours.

Overall however, the relationship that Mulcahy had with IRA figures in the conflict 'hotspots' such as Cork was rather mixed as the conflict ended. The overriding criticism that emerges in many retrospective accounts is the lack of supply of arms direct from GHQ, Mulcahy instead encouraging frequent arms raids on barracks. Indeed, one (unnamed) southern IRA leader is said to have remarked the conflict began with the Volunteers using hurleys and will end with them using fountain pens, as per Mulcahy's frequent request for reports.

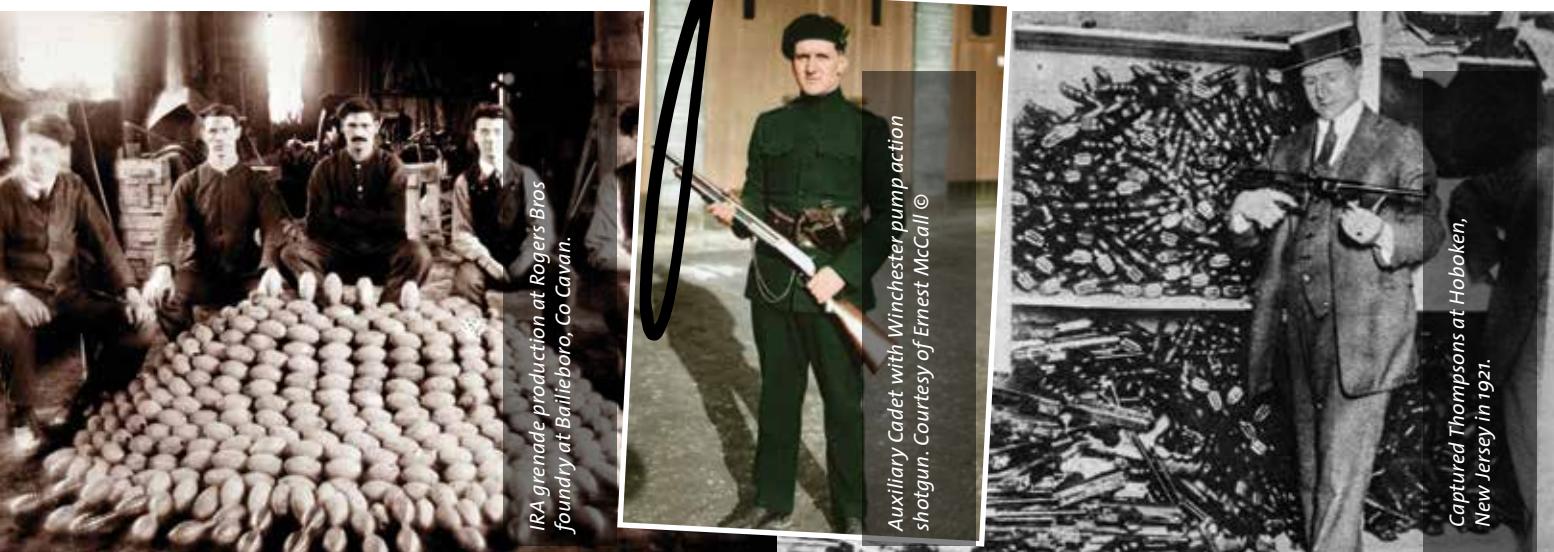
Tom Barry, writing in *Guerilla Days in Ireland*, insisted both Mulcahy and Collins should have attempted to visit IRA units in the areas of heavy fighting during the conflict.

Though technically the overseeing body of the Irish Republican Army, it may seem surprising that the staff of IRA GHQ had little involvement in negotiating the terms of the truce – though they had influence as to the terms they as the governing body of the IRA could accept. Eamon Duggan and Robert Barton, both commandants, represented the IRA in the truce negotiations. Two reasons for IRA GHQ's lack of involvement in the truce negotiations was 1) the continued refusal of the British to recognise the IRA as a legitimate army and 2) the likely fear on the part of the Sinn Féin politicians for the IRA leadership to be out in the open if the conflict were to continue. As Mulcahy later commented: "It may seem funny to think that the discussion which led to an agreement to have a Truce was conducted, as far as the Irish side was concerned, entirely at the political

**About the Author:** Gerard Shannon is a historian residing in the town of Skerries in north county Dublin. He has published a number of articles online and in print about figures in the Irish revolutionary movement of the early 20th century. He is studying an MA in History at DCU, and is in the process of finishing a thesis on Liam Lynch as the anti-Treaty IRA Chief-of-Staff during the Civil War. ■

# Weapons of the War of Independence

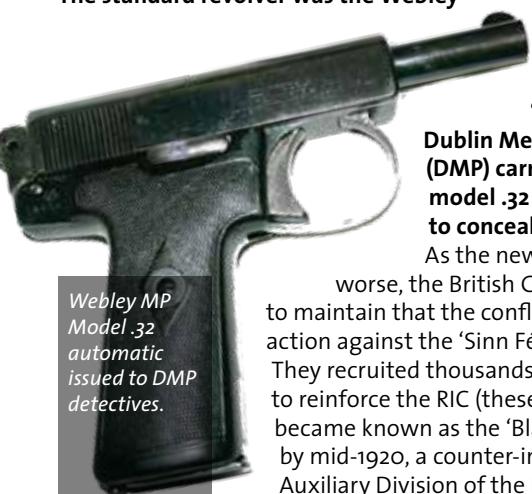
BY MICHAEL BARRY



From the beginning of 1919, as the War of Independence gathered momentum, it was the RIC that initially bore the brunt of the IRA assault. As attacks on barracks increased, the force was withdrawn from small isolated barracks. The larger ones were transformed into bastions, with steel plates over windows and loopholes. The RIC was a paramilitary force and well armed. They were issued with carbines, (a shorter rifle, easier for a constable to carry while on a horse – or bicycle). From 1904, the rifles were Lee Metford bolt-action carbines, with a six-cartridge magazine. These, along with similar Lee Enfield carbines, had been surplus and were converted to take bayonets. The standard revolver was the Webley

and Scott (break top) Mk VI .455 calibre revolver.

The detectives of 'G' Division of the Dublin Metropolitan Police (DMP) carried Webley MP model .32 automatics, easier to conceal.



Webley MP Model .32 automatic issued to DMP detectives.

As the news from Ireland got worse, the British Government tried to maintain that the conflict was a police action against the 'Sinn Féin murder gang'. They recruited thousands of ex-servicemen to reinforce the RIC (these new men soon became known as the 'Black and Tans'), and by mid-1920, a counter-insurgency force, the Auxiliary Division of the RIC (ADRIC), was recruited and staffed with ex-officers. ADRIC companies were well equipped. They had Crossley Tenders and armoured cars. Each cadet could select from a Webley

revolver or automatic pistol, a Lee Enfield SMLE or a Winchester pump-action shotgun. They also had Mills bombs and Lewis light machine guns.

The first IRA direct attack on the British Army was at Fermoy in September 1919. After this the military were increasingly brought into the conflict. Stationed around the country, they had the benefit of being well equipped with excellent weapons that had been combat-proven in the recent world war. The staple arm was the general-issue British infantry rifle, the Lee Enfield bolt-action SMLE Mk III. A soldier could fire off the ten .303 rounds in the magazine in 15 seconds. The standard officer's sidearm was the Webley Mk VI .455 calibre revolver. They also had access to the formidable Vickers heavy machine gun. Water-cooled, it could fire .303 bullets at 500 rounds per minute. A versatile weapon was the American-designed Lewis machine gun, of .303 calibre. With a pan magazine, it was air-cooled using an aluminium barrel radiator. It was light, but could pump out 550 rounds per minute.

Over the course of the War of Independence, the IRA was woefully short of arms. IRA units had developed out of the Irish Volunteer organisation. Most arms had been sourced locally. GHQ in Dublin evolved from 1919 onwards and, with difficulty, tried to put order on the situation. A certain amount of arms were imported clandestinely, a significant number through Liverpool. One GHQ document, written in December 1921, listed the amount of arms imported over the eleven months up to the Truce on 11 July 1921. It amounted to a mere 96 rifles and 522 pistols. In the context of the requirements to fight a nationwide guerrilla war, the amount of arms imported was minimal. (The pace of imports radically accelerated in the six months after the Truce.) In reality most IRA units had to depend on their own resources. Managing weapons and ammunition stocks posed a nightmare for the local quarter-

masters, as there was a great variety of rifles, some from raids on RIC or military barracks, some purchased from British soldiers – or captured in ambushes. There were various revolvers and automatics, as well as many locally sourced shotguns, which were only of worth in close-quarter exchanges.

Among the miscellany of weapons were those captured from the Crown forces - RIC carbines and army Lee Enfield SMLEs. Occasionally Lewis light machine guns were captured and used to good effect in ambushes, particularly in Co. Cork. Hotchkiss light machine guns were also captured (two were taken from the Peerless armoured car used in the attempt to free Sean Mac Eoin in May 1921).

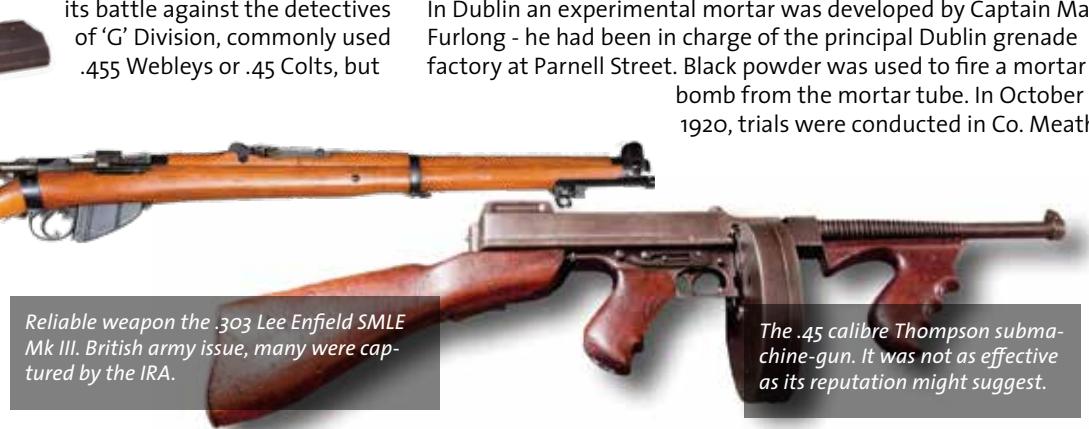
There were a wide variety of side-arms. Many Webleys had been captured. A prized possession of IRA units was a 'Peter the Painter' (named after a Latvian anarchist who reportedly used one in the Sidney Street Siege in London in 1911). This was the Mauser C96 semi-automatic pistol with detachable wooden stock, which gave it the stability of a short-barrelled rifle. It had been used to good effect during the 1916 Rising and was also called the 'Broomhandle' due to its round wooden handle. Collins' Squad, in its battle against the detectives of 'G' Division, commonly used .455 Webleys or .45 Colts, but

quarter trench work in the World War, but it was inaccurate over 50m. It had a legendary reputation, but in reality was not very effective and did not make much difference by the end of the War of Independence, nor during the subsequent Civil War. Harry Boland and comrades had purchased 653 Thompsons in the US. Three had been smuggled in in May 1921 and one was test fired in a tunnel at the Casino in Marino by the Squad and others, including Tom Barry, who was visiting Dublin. On 13 June 1921 Customs seized 495 Thompsons on a ship at New Jersey, as they were about to be transported to Ireland. The rest were smuggled to Ireland after the Truce. A Thompson was used in action for the first time on 8 July 1921, when Pádraig O'Connor led an attack, from a Ballyfermot bridge, on a troop train. Several soldiers were wounded.

The IRA also manufactured grenades in improvised factories spread around the country. Many thousands were produced but quality was variable. As the war progressed, IRA engineers gained more expertise in the use of mines. Their efficacy was demonstrated during the Rathcoole, Co. Cork ambush where mines were successfully exploded under an armoured Lancia and two lorries. In Dublin an experimental mortar was developed by Captain Matt Furlong - he had been in charge of the principal Dublin grenade factory at Parnell Street. Black powder was used to fire a mortar bomb from the mortar tube. In October 1920, trials were conducted in Co. Meath.

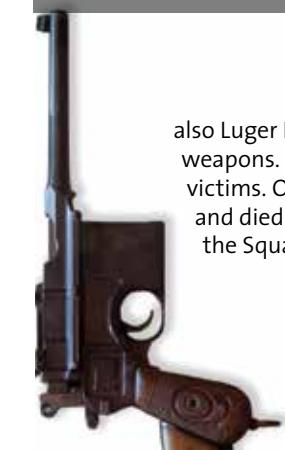


Webley MkVI, issued to the British Army and the RIC.



Reliable weapon the .303 Lee Enfield SMLE Mk III. British army issue, many were captured by the IRA.

The .45 calibre Thompson submachine-gun. It was not as effective as its reputation might suggest.



Mauser C96 semi-automatic pistol with detachable wooden stock, which gave it the stability of a short barreled rifle.



The American designed Lewis machine gun, of .303 calibre. With a pan magazine, it was air cooled using an aluminium barrel radiator.



An experimental mortar of IRA Captain Matt Furlong, who was killed after it exploded when being tested.

also Luger Parabellums. In the early days, they used lighter weapons. Detective-Sergeant Smyth was one of their first victims. On 30 July 1919 he was shot but was able to flee, and died weeks later from his wounds. Jim Slattery of the Squad noted: 'We never used .38 guns again; we used .45 guns after that lesson'.

The .45 calibre Thompson submachine gun arrived in early 1921. It had been designed for close-

Furlong first experimented using dummy shells. Then he fired a live round, which exploded in the tube, severely injuring him – he later died.

In summary, despite being short of arms and equipment during the period 1919-1921, the IRA fought a successful guerrilla war against the Crown forces, armed with a miscellany of weapons and, fortuitously in some cases, combat-proven guns. The IRA had to arm themselves using their own resources, and were constantly improving their guerrilla tactics in an empirical manner. As the war ended they were also advancing to more sophisticated tactics, such as gaining mastery of land mines. If the Truce had not been signed in July 1921, the IRA probably would have been able to use these to devastate the Crown forces armoured cars and trucks, essential for their mobility and control across the country.

#### ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Michael Barry is an author and historian living in Dublin. His latest book, *The Fight for Irish Freedom: An Illustrated History of the War of Independence* was published in October 2018. His other books are *Courage Boys*, *We are Winning: an Illustrated History of the 1916 Rising* (2015), which contains over 550 photographs, and *The Green Divide: an Illustrated History of the Irish Civil War* (2014), have all received very high praise. They are available from [www.books.ie](http://www.books.ie) and all leading bookshops. ■

# ARMOURED CARS

## *in the War of Independence*

BY MICHAEL BARRY

**T**he British forces had seen the advantages of armoured cars in their effort to stamp out rebellion in Ireland during the early 20th century. They reacted immediately during Easter Week: within a few days they had deployed the improvised armoured vehicles, made from locomotive smoke boxes, mounted on lorries borrowed from Guinness and fabricated in Inchicore railway works. Troops and equipment were rushed to Dublin during the rebellion. Amongst these were seven Rolls-Royce armoured cars that arrived just after the Rising ended.

By 1919, Republicanism had regrouped and gone on the offensive; the War of Independence began, and gained in intensity. The British army sent tanks and armoured cars to Ireland. Tanks of that time were lumbering heavy beasts, more effective for intimidation than tactical use in low-intensity guerrilla warfare. Armoured cars were more useful for the dispersed form of warfare around Ireland. These amounted to a mixed bag; there were a variety of types, reflecting the vast amount of surplus left over from the just-ended WWI. In 1919, 20 Jeffery Quad armoured cars were shipped across. With armoured hulls mounted on US-made Jeffery Quad four-wheel drive truck chassis, these had seen service with the Canadian Army in England.

After the outbreak of war in 1914, the Imperial Russian Army had ordered armoured cars from the Austin Motor Company, specifying a twin-turret design. In 1918 a batch of an upgraded variant could not be sent to Russia due to the revolution. Purchased by the British Army, some were dispatched to Ireland, also in 1919.

The British had obtained new territories, such as Mesopotamia and Palestine, in



A Peerless with twin turrets and Hotchkiss machine guns.

the carve-up of the Ottoman Empire after WWI. When they became increasingly involved in conflict in the Middle East and other lands, they began to run short of armoured cars, which were eminently suitable for an 'imperial policing' role. As they had a surplus of thousands of US-made five-tonne Peerless trucks (highly regarded for strength and performance), it was decided to fit an Austin twin-turret armoured car body on a Peerless chassis. From July 1920, the Austin armoured cars were replaced in Ireland by the Peerless model. Again, like the Austin, it was armed with two .303 Hotchkiss machine guns. Weighing over seven tonnes, the Peerless was ponderous and heavy. It had solid rubber tyres and could not easily travel on what were the many poor Irish country roads. It was also in danger of bogging down on softer ground – and was better suited only to more well paved urban roads.

In January 1921, a batch of a modernised version of the Rolls Royce armoured car, which had been earmarked for Mesopotamia, was diverted to Ireland. This was a formidable machine – faster, quieter, more reliable and tougher than the Peerless. Manned by a crew of three, it was lighter, and with better wheels and suspension, was able to patrol the country roads. A Vickers .303 water-cooled machine gun was mounted in the single turret. The refined, reliable and smooth-running Silver Ghost six-cylinder 7.5 litre engine powered it.

IRA ambushes escalated during 1920. The Crown forces had to travel more by

road, as the railway workers refused to transport them during the 'Munitions Crisis'. The reliable and rugged light truck, known as the Crossley tender was 'up-armoured' – armour was added around the sides of the tender. A more sophisticated personnel carrier arrived in July 1920. These were Italian-made Lancia IZ model trucks, and had been surplus to the war effort. After arrival they were armoured all around. An angled front enclosed the drive with a sloped mesh fitted on top to repel grenades. In 1921 the RIC and the Auxiliary Division RIC operated these vehicles for patrols in town and country. ■



Jeffrey Larkin Armoured Car – 20 of which were sent to Ireland.



Probably the most famous RR Armoured car Slábh na Mban. Photo courtesy of South Dublin Libraries/David Power/wm\_DSC\_1120



A Lancia Armoured Personnel Carrier

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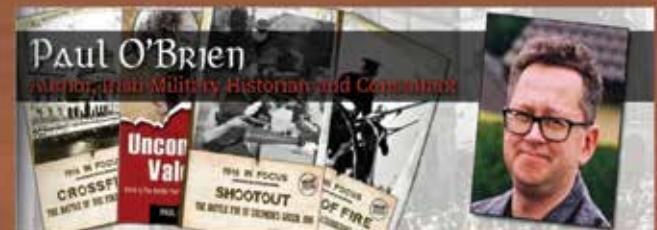
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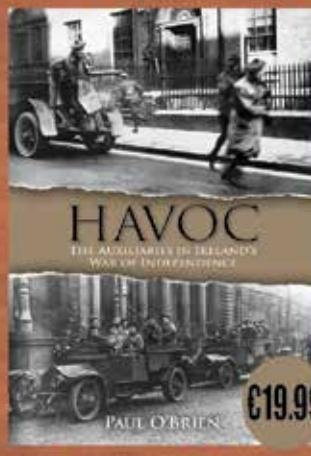
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# MICHAEL COLLINS

Shaping a Revolution **Shaping a Revolution** Shaping a Revolution Shaping a Revolution

BY JOSEPH EA CONNELL JNR

**I**n 1917 national coordination of the IRA began in earnest when a national executive was elected, with Cathal Brugha as chairman, Michael Collins as director of army organisation, and Richard Mulcahy in charge of training. Although the executive functioned to 1920, by March 1919 real power over the army had passed to the GHQ Staff and then to the Ministry for Defence when Dáil Éireann was proclaimed in January 1919. This left Collins and Mulcahy in effective command of the army and intelligence throughout the War of Independence.

remove a vital source of intelligence from the British, allowing the IRA vital breathing space. Collins believed: "England could always reinforce her army. She could replace every soldier that she lost... But there were others indispensable for her purposes that were not so easily replaced. ...To paralyse the British machine, it was necessary to strike at individuals. Without her spies, England was helpless. It was only by their accumulated and accumulating knowledge that the British machine could operate."

Although he knowingly embarked upon his ruthless path, Col-



Members of the Irish delegation at the signing of the Treaty for the Irish Free State, 1921.



Harry Boland, Michael Collins and Eamon de Valera three survivors of the Easter Rising between sessions of Dáil Éireann, circa 1st April 1919.

From 1919 to the end of 1921, the war was waged with strong reliance on intelligence, propaganda, politics, and guerrilla tactics, coordinated in Dublin by Collins. Primarily the war was fought on a number of fronts; between the British Secret Service and Collins's network in Dublin, a similar war led by Florence O'Donoghue in Cork, a war of harassment and reprisal in the country, and a war of propaganda.

Collins's intelligence ring and ruthlessly-used killers were the lynchpin of the effort in Dublin, and he also sent directives across the country coordinating efforts in almost every field.

Collins recognised that guerrilla warfare was the only way forward, although this took a different character in the country to what was employed in Dublin. In the country, initially, groups assembled at night to carry out attacks on RIC barracks before resuming their ordinary civilian lives the next day. Later, small flying columns were formed that remained on full-time active service in the country, receiving shelter and food from locals, getting assistance from local IRA men and civilians in their activities, and operating hit-and-run tactics.

In Dublin Collins's prime targets for assassination were the G-men, who specialised in political work, as their elimination would

lins was aware of a possible public backlash. However, the knee-jerk reaction of suppression and censorship from Dublin Castle in response to his policy, together with the obvious alarm caused by the killings, confirmed to Collins that he was hurting the British intelligence system.

By the end of Collins's brutal but effective campaign, the DMP's intelligence-gathering capabilities were destroyed. The force was on the verge of collapse, compelled to withdraw from direct involvement in the conflict; its members refusing to carry arms or assume any responsibility for a political crime.

Throughout the war, Collins deliberately provoked the authorities into over-reacting in ways that alienated the overwhelming majority of the Irish people and much of the IRA's popularity was due to the excessive reaction of British forces to insurgent activity.

For most of 1919 and into 1920 the level of violence throughout Ireland increased, and various quasi-official bodies like the Dáil/Republican Courts or the IRA began to hold sway throughout the countryside. The IRA benefited from widespread support from the general population, who regularly refused to pass information to the British.

The arrival of the Black and Tans in March 1920 changed the entire complexion of the war. Collins viewed the Black and Tans and the terror that came with them, as a mixed blessing as they clearly drove any doubting nationalists into the arms of Sinn Féin. He wrote in a letter to Donal Hayes: 'Apart from the loss which these attacks entail, good is done, as it makes clear and clearer to people what both sides stand for.'

The Black and Tans' appearance in Dublin altered the whole view of the city. Kathleen Napoli McKenna, who worked on The Irish Bulletin, and saw Collins almost daily, wrote of what a Sunday morning in Dublin looked like. Instead of empty streets with only Mass-goers about, '...citizens were thronging to hear Mass through streets filled with British Regulars carrying rifles with fixed bayonets, Auxiliary Cadets, Black and Tans and here and there, broad-shouldered plainclothesmen distinguishable as members of the 'G' Division of the Dublin Metropolitan Police engaged in political espionage. A tank was ambling along Bachelor's Walk, military lorries, filled with armed-to-the-teeth troops, their rifles at the ready, were racing through O'Connell St, and military cordons were drawn with barbed wire around entrances from Grafton St, from Nassau St and College Green.'

Collins's plans were working well; the IRA would ambush a patrol, and a few hours later Crown forces would arrive in strength

IRA volunteers kept up the pressure by attacking patrols, raiding post offices, and shooting key men in the British intelligence services. After dark, British murder squads went out in the comparative safety of curfew to shoot at will.

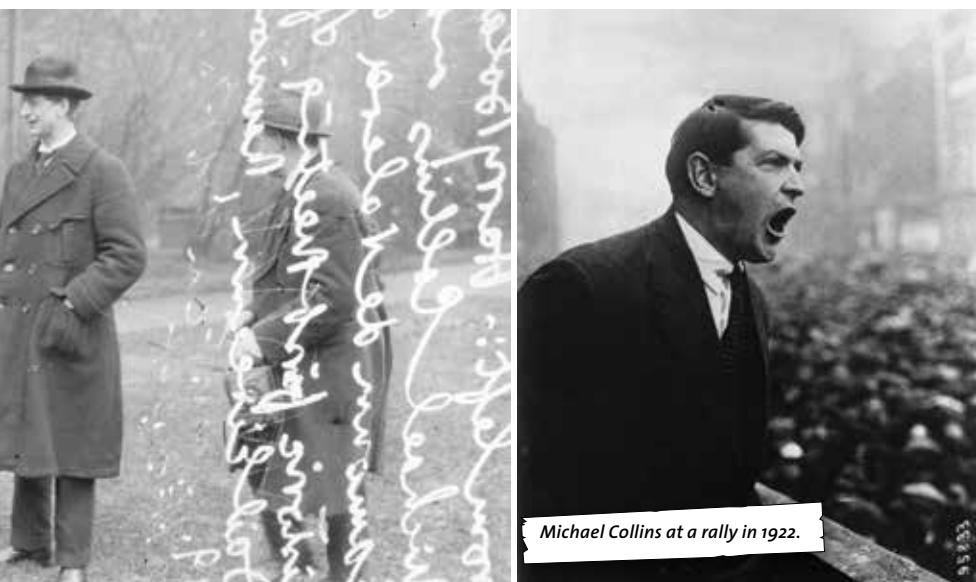
Collins was deeply conscious of the sufferings of the population, but he realised that these tactics must go on. With few men, and little ammunition, he knew he could not beat the British by force, but he could and would defeat them through their own conduct.

Collins was one of the first guerrilla leaders to recognise the potential of what is now known as improvised explosive devices (IEDs), directing James O'Donovan in 1919 to develop an explosive that was sufficiently powerful and could be distributed to units throughout the country, but that 'men with no technical skill could produce in a farmhouse kitchen... They have to be fairly foolproof because we can't have people all over the country having their heads blown off!'

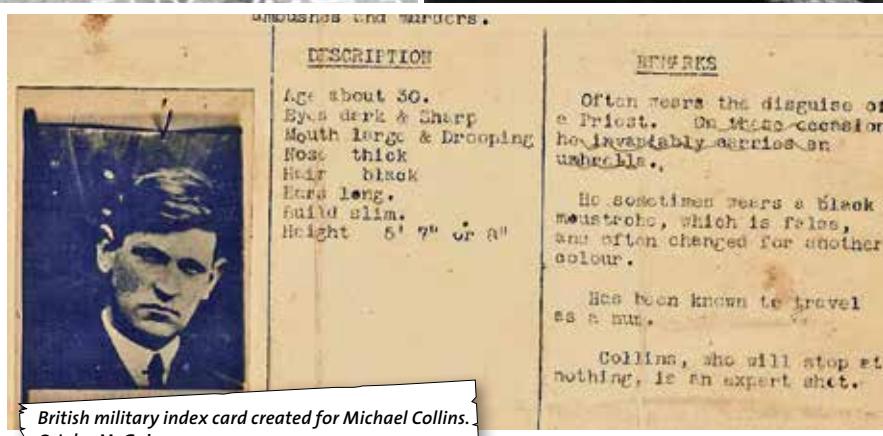
From autumn 1920 the IRA began to use IEDs in ambushes with regularity. Of 172 ambushes reported in the British War Diaries from then until the Truce in July 1921, 109 used explosive devices of some sort.

By spring 1921 the IRA were a force in Dublin and its flying columns were feared throughout Cork, Kerry and Clare. However a lack of ammunition was becoming an issue, and though a formidable opponent, the IRA was not able to dislodge the British forces. It became clear to Collins that the Irish could not defeat those forces in the field.

What set Collins apart from others was that he was always thinking not just of war, but also of peace and how to achieve it as quickly and advantageously as possible. Collins's views on violence were carefully considered. He said he had 'strong fighting ideas, or I should say, I suppose, ideas of the utility of fighting'. Above all, though, Collins was a realist. He was always concerned about shaping public opinion and about the political impact of violence. He knew that sooner or later the Irish were going to have to negotiate with the British – and smarter men would do it sooner rather than later. Collins always said he was 'a soldier, not a politician'. In fact, he was neither – he was an administrative genius, able to compartmentalise all matters and keep them separate and he ran a whole revolution as though it was a business concern.



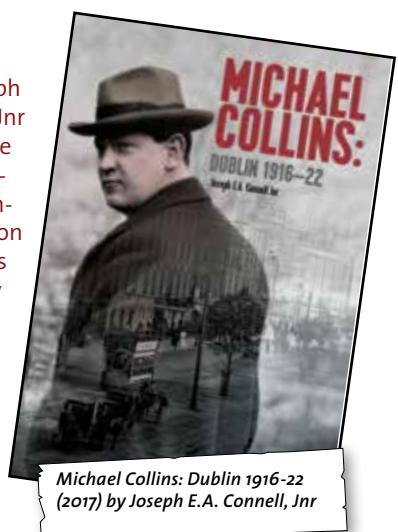
Michael Collins at a rally in 1922.



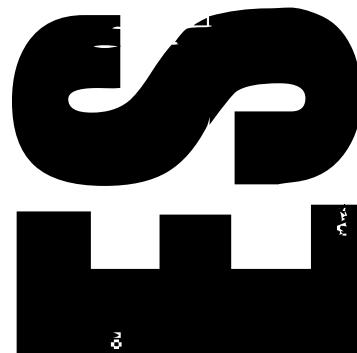
British military index card created for Michael Collins.  
© John McGuigan

to shoot, burn and loot. They acted as if all the whole population was against them, so they didn't bother to differentiate – to be Irish was to be guilty. Nothing could have brought the people over to the nationalist side more completely. In essence, the people were driven into the arms of the IRA – which was exactly what Collins envisaged when he set out to provoke the confrontation. Dublin developed into a bloody battleground. During the day,

a regular column to History Ireland. His latest books include *Michael Collins: Dublin 1916-22* (2017), and *Who's Who In The Dublin Rising 1916* (2015), published by Wordwell Books [www.wordwellbooks.com](http://www.wordwellbooks.com)



Michael Collins: Dublin 1916-22 (2017) by Joseph E.A. Connell, Jr



INFORMERS  
BEWARE!

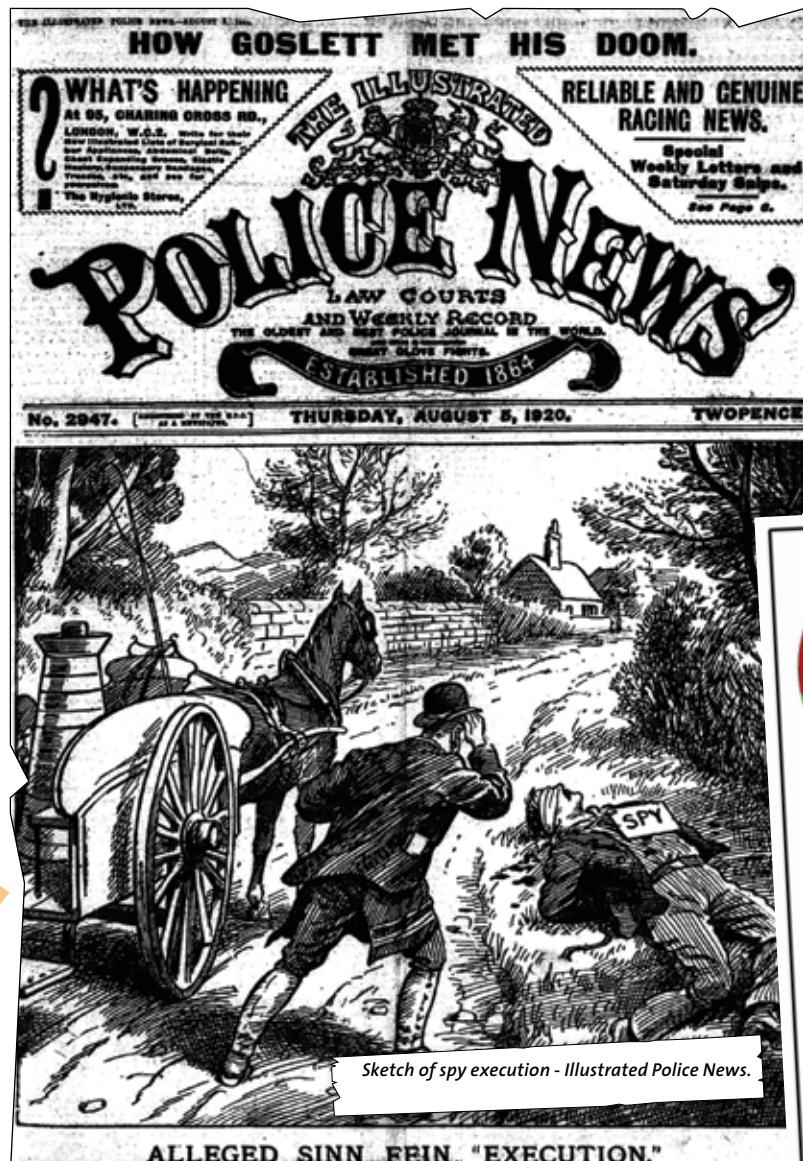
# SPY & INFORMERS BEWARE!

BY DR. PÁDRAIG Ó RUAIRC PHD

**T**he 'intelligence war' was undoubtedly one of the most important military aspects of the Irish War of Independence. For the British forces, the best way to defeat the republican insurgency was to acquire accurate intelligence information about Irish Republican Army (IRA) personnel, their supply of arms and operations. Prior to the 1916 Rising the British Government had relied on the Royal Irish Constabulary (RIC) to gather such information. However the widespread closure of RIC barracks following IRA attacks, the success of Sinn Féin's police boycott and the consequent mass resignation of Irish-born Constables meant that from 1919 the British forces became increasingly dependent upon civilians for information.

Given the role of spies and informers in compromising the republican insur-

rections of 1798 and 1867, the IRA was acutely aware of the importance of stopping the flow of information to the enemy by identifying British intelligence agents. During the War of Independence, the republicans inflicted a variety of punishments on those suspected of being British spies. Some received threatening notices, others suffered economic boycott, had their property destroyed or were forced into exile. In the extreme cases, the IRA captured and killed civilians they claimed were spies. As a guerrilla army, relying on secrecy and mobility the IRA could rarely afford to take alleged spies' prisoner for extended periods. The chief of IRA intelligence in Cork, Florence O'Donoghue, commented on the dilemma this posed: "The absence of any facilities for the detention of prisoners made it impossible to deal with the doubtful cases. In practice,



ALLEGED SINK FEIN. "EXECUTION."

*there was no alternative between execution and complete immunity.*" Given the damage that an active spy could inflict in terms of the capture and execution of IRA Volunteers, the killing of suspected British intelligence agents was a necessary military action and a total of 196 civilians accused of spying were killed by the IRA during the War of Independence.

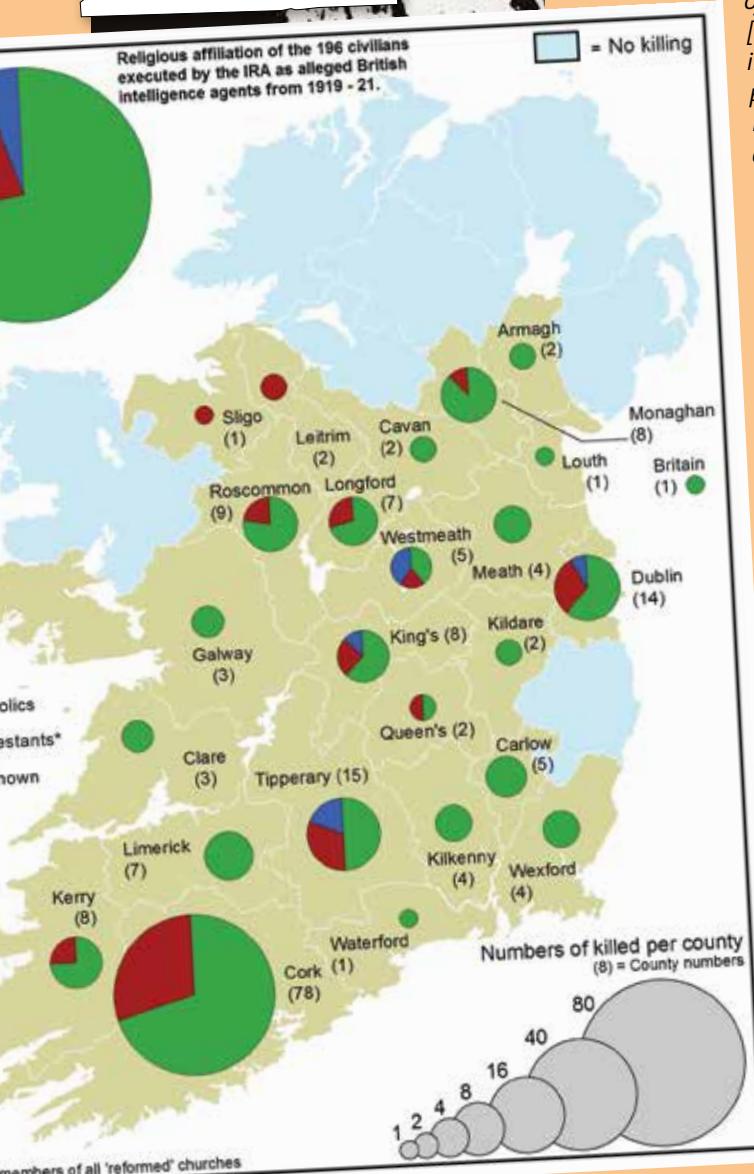
Today most Irish people hold a fairly positive view of the War of Independence regarding it as a 'just war' fought in a mostly chivalrous manner by the IRA, which eventually led to independence for southern Ireland and established the main pillars of our modern democratic state - Dáil Éireann, the Irish Defences Forces and An Garda Síochana. However the military struggle for Irish freedom was far more complex than the history most of us were taught in school

Cath  
Prote  
Unkn

\*Including



### *Maria Lyndsay executed as a spy.*



and a century later the IRA's intelligence war remains one of the most controversial aspects of the conflict.

The official record of the British Army's 6th Division suggested that the IRA exploited genuine intelligence concerns for sectarian reasons: "a large number of

*Protestant Loyalists were murdered and labelled as spies ... a regular murder campaign was instigated against Protestant Loyalists and anyone suspected of being an informer quite irrespective of whether he really was one or not". Some modern historians have repeated this claim and used this controversy to question the legitimacy of the War of Independence as a whole.*

County	Killed
Monaghan	8
Louth	1
Britain	1
Dublin	14
Other	80

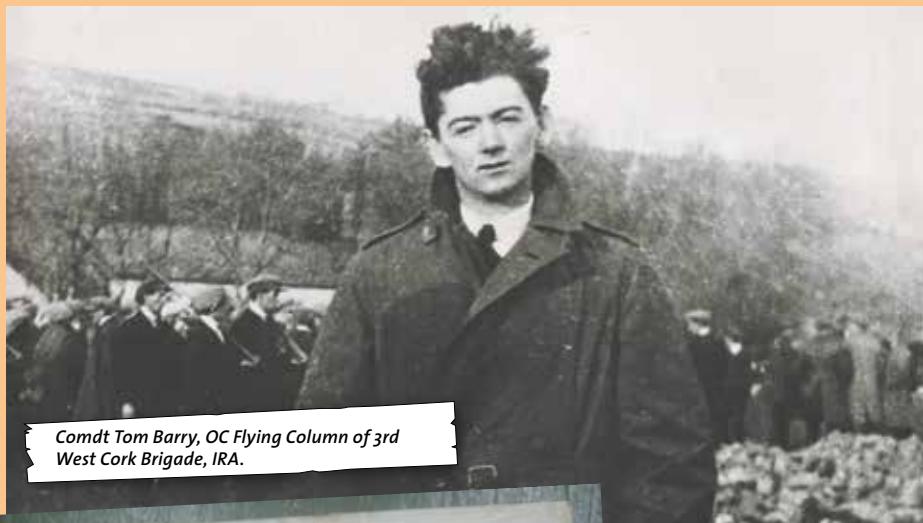
these claims. The most striking thing about the IRA's intelligence war is that the number of alleged British agents killed varied widely throughout Ireland. (See map). The execution of suspected spies was almost exclusively a 'southern' phenomenon. Apart from a small cluster of executions in Armagh, Cavan and Monaghan

the IRA execution of spies was almost unknown in Ulster. The War of Independence was most bitterly fought in Cork the largest number of IRA executions of alleged spies; seventy-eight in total, occurred in that county. The second highest number of executions occurred in Tipperary where fifteen civilians accused of spying were executed. Whilst the IRA in Dublin killed at least fourteen civilians for spying. These three counties alone accounted for more than half of such killings nationally. This is unsurprising given that these counties saw intense IRA activity and were amongst the first districts to be proclaimed under martial law.

The execution of Protestants accused of spying was not widespread nationally. Of the 196 civilians killed by the IRA as alleged spies the religious affiliation of ten of them cannot be established, but of the remainder the overwhelming majority - 75% were Catholic and just 25% were Protestant (Anglican, Presbyterian or Methodist). This ratio of three quarters Catholic and one quarter Protestant tallies exactly with the overall religious makeup of Irish society at that time. The IRA did not kill any civilians' accused of spying in Antrim, Derry, Donegal, Down, Fermanagh, Mayo, Tyrone or Wicklow. Furthermore, Catholics accounted for all of those shot by the IRA as spies in Armagh, Carlow, Cavan, Clare, Galway, Kildare, Kilkenny, Limerick, Louth, Meath, Waterford and Wexford. This rules out the possibility that the IRA in any of these twenty counties exploited the intelligence war as a pretext for "sectarian murder" or "ethnic cleansing".

The largest number of Protestant civilians killed by the IRA as suspected spies occurred in Cork where 24 of those killed (approximately 30%) were Protestant. Although this figure seems disproportionately high, there were very large Protestant communities in Cork, which were staunchly Loyalist in politics and consequently were more willing to assist the British forces. The British Army's *"Record of the Rebellion"* reported that Protestant Loyalists in West Cork had actively assisted them 'in the Bandon Valley ... there were many Protestant farmers who gave information ... it proved almost impossible to protect these brave men many of whom were murdered'.

The IRA killed one alleged spy in Sligo and a further two in Leitrim - these were the only counties where all of those killed as spies were Protestant.



Comdt Tom Barry, OC Flying Column of 3rd West Cork Brigade, IRA.

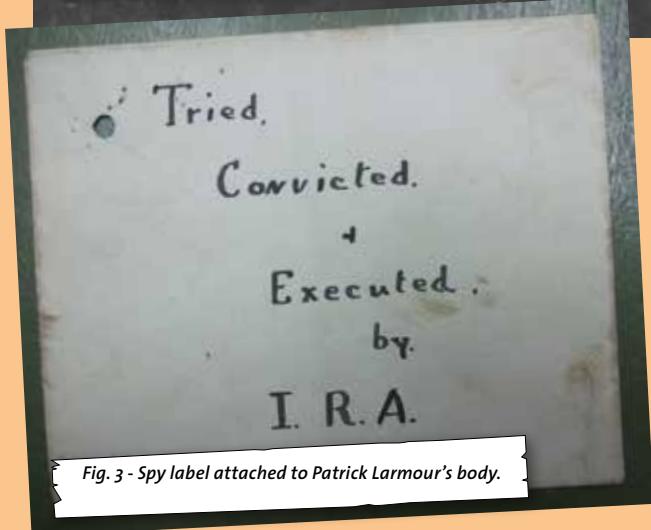


Fig. 3 - Spy label attached to Patrick Larmour's body.

However it would be wrong to automatically assume that these three killings were all sectarian. The widow of one of the victims stated in her application to the British Government's Irish Grants Commission that her husband, William Latimer, a Protestant farmer, was killed because he had supplied intelligence information to the RIC. Furthermore she did not ascribe a sectarian motive to his killing. John Henry Bernard the former Protestant Archbishop of Dublin declared that "During the melancholy years 1920 to 1923 there have indeed been outbursts of violence directed at Loyalist minorities but for the most part it has been because they were Loyalists, and not because they were Protestant, that members of the Church of Ireland suffered." Likewise Lionel Curtis, an advisor to the British government, who visited Ireland in secret in 1921 reported to the British cabinet that: "Protestants in the South do not complain of persecution on sectarian grounds. If Protestant farmers are murdered, it is not by reason of their religion, but rather because they are under suspicion as Loyalists. The distinction is a fine but a real one."

Peter Steepe, Otto Hasselbeck, George Imbush and Stanley Harris in Limerick, Walter Mitchell in Offaly and the Plant brothers in Tipperary fought alongside their Catholic comrades in arms for the Republic proclaimed in 1916 and ratified by Dáil Éireann in 1919 which promised to "cherish all of the children of the nation equally" and guaranteed "religious and civil liberty, equal rights and equal opportunities to all its citizens"

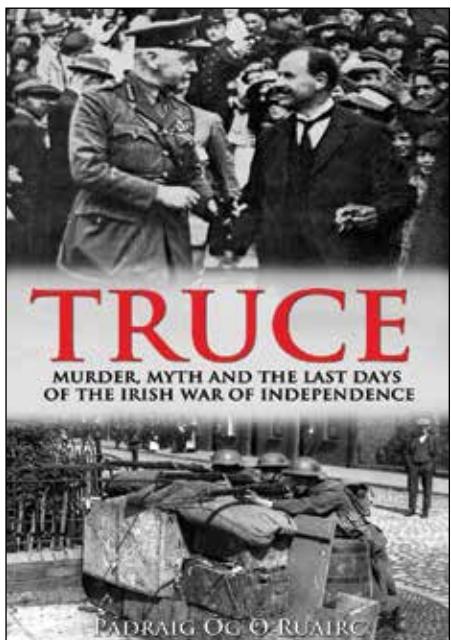
The overwhelming majority of the historical evidence suggests the IRA suspected people of being spies based on their activities, and not because of a campaign of anti-Protestant ethnic cleansing. Tom Barry, the leader of the IRA's 3rd West Cork Brigade Flying Column claimed that the IRA always operated on this basis and that religious prejudice was never a motivating factor for them: "We never killed a man or interfered with a man because of his religion, we didn't give three straws, they were human beings to us and they were treated as that and there was never a breath of sectarianism ... They were no more shot because they were Protestant or Jew or Atheists or anything else. They

were shot because they had in their own confessions that they were doing the job, and they had caused the loss of Irish Republican Army men's lives."

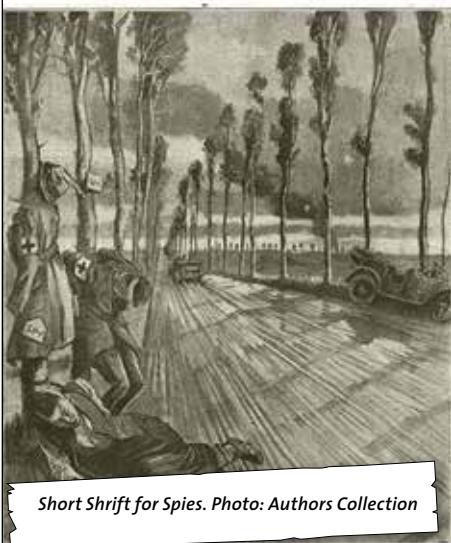
Although the IRA was a 'volunteer army' waging guerilla warfare, both the rank and file and IRA General Headquarters made determined throughout the War of Independence to adopt, as far as was possible in the circumstances, the structures and regulations of a regular standing national army - a chain of command, accountability to Governmental authority, direction from the Minister of Defence etc. The IRA's methods of detecting and punishing suspected spies followed the standard operating procedures then practiced by other armies and in particular the British army where many IRA Volunteers had learned their soldiering. For example, many of the features of IRA executions including the use of firing squads, tying the condemned person to a fixed post before shooting and the use of "spy labels" mimicked British army practice in the First World War at a time when the execution of civilians as alleged German spies by the British forces was common.

Spy mania on the Western Front resulted in the execution of hundreds of civilian suspects. Private B.W. Page of the London Irish Rifles recalled an incident when a telephone was found in the house of a peasant girl who was friendly with British troops. The discovery was considered by the British Army as sufficient proof that she was guilty of being a German spy and all of the occupants of her house were subsequently arrested and executed. Likewise, Captain J.C. Dunn of the Royal Welch Fusiliers recorded in his diary for 5th May 1918 - "A heavy drizzle nearly all day. The proprietor of Charlie's Bar at Amiens is said to have been shot, a wireless outfit and other incriminating discoveries are alleged. Also there's a story of the shooting of a cheque changer at Béthune..."

The British saw such measures as a military necessity and their propaganda proudly boasted about the harsh treatment they dealt out to suspected spies. British magazines like 'The War Illustrated' showed images of the bodies of alleged German spies shot dead, their bodies labelled with a notice that simply read "SPY" and dumped on the roadside. These images were published with glee-filled headlines such as "Short Shrift for Spies at the Battle-Front." By 1920 British propaganda in 'The Illustrated Police News' printed a remarkably similar im-



**Short Shift for Spies at the Battle-Front**



age of an alleged British spy shot by the IRA and dumped on the roadside with a label reading "SPY" and, with no small degree of hypocrisy, denounced such methods as the criminal acts of an Irish "murder gang".

The majority of those killed by the IRA as spies were shot and their bodies were deposited in public places with a "spy notice" affixed to their corpse as a warning to others. The labelling of the corpse took extra effort on the part of the killers and was an attempt at showing proper bureaucratic and judicial processes to the public. Michael Collins, the IRA's Director of Intelligence stated that "There is no crime in detecting and destroying in wartime the spy and the informer" and he claimed that the IRA had adhered to the rules of war "...as far as possible".

Although there is little evidence to support the allegations of sectarianism levelled against the IRA that is not to say that its conduct in the intelligence war was always exemplary. Beginning in May of 1920 IRA Headquarters began issuing a series of "General Orders" in an attempt to guide and regulate the military conduct of the IRA in relation to the execution of spies and other military tactics. Officially, the death sentences passed on all alleged spies had to be approved by the local IRA Brigade Commandant and reported to the Adjutant General of the IRA. The reality however is that lower ranking IRA officers often sanctioned executions without waiting for formal approval.

Only IRA Headquarters had the authority to pass sentence of death on members of the IRA found guilty of spying – but at least three serving IRA Volunteers were executed as spies most of whom were killed without the sanction of IRA Headquarters. One of these was Patrick Larmour an IRA Volunteer from Monaghan who simply 'broke' under interrogation. After release from custody, Larmour told his superior officers exactly what had happened, and although it is unlikely that he gave the British forces any significant information; he was shot as a spy. James Dalton an IRA officer in Limerick city accused of spying was actually shot as the result of an internal IRA feud. The allegation that Dalton was a spy was undoubtedly concocted after the killing, and, a short time later Dáil Éireann took the unprecedented step of investigating Dalton's death and issuing a public statement declaring his innocence.

Another General Order stated that women found guilty of spying were to be exiled from Ireland however local IRA commanders often took more extreme measures. Some women accused of collaborating with the British were publicly humiliated by having their heads shaved (a tactic later adopted by the French Resistance) and the IRA executed at least three female suspects accused of spying. By far the most infamous of these cases was the shooting of Maria Lyndsay. Lindsay was abducted by the IRA in March 1921 because she had informed the British Army about an IRA ambush at Dripsey, County Cork resulting in the capture and execution of five IRA Volunteers. Maria Lyndsey was one of about forty suspected spies whose body was hidden by the IRA after execution. During the conflict both, the

British forces and the IRA "disappeared" a small number of those they killed. In the case of the IRA, the practice may have been adopted in circumstances where republicans felt that the killing would not be approved of by the wider community - such as the shooting of a woman. Alternatively, "disappearances" may merely have been a way to hide evidence of these killings. Either way the fact that the IRA used this tactic is one reason why the intelligence war remains controversial.

The main reason why the IRA's intelligence war will always remain a contested history and controversial subject is because in most cases it is simply impossible for modern day historians to establish beyond any doubt the guilt or innocence of those executed by the IRA. The British Government has a longstanding policy of neither confirming nor denying if civilians shot as alleged spies and informers were in fact intelligence agents. As recently as 2015 the British Home Office refused a freedom of information request about financial payments to Irish informants a century earlier on the basis that "to do so would undermine British national security and could lead to present day informants being less willing to come forward in case their names were revealed in 100 years time."

The challenge for historians in the "Decade of Centenaries" is to scrutinise all of the available evidence about the IRA's intelligence war, evaluate it fairly and to publish it educating the public and getting them to ask difficult questions about our history. In assessing the IRA's record in executing civilians for spying, the available evidence shows that whilst local republican units did not always have a perfect record in intelligence matters – there is little evidence to support the suggestions that "ethnic cleansing" and widespread anti-Protestant sectarianism blighted the IRA's military record in the War of Independence.

**About the author:** Pádraig Ó Ruairc has a PhD in history and has written several books on the 1916 Rising, War of Independence and Civil War. The data used in this article come from his book 'Truce: Murder, Myth and the Last Days of the Irish War of Independence'. ■



BY JOE PRICE

**S**pagnum moss has been used since the early 1900s as a way of effecting comfort and first aid. It made its way into the military theatre when the demand for dressings exceeded supply. Doctors at the Royal College of Surgeons noticed that soldiers were dying from sepsis at an alarming rate. Cotton been in such a high demand for not just dressings but uniforms and its recent discovery in the use of explosives. Enter sphagnum moss or peat moss. The humble plant grows in abundance in Ireland and in similar climates. It was first noted by a Scottish botanist first that Gaelic warriors in the battle of Clontarf used moss to stuff their wounds.

Sphagnum moss when shook free of debris can hold 22% of its weight in water. Far more than cotton. This is because 90% of the cells in sphagnum moss are dead to allow the plant to absorb any moisture it can. Thus, making it ideal for soaking up blood and pus.

To prepare moss for dressings you simply shake it free from large debris and dry it out as best you can. Either leaving it in the sun, by a fire or curing it in a billy can.

This is a great modern technique for keeping burns or dry areas cool. Take a piece of moss and shake the debris off it, and wrap it in a shemagh or bandanna you can apply it to infected areas. You can either wet it for dry wounds or leave it dry if you have a wound that needs an absorbent dressing. But make sure to always have some barrier between you and the sphagnum moss.

As the war raged on, the number of bandages needed skyrocketed, and sphagnum moss provided the raw material for more and more of them. In 1916, the Canadian Red Cross Society in Ontario provided over 1 million dressings, nearly 2 million compresses and 1 million pads for wounded soldiers in Europe, using moss collected from British Columbia, Nova Scotia and other swampy, coastal regions. By 1918 more than 2 million dressings were being sent out.

In December 1916 an Irish war hospital supply depot was set up in 40 Merrion Square, Dublin. Here volunteer women made dressings and bandages, such as papier-mâché surgical applications and sphagnum moss dressings. Owing to the war, one of the first items to become scarce was cotton wool. Sphagnum moss proved a

good substitute because of its excellent absorption properties. Some women spent many a cold winter's afternoon

gathering moss from bogs in the Dublin Mountains. The moss was sterilised, dried and sent to sub-depots throughout Ireland. The central depot for sphagnum moss collection in Dublin was the Royal College of Science in Merrion Street (now the Department of An Taoiseach).

So, the credentials of this amazing plant found abundant throughout Europe goes without saying. But first aid isn't all sphagnum moss can be used for. It also makes great bedding. Not when placed directly on because of its moisture when fresh, but luckily sphagnum is easily torn in huge sheets from the ground and it can be placed on the ground to pad out the underneath of a tent's floor, placed into black bags for a mattress or simply stuffed into a dry bag for use as a pillow.

If cold, dry moss can be stuffed into a sleeping bag liner and used as an insulator in cold weather under a coat or padding for cold kidneys.

Some literature says it makes a great water filter for filtering sediment but I wouldn't recommend this. A shemagh or bandana will have more filtration effect and in many cases using natural materials to filter water can in fact make it dirtier.

But these are just some of the uses of this amazing plant used during the great wars. Between 1911-1919 Ireland's Red Cross had managed to collect and prepare from the bogs of the Dublin and Wicklow mountains enough material to send nearly a million dressings to theatres of war around the globe. It truly is an amazing plant for survival and one of the few plants found abundantly across the island. ■

**Joe Price is one of the co-founders of the “Living to Learn” Bushcraft Community, a member of the Irish Bushcraft Club and you can follow the community online: [facebook.com/groups/livingtolearn/](https://facebook.com/groups/livingtolearn/)**



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LOYALTY

SELFLESSNESS

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MORAL COURAGE

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RESPECT: A/MECH RYAN O DRISCOLL, NAVAL SERVICE

LOYALTY: SGT PJ MCCABE, 2 BRIGADE MILITARY POLICE COMPANY

SELFLESSNESS: CPL THOMAS CAREW, 3 INFANTRY BATTALION

PHYSICAL COURAGE: CPL DAVID MCCORMACK, 1 CATHLÁN COISITHE

MORAL COURAGE: CPL CAITRIONA LACEY, 6 INFANTRY BATTALION

INTEGRITY: GNR DAVID STACK, 1 BRIGADE ARTILLERY REGIMENT

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# MASTERS OF CHAOS

## BRITISH SPECIAL FORCES DURING THE IRISH WAR OF INDEPENDENCE

BY PAUL O'BRIEN MA

**D**uring the Irish War of Independence, the rank and file of the Royal Irish Constabulary (RIC) and Dublin Metropolitan Police bore the brunt of attacks by the Irish Republican Army (IRA). A campaign of intimidation and violence against policemen and their families had, in a short period of time, forced many officers to resign from the force. In order to bolster the police in Ireland, the British Government hastily advertised for recruits. The recruitment of the Black and Tans, an ancillary force with a mixed uniform of police and military attire, were rapidly deployed to augment the dwindling ranks of the police. Their intervention did little to stem the death and chaos.

In the aftermath of the Great War and the conclusion of the Versailles peace talks in 1919, the British Empire found itself overstretched by ever

increasing demands to police its interests in places such as Germany, the Middle East, India and Ireland. The government was concerned that the unrest in Ireland would have a domino effect and spread to Britain's other colonies. The authorities were unprepared and under equipped to deal with the large number of nationalists demanding independence, and the possibility of increased numbers of violent and bloody insurrections that might occur. In Ireland the government depended on the civil administration based in Dublin Castle and the Royal Irish Constabulary to deal with the situation.

As the unrest in Ireland intensified, Sir Winston Churchill suggested a Gendarmerie to restore law and order in Ire-

land. In July 1920, a new force, a specialist force, that of the Auxiliary Division of the Royal Irish Constabulary (ADRIC) were raised. These ex-military personnel, all ex-officers, were assigned by Prime Minister David Lloyd George to do a rough and dangerous mission – to take the fight to the IRA.

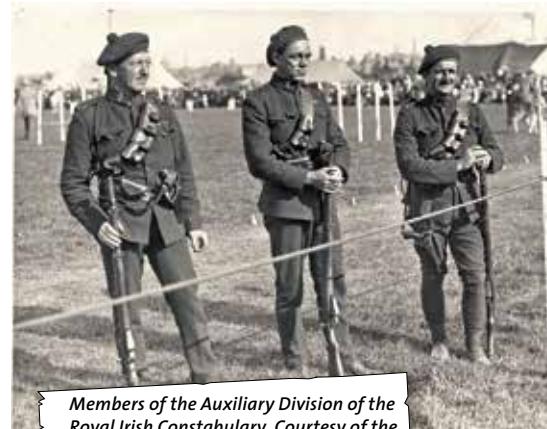
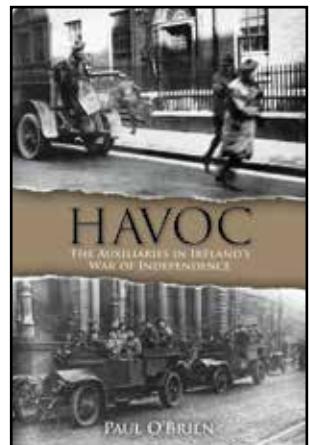
Special Forces are units which conduct military operations by specially designated, trained and equipped forces, manned with selected personnel, using unconventional tactics, techniques and modes of employment. Rather than aligning the new force with the army, it was decided to incorporate them into the police, with the new recruits being called Temporary Cadets. It was envisaged that the Auxiliary Division was to be maintained as an autonomous force and was to be deployed into areas where the IRA was most active, with the mission of find, fix and destroy.

The first recruits arrived at the North Wall Dock, Dublin where they were then transferred to Hare Park camp at the Curragh Training Camp in County Kildare. Here they underwent a brief, yet inadequate training course consisting of the rudimentary skills of policing. They also received a refresher course in weapons training consisting of firing and bombing

practice, for which they provided their own instructors. Beggars Bush Barracks were later to become their depot headquarters. The unit were equipped with up to date weaponry and an array of vehicles

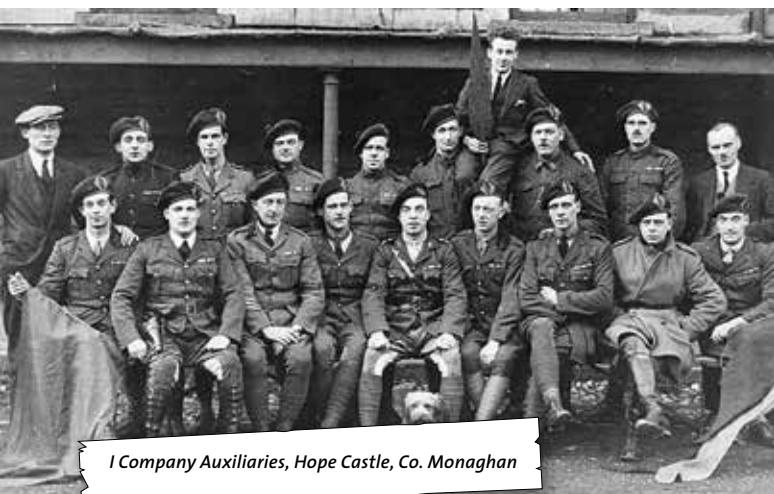


Auxiliaries searching civilians on Amiens Street, Dublin. (Michael Curren)



Members of the Auxiliary Division of the Royal Irish Constabulary. Courtesy of the National Museum of Ireland.

This shot of joking Black and Tans and Auxiliaries was taken outside the London and North Western Hotel, North Wall, Dublin as they surveyed the damage after an I.R.A. attack on their quarters. Written on the mount of this photo was 'Tans glad to have escaped the bombs thrown at their headquarters in Dublin'. Photo: National Library of Ireland/W. D. Hogan/NLI Ref\_HOG117



I Company Auxiliaries, Hope Castle, Co. Monaghan

for rapid insertion into areas of operations.

By the end of August 1920, fifteen Companies had been formed and four were immediately deployed to areas of considerable insurgent activity in counties Dublin, Kilkenny, Cork and Galway. In total there were to be twenty-one Companies, numbering between forty to eighty T/Cadets, organised along military lines, deployed as an elite body to seek out and eliminate the IRA.

Realising that IRA intelligence had infiltrated the police, the ADRIC established their own intelligence units to gather information on republican operatives. Utilising their mili-

tary skills, they began a violent counter-insurgency campaign with raids on IRA safe houses and the lifting of suspects. Their aggressive tactics alienated the population and their actions and techniques were often questioned in the House of Commons, bringing condemnation from both sides of the house.

The insurgents hit back with planned ambushes



Auxiliaries examining captured IRA weapons after the attack on the Custom House.

against ADRIC patrols and the assassination of Cadets, both on and off duty. An attack on a motorised ADRIC unit at Kilmichael in County Cork by Tom Barry and his Flying Column resulted in the annihilation of the patrol. Retaliation by Crown Forces for such attacks was brutal, with the houses of locals being destroyed and the destruction of local industrial and agricultural infrastructure, which was, in many cases sanctioned by the authorities.

The very nature of counter-insurgency warfare found the ADRIC operating in a hostile environment with little or no support from the local population. The pressures of operating under such austere conditions often resulted in certain units taking out their frustrations on the local populace, as can be seen with the burning of Cork city after an earlier ambush in the vicinity.

The force was involved in numerous operations throughout the country and also was accused of conducting black operations resulting in the killing of high value targets.

Two Companies of Auxiliaries responded to the attack on the Custom House, Dublin, by the IRA in May 1921. A fierce gun battle commenced as the building caught fire and IRA operatives tried to shoot their way out, with some being killed. In the aftermath of the operation, over one hundred members of the IRA were arrested and imprisoned, leading to a shortage of trained and experienced operatives to continue the fight against the British in the capital. Smaller operations did take place but not to the same scale as that of the Custom House raid.

The British authorities in Ireland believed that the Republican campaign was nearing an end as the lack of experienced manpower, weapons and munitions were having a detrimental effect on the organisation.

Initial talks between the two sides resulted in a ceasefire and later to peace talks which gave Ireland a 'Free State' status.

One of the conditions for the cessation of hostilities was that the recruitment of cadets into the Auxiliary Division of the RIC cease and operations be suspended. The British government agreed and the force was disbanded in early 1922, with many officers looking to Palestine and its new gendarmerie for employment and adventure.

During World War Two Churchill requested 'specially trained troops of the hunter class, who can develop a reign of terror down the enemy coast.' The Royal Marine Commandos are considered by many to be the prototype for the modern Special Forces but it was Churchill's request in 1920, which saw the formation of the Auxiliaries, a controversial force, considered by some to be the 20th century's first Special Services unit.

**ABOUT THE AUTHOR:** Paul O'Brien is a military historian who works for the Office of Public works at the Royal Hospital Kilmainham. A regular contributor to *An Cosantóir* he is also the author of ten books, and has written extensively on the military strategy of the 1916 Rising as well as the British Army in Ireland. His latest book *Havoc: The Auxiliaries in Ireland's War of Independence* (2017) is available now. Two of his books, *Blood on the Streets* and *Crossfire*, were turned into the critically acclaimed drama-documentary *A Terrible Beauty*. He lives in Dublin with his wife Marian and daughter Bláthnaid and their two cats. [www.paulobrienauthor.ie](http://www.paulobrienauthor.ie) ■

# Josie McGowan A WILLING HEART

BY MÍCHEÁL Ó DOIBHILÍN

**T**he War of Independence is accepted as commencing on 21st January 1919. Yet one of the earliest medals for service in that war was issued (complete with 'Comhrac' bar i.e. for active service) for a fatal engagement four months earlier – on September 22nd, 1918 – in which the recipient was mortally wounded.

This medal was awarded to the first member of Cumann na mBan to die in the War of Independence, 20-year-old Josie McGowan, for an action she had been engaged in at Foster Place, Dublin (by the Bank of Ireland, opposite Trinity College).

A veteran of the Easter Rising, having fought in Marrowbone Lane, Josie had been involved long before that, having joined Inghinidhe na hÉireann at an early age.

In 1900 the visit of Queen Victoria spurred the foundation of Inghinidhe na hÉireann in which, as founder-member Helena Molony later wrote: "*there were some young girls in Dublin... all working girls (who) had not much gold and silver to give to Ireland, only willing hearts, earnestness and determination*".

Among the objectives of this new society was the complete independence of Ireland. Its members arranged educational classes and entertainment for the poor children of Dublin and also protested at British army recruitment centres.

Josie McGowan became one of these 'willing hearts', helping with classes for young girls and the distribution of clothes – some of which she may have made herself in the Association's craft classes – to the needy. She would have read the Inghinidhe's monthly magazine *Bean na hÉireann* with its articles on politics, female franchise, nationalism and the Irish language, soaking up the revolutionary ethos of the day.

By 1913 Josie was working as a seamstress/tailor in Greenmount Mills, Harold's Cross – a major Irish company exporting cotton products to the World.

When Cumann na mBan – the women's equivalent of the male Irish Volunteers – was founded in 1914, the Inghinidhe membership was subsumed into it en masse, forming their

own branch and becoming the first to adopt a semi-military structure.

One of Cumann na mBan's objectives was to, "advance the cause of Irish liberty and to organise Irishwomen in the furtherance of this object", and its members studied military matters, particularly field first aid, and made field dressings for use in battlefield conditions.

Josie must have been very proud of her involvement in this new, women's Republican movement, for she obtained a full Cumann na mBan uniform – one of the few members to do so – and had herself professionally photographed in it.

Rose MacNamara later recorded that the bulk of the Inghinidhe branch spent Good Friday 1916, "making field dressings in No 2 Dawson Street, having previously purchased the materials. There was a big crowd of us there and we worked very hard to ensure that there would be enough dressings for ... the manoeuvres that were soon to take place".

On Easter Sunday night, stood down following the Countermanding Order, Josie attended a céili run by the Cleaver branch of the Gaelic League, of which she was a member.

Then, on Easter Monday instructions came to mobilise at Weaver's Hall, Cork Street, with full uniform and equipment. They marched behind Rose McNamara to Emerald Square where Commandant Ceannt ordered them to follow a Company of Volunteers until they reached Jameson's Distillery in Marrowbone Lane, bringing with them a horse and cart laden with ammunition. Once there, they quickly took over the distillery.

It was 12 noon, 24th April, 1916, and the Easter Rising had begun.

Firing soon broke out and continued till dark. The military organisation of the Inghinidhe branch was now to serve it well and Josie is recorded in later Witness Statements as being an active participant in the action there, loading rifles, helping the men, giving first aid as needed, and car-



rying out whatever duties were asked of her. The women were charged with watching the rear of the South Dublin Union and were armed with hand grenades made from milk cans to drop over the nearby railway bridge in case of attack from that direction.

Dividing into squads, they kept in close touch with the different firing lines, lying on sacks of oats or grain to remain out of view of the enemy. Among them were five sets of sisters, while one of their youngest members was Josie McGowan, just 18 years of age – having been born in the centenary of that other great rebellion of 1798.

Conditions in the garrison were primitive, with men and women sleeping on sacks and straw (the women in the Main Hall), but morale was high. All ate well, due in no small part to the resourcefulness of the Cumann na mBan members who managed to ‘procure’ some chickens and even a cow and two calves, and made soda bread and butter with the milk.

Volunteers Robert Holland mentions Josie several times in his Witness Statement: *“A volley of shots rang out ... and then I fired. The soldiers ... returned the fire. This kept on until dark. ... Josie McGowan came along with another rifle. (She) stayed with me until it was almost dark and ... brought me up a can of tea and some bread and a can of fresh water.*

*“The British are now realising that it is a real fight and are not leaving themselves so exposed to our fire. ... I got up another Lee Enfield rifle. ... Josie McGowan came along with my ration of tea and bread.*

*“Mick Liston was wounded ... in the head and was taken down and dressed. (He) was not long away getting dressed when he was back with a piece of black coat lining stitched around his head like a cap. We asked him not to go up again, but he insisted.*

*Mick was no sooner up in position when he was down again with another head wound, this time more serious. As he passed me I saw blood running down his face. Our hearts sank and I saw the tears run down Josie McGowan’s face ... as they brought him down”.*

Throughout the week the Garrison held its own against superior forces and by Thursday things were going so well it was decided to hold a victory céili on the following Sunday. Events elsewhere, however, frustrated this and, at four o’clock, Sunday April 30th, the garrison received instructions to surrender.

The men had prepared a tunnel so that the women could escape, but all (including Josie) refused to leave their comrades. They were marched under military escort first to St. Patrick’s Park and then on to Richmond Barracks, the women singing in defiance of the insults of the soldiers and the onlookers along the route. The next day wives of men fighting in the First World War threw bottles and horse dung at them as they were marched from the barracks to nearby Kilmainham Gaol.

Brigid Lyons Thornton recalled that ... *“Kilmainham... was a dismal, dreary, frightening place ... We went in and there were officers inside... they tried to get more details out of us and then somebody said, ‘Take them up and throw them into the cells, we can’t get anything’... then we were marched upstairs and thrown three or four into a cell. We didn’t care where we got so long as we got lying down. We were exhausted”.*

The fact that many of the female prisoners knew each other and were permitted to share cells possibly eased their time in jail. The British soldiers permitted their camaraderie, even letting them sing but, when a number of the women did the Sixteen Hand Reel in the Exercise Yard, the noise was so loud that they were forbidden to dance at exercise hour in future on penalty of being kept in their cells!

On May 8th the majority of the women were released but Josie was not, suggesting some intelligence about her activities had been received. She was eventually released two weeks later, on the 22nd.

Now the women began to reorganise. A meeting of the Irish National Aid Association and Volunteer Dependents’ Fund was held in a house in Peter’s Place, Dublin in the summer of 1916 and a group photograph was taken. All 60 of the women in the photo had participated in the Easter Rising and among them is Josie McGowan, looking no more than a schoolgirl.

She kept up her involvement in ‘the movement’ and continued on manoeuvres and drilling, as well as carrying out other more militant activities including anti-conscription rallies and demonstrations, carrying messages and distributing or moving arms.

One of the main actions undertaken was to disrupt British Army recruitment meetings, heckling the speakers and often being arrested for public disorder. They also fought for better conditions for the imprisoned men and women of the Easter Rising, and thus it was that Josie was in the crowd in Foster Place on that fateful Saturday in 1918 when





a group of some 300 people huddled close together, some linking arms, some turning their backs while others stared defiantly at approaching police, standing between them and their target – the women on the platform complaining about the treatment of Irish female prisoners in English jails.

Suddenly the policemen charged, pushing those on the fringes out of their way, striking with their batons at any who resisted them, driving a wedge through the crowd towards the speakers' platform.

The Daily Herald reported police "*had to fight their way through a cordon of citizens to reach the car on which the speakers were*" while The Larne Times added that "*missiles were thrown and a few of the police were hurt*".

No mention was made of injured civilians. And there were injured – at least one mortally. Although terrified, Josie McGowan, slim young girl of just 20 years, had none-the-less bravely faced the police and refused to budge while those around her were knocked to the ground or pushed aside, until a policeman struck her hard, driving his baton several times into her ribcage and stomach and, losing consciousness, she collapsed as her attackers struggled past.

When she came to Josie discovered she was in a field hospital run by Cumann na mBan in Ticknock, in the Dublin mountains. Badly injured, she had been carried there quickly, as she could not be brought home or to any hospital in Dublin for fear of arrest.

Alas, by the following Saturday, she was dead. Then, under cover of darkness, Josie was taken home to her distraught parents and the family doctor notified. He certified pneumonia as the cause of death probably to protect the family from the authorities ... and gossiping

neighbours, as it explained why they would not have seen her for several days.

On Thursday, October 3rd, twenty-year-old Josie was buried in a pauper's grave in Dublin's Prospect Cemetery. There she was joined by her father just seven days later – dead, allegedly, of a broken heart, just 45 years of age.

Josie McGowan left little behind – three photographs and two posthumously awarded medals are the only physical reminders of her brief life. She gave herself to help others – the poor, the starving, the illiterate – through Inghinidhe na hÉireann. Through Cumann na mBan, with a "*willing heart, earnestness and determination*" she tried to overthrow a system that cared nought about these or any other Irish people.

But her life's spark, and that of all the other willing hearts of Cumann na mBan, kept alive the fire that eventually burned and destroyed the shackles of that Empire she fought so bravely against. ■

**About the author:** Mícheál Ó Doibhilín is MD/editor of Kilmainham Tales Teo., a publishing house specialising mainly in 19th and early 20th Century Irish history, and has worked for the last ten years as an information officer/tour guide in Kilmainham Gaol. The company has published over 26 books, authors include Las Fallon, Paul O'Brien, Shane Kenna, Rory O'Dwyer, Joseph E.A. Connell Jnr and Ciara Scott, as well as Mícheál himself. The company has a full programme of books to mark the centenary of the Rising. [www.kilmainhamtales.ie](http://www.kilmainhamtales.ie)

## Josie McGowan





Sunday 12th December 1920 a Dublin Fire Brigade contingent were conveyed by the special train to Cork to help with the fires during the Burning of Cork. Photo: National Library of Ireland/W. D. Hogan/NLI Ref\_HOG143

# FORGOTTEN ALLIES

## The Dublin Fire Brigade 1919-1921

BY LAS FALLON

**D**ublin Fire Brigade (DFB) in 1919-1921 was a well trained, well equipped professional force under the command of the Chief Officer, Captain John Myers. The brigade numbered just under 60 men stationed at four stations at Thomas Street, Dorset Street, Buckingham Street and brigade headquarters at Tara Street. To the south in the townships of Rathmines and Pembroke, there were also fire stations with fulltime fire brigades.

The DFB's main firefighting resource at the time were its two Leyland motor fire engines, one stationed at brigade headquarters at Tara Street and one at Thomas Street, it also had three horse-drawn aerial ladders which could be used for both firefighting and rescue work. The brigade also provided the city's ambulance service as it had since 1898.

The Brigades greatest challenge to date had come with the Rising in 1916 when Dublin burned and the city streets were a battlefield. After the ceasefire and surrender on April 29th, the brigade had gone into action immediately to prevent the spread of fire and deal with the major fires burning in the city. They had been prevented from turning out earlier due to martial law restrictions and the dangers of firefighting in a city at war.

On 24th April 1916 one firefighter, Joseph Connolly, had left Tara Street on hearing from his brother Sean that the Rising was going ahead. Like Sean, who would soon be killed in action at City Hall, Joe was a member of the Irish Citizen Army. He left the station and reported for duty with the ICA, fighting through the week as part of the College of Surgeons garrison. Joe Connolly returned to Dublin Fire Brigade after his impris-

onment in Frongoch and was reinstated without question.

The year 1917 saw the first glimpses of a militant mood within the DFB. A large British Army recruiting banner had been fixed to the front of the burned out GPO. When it was set on fire by Volunteers the brigade on arrival saw what was burning and returned to their station without taking action. On the last day of September 1917 a large contingent from the Dublin Fire Brigade, including the brigades two motor pumps and the Chief Officer, formed part of the funeral procession for Thomas Ashe. It was noted by one visiting English journalist that the firemen were wearing 'Sinn Féin armlets'.

When events moved beyond the symbolic and into the realms of open warfare members of the DFB also are to be found involved. When DMP G Division Sergeant Patrick Smyth was shot in an early operation by the Squad on 30th July 1919, the DFB ambulance crew which collected him from his house to bring him to hospital included Joe Connolly the 1916 veteran. Immediately after the shooting he made contact with Joe Lawless of the Squad to let him know that Smyth, although shot a number of times with .38 revolvers, was not dead. While Smyth did eventually die from complications of his wounds the Squad reviewed their tactics and tended towards heavier calibre .455 revolvers for future attacks on their targets.

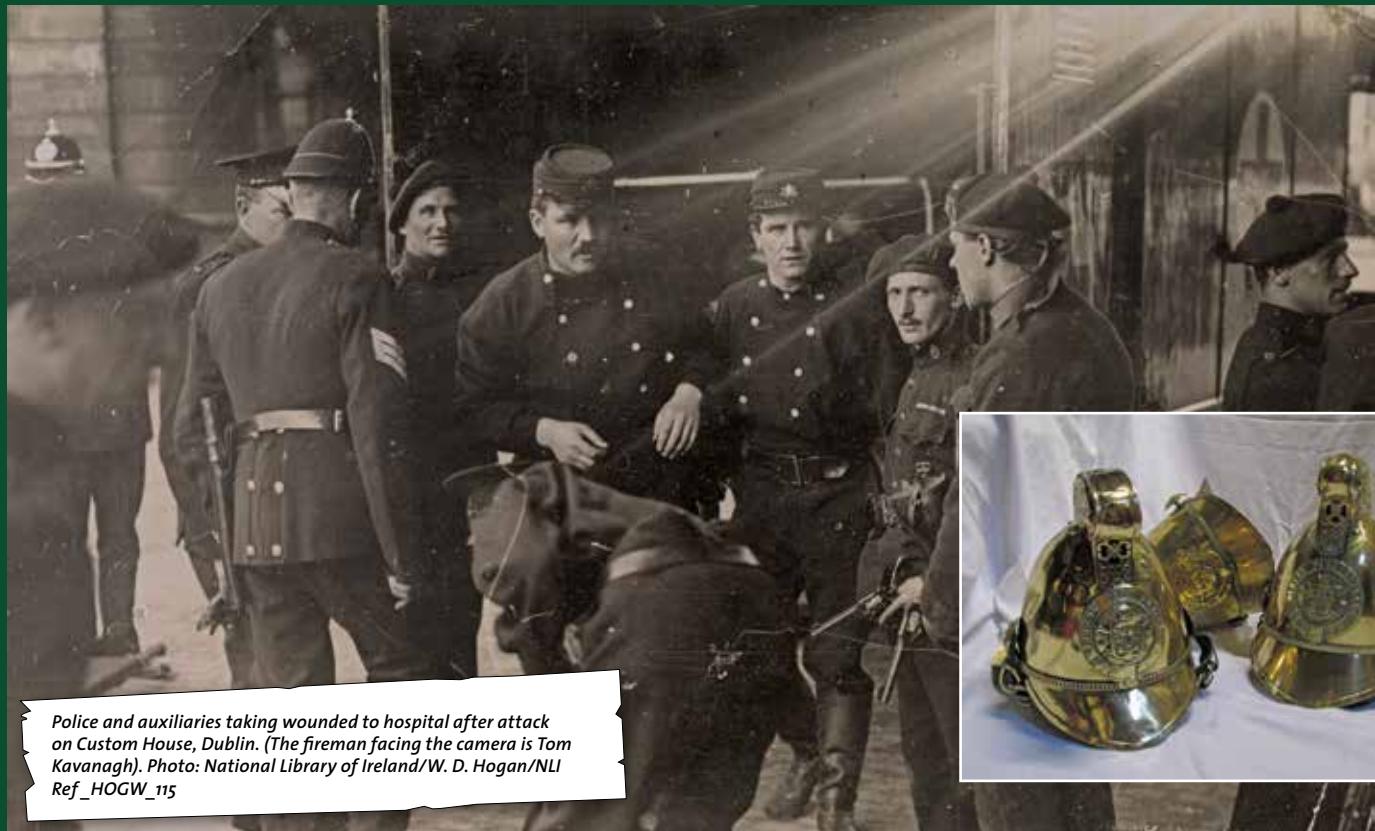
In the 1918 to 1920 period a number of both IRA Volunteers and active sympathisers joined the DFB. Some of these men, like Tom Smart and Tom Kavanagh, were 1916 veterans and should have been well known to the authorities. Kavanagh, like another Volunteer who joined at this time, Austin McDonald, had served a sentence in jail for illegal drilling. Other

Volunteers like Michael Rogers also joined at this time and found men like Joe Connolly and James Conway, a former seaman and active republican, already in the brigade. By early 1920 there was a cohort of Volunteers and what would be described later in BMH statements and MPSC documents as 'active sympathisers' now within the DFB. None of these men could have been employed without the knowledge of the Chief Officer who would have a say in the employment of any fireman at the period.

In their various Bureau of Military History and Military

Volunteers and his men to have the remaining arms and ammunition removed and no mention was made of the incident in any report to the police or otherwise. One local Volunteer officer later described Myers as "*a very fine fellow and from the national point of view, thoroughly sound and reliable in every way.*"

Myers 'soundness on the national question' and the attitude of those under his command was again demonstrated on 19th July 1920 when an IRA unit raided Kingsbridge station, disarming a British Army guard and capturing nine



*Police and auxiliaries taking wounded to hospital after attack on Custom House, Dublin. (The fireman facing the camera is Tom Kavanagh). Photo: National Library of Ireland/W. D. Hogan/NLI Ref\_HOGW\_115*

Service Pension applications men like Conway and Smart tell of an intelligence and logistics role played by members in the DFB when material could be moved about the city to arms dumps and safe houses under the guise of ambulance work in particular. DFB members were often trusted with sensitive information by members of the police and military who assumed that all who wore a uniform held similar views to their own. Within the job the sympathy of the overwhelming majority was with the independence movement and no indication was ever given to the police or military of the militant role being played by the city firefighters.

To illustrate the importance of the DFB men's role in the fight for freedom we can look at some examples; On 26th January 1920 a major fire broke out in the township of Rathmines at the Catholic church on Rathmines Road. The Corporation fire brigade was asked to assist and as was practice on arrival Captain Myers took control of the fire with the DFB crews. Myers was approached by local Volunteer officers who told him that the vaults of the church contained arms and ammunition as the sacristan of the church was also the local units quartermaster. Myers arranged with the

rifles and a revolver before setting fire to carriages of military stores held up in the station due to industrial action by railwaymen who refused to transport British military cargo. The action was intended as a propaganda coup and none of the British soldiers were injured. The carriages containing the military stores were set alight. When the alarm was raised and the fire brigade arrived Myers ordered that no action be taken. He would state in his annual report that he had taken no action as the stores were part of an industrial dispute which had caused the dismissal of 50 men and that the military and railway staff were standing idly by although they had fire appliances of their own. He stated the cause of the fire to be "*incendiaries*". In a photo published in the Chicago Sunday Tribune, the DFB crew are seen resting against their fire engine as the carriages of military equipment burns. The caption for the photo states 'Dublin firemen grin as military stores burn'. Quite how the Chicago Tribune photographer knew to be at Kingsbridge that day was not explained. In a later British Army report on the incident, it was noted that the DFB had been present but had taken no action. It implied that the firemen had been intimidated but missed the obvi-

ous truth that by early 1920 elements within the DFB were operating hand in hand with the IRA.

The 'inability' of the DFB to deal with fires in British government property was shown again in the attack on tax offices, military stores and vehicles and other incendiary incidents where in all cases the targets were burned out throughout 1920 and early 1921. Firefighters on ambulance duty took wounded Volunteers from the scene of ambushes and brought them to sympathetic hospitals and nursing homes for treatment. Weapons, ammunition and incriminating documents were removed from wounded men and returned to IRA quartermasters. The DFB was becoming more and more embroiled in the guerrilla war on the streets of Dublin. The incident where they would cross the line from support to active participation would come in May 1921 with the attack on the Custom House.

On 25<sup>th</sup> May 1921 units of the Dublin Brigade of the Irish Republican Army went into action to destroy the seat of British civil power in Ireland, the Custom House.

DFB firefighters including Joe Connolly and Austin McDonald played a part in planning the attack on the Custom House including recommending the use of paraffin rather than petrol for the incendiary attacks. On the morning of the attack the fire stations in the city were taken over and held by IRA units. In the case of Tara Street 'K' Company of the 3rd battalion held the station. In later years the CO of 'K' Company would thank the intelligence officers within the DFB for their assistance with the takeover of the stations.

When the DFB arrived at the Custom House they found many parts of the building had not burned and set about remedying that position by using the remaining paraffin to spread the fire into areas which had escaped the initial burning. Other members broke into offices and prepared them for burning by opening doors and cupboards and spreading the contents around to ensure their destruction. Their comrades outside took an inordinate length to make down to water supplies and then much of that water was simply hosed on to the outside walls.

Another task undertaken by the firemen was the removal of abandoned IRA weapons which were smuggled out and later that day returned to IRA/ICA arms dumps. One of those involved in this activity was Tom Smart, an IRA veteran of the fierce fighting at North King Street and the Four Courts area in 1916.

While searching the Custom House and ensuring its destruction firefighters discovered four IRA members hiding out in the building. One of the firemen, Michael Rogers, returned to Tara Street and brought back uniforms for the men to change in to. They were smuggled away as injured firemen. One of the uniforms was later used by Captain Mick O'Kelly of the ICA who toured the building to assess the damage and organise the removal of weapons.

Michael Rogers would write his account of the Custom House fire for the Irish Press following his retirement from the DFB after a long and distinguished career. In a series of articles, he wrote about some of the incidents he had attended from the death of Matt Talbot to the Belfast blitz. He tells of the tension among DFB members who were also active in the IRA in the run up to major operations like Bloody Sunday and the Custom House attack. He tells the

story with a very human touch remembering incidents like how, "we had the building practically at our mercy and many parts of it that were not on fire when we arrived were blazing nicely in a short time."

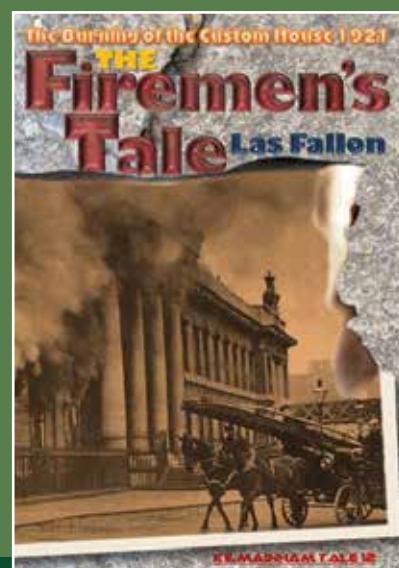
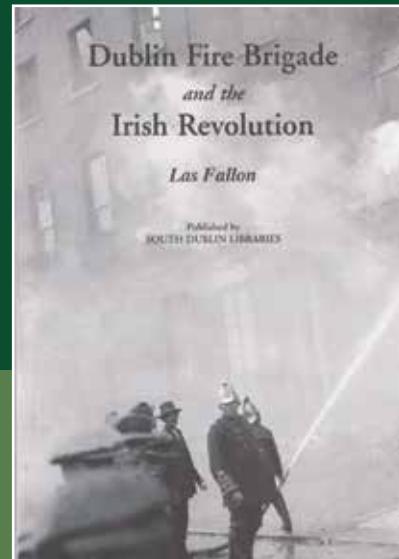
One abiding memory for him was when the Auxies, who had taken Liberty Hall as a temporary post discovered the instruments of the ITGWU band and set up on the steps of Liberty Hall in the early hours of the morning to play 'Keep the Home Fires Burning'. He was less enamoured of the Auxies who, to settle a bet as to who was the best shot, began to shoot out the remaining windows following their impromptu concert.

The Custom House would burn for five days in spite of the fact that the brigade was largely the same seasoned firefighters who had stopped the fires of 1916 within a day. There was no will at any level within the brigade to extinguish this fire which was seen as a major blow to the British Administration. Many parts of the building which were noted as undamaged after the initial attack were later found to have been ransacked and burned. The Custom House is the point where Dublin firemen went from aiding and abetting attacks on Crown Forces and property to becoming active participants.

Their activities were overlooked and forgotten for many years and as always, I welcome the opportunity to tell their story.

#### About the Author:

Las Fallon, a firefighter with Dublin Fire Brigade since 1985 and recently retired, is the author of *Dublin Fire Brigade and the Irish Revolution* (2012) and *The Firemen's Tale: the burning of the Custom House 1921* (2015) and published by Kilmainham Tales [www.kilmainhamtales.ie](http://www.kilmainhamtales.ie). Las is a former volunteer curator of the DFB Museum (2008-2011), and an avid collector and researcher of Irish fire service history and memorabilia. ■





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# CUMANN NA MBAN REGALIA

## Uniforms, Badges & Flags, 1914-1923

BY AILBHE ROGERS & PAUL GOSLING

**C**umann na mBan (henceforth CnamB) was founded in April 1914 as a women's auxiliary organisation whose activities included: first aid; the transportation and concealment of arms, ammunition and despatches; drilling; intelligence and propaganda work; providing for men on the run; prisoner network support and weapons care. The relationship between the CnamB and the Irish Volunteer leadership, has been explored in depth by historians, while the 2018 centenary commemorations drew considerable attention to questions of suffrage and female republicanism within the movement. However, there has been a distinct lack of research conducted on the militaristic aspects of CnamB as an organisation and the material culture surrounding CnamB, namely uniforms, badges and flags that survive in public and private possession (Figs. 1-4). This paper will attempt to rectify this and shed light on the merits of interdisciplinary approaches to the study of military regalia.

**UNIFORMS:** The first directive given by the CnamB Executive on the question of coordinated attire came in September 1914 when first-aid training sections were instructed to wear 'a washing frock, nurse's caps, aprons and cuffs. An armlet should be worn on the left arm with the words 'Cumann na mBan' printed, stencilled or embroidered above a green cross' (Fig. 1). Against the backdrop of the First World War in Ireland, this uniform was characteristic of several voluntary nursing groups. However, the green cross armlet in particular sought to disassociate CnamB from other nursing organisations such as the British Red Cross and emphasise the group's republican sympathies. During the Easter Rising, there are several accounts of CnamB members acting under the auspices of the Red Cross flag or wearing a Red Cross armlet. However, there are no reporting sightings of the green cross during the Rising. The wearing of such items in combat may have singled individuals out as collaborators and left them susceptible to arrest by British forces.

Cal McCarthy argues that the CnamB uniform was first worn in public at an aeridheacht in St. Enda's School, Rathfarnham in September 1915. Variants of the uniform were in fact modelled by Central Branch two months previously at the Wolfe Tone Annual Commemoration in Bodenstown and during the funeral of Jeremiah O'Donovan Rossa in Glasnevin Cemetery (Fig. 3). It was probably due to the hybrid quality and unkempt style of makeshift uniforms that the CnamB Executive sought to set a standard. At the



*Fig. 1: Emily Elliot wearing a Cumann na mBan uniform, badge and first aid armlet. Photo courtesy of Kilmainham Gaol Archives, 17PO -1A24 -17.*

CnamB Annual Convention in October 1915, the Executive recommended an optional uniform of 'a coat and skirt of Volunteer tweed and hat of same. Four pockets in coat, skirt at least seven inches off the ground, tweed or leather belt, haversack with first aid outfit' (Fig. 4). Members were pressed upon to purchase fabric of Irish manufacture and Mary F. Hegarty of Harcourt St, Dublin was one seamstress who specialised in the making of CnamB outfits.

The acquisition of a uniform depended upon one's economic means and personal skills. Eileen McGrane purchased her uniform from Harry Boland who operated a tailoring business on Middle Abbey St, Dublin while Annie O'Brien worked feverishly throughout Holy Week 1916 trying to finish her uniform coat in time for Easter Sunday. A CnamB uniform formerly on loan to the National Museum of Ireland, Collins Barracks, bore a label stating that it had been 'made in Dublin by Co-Op Workers'. This suggests an un-

documented level of co-operation between CnamB and the Irish Women Workers' Union who managed a co-operative at Liberty Hall.

According to Phyllis Morkan, CnamB members were ordered not to wear uniforms or badges for mobilisation on Easter Sunday 1916. In civilian clothes, female combatants could move through military cordons and intermingle with crowds more freely. During Easter Week, Margaret Skin-nider donned her uniform while sniping from the roof of the College of Surgeons but while on dispatch-carrying missions, wore her civilian clothes. During the War of Independence and Civil War, CnamB's regular appearance at public processions and republican funerals left members vulnerable to detection and ultimately led to the abandonment of the uniform for everyday activities in provincial regions.



Fig. 2: Subtypes A1 and B1 Cumann na mBan badges – approx. 5.4cm in length. Photo courtesy of Kilmainham Gaol Archives, KGM 2012.0248 and KGM 2011.0389.09.

**BADGES:** One of the most arresting of CnamB insignia are the small badges worn by its members (Fig. 2). Made initially of base metals, later of silver and gold, their design was not only radical but also aesthetic, cleverly intertwining the initials of the organisation with the motif of a rifle. As such, the badges announced that women were not only going to resist British rule but were prepared to bare arms in so doing. Given that the wearing of uniforms was neither compulsory nor practical, CnamB did not adopt a set of insignia. However, when worn with the uniform, the placement of the badges appears, at times, to have been an index of rank. Worn independently of the uniform, they were discrete and useful for identifying members up to and including the 1916 Rising. However, as the War of Independence unfolded, the wearing of the badges, like uniforms, was undoubtedly restricted and thus confined to official and ceremonial occasions.

The first mention of these badges dates from 5th September 1914 when the CnamB column in the *Irish Volunteer* reported that 'the badges of the organisation can be had from Tempest, Dundalk, price 6d'. These early examples (Fig. 2, A1) are clearly identifiable, in that they were all manufactured by the printing firm of William Tempest in Dundalk, Co. Louth (founded 1859). Tempests' had also begun trading as Dundalgan Press from 1907 and the latter moniker is neatly stamped on the reverse side of each of these badges.

By 1918, it is apparent that Tempests' were not the sole

purveyors of CnamB badges. Post 1916, a number of reputable jewellers and independent silversmiths in Dublin and Cork had begun manufacturing openwork varieties of the badge, albeit with the same design elements – Gaelic-style lettering, a rifle, and an interlaced shoulder strap. However, the type of rifle depicted began to vary (Fig. 2, compare A1 and B1). Using these variations, the present authors have developed a classification scheme for the badges. Four major types have been identified to date, and the preliminary typology is being published in the quarterly magazine *Archaeology Ireland* (Wordwell Books).

The rifle on the Dundalgan Press badges (Fig. 2, A1) has a bolt-action, a pistol grip on the stock and a long barrel. While some writers have suggested that it is a representation of a German Mauser, it is in fact a very realistic depic-



Fig. 3: Cumann na mBan Central Branch pictured with flag at the Annual Wolfe Tone Commemoration, Bodenstown, 20 June 1915. Those present include Jenny Wyse Power, Sorcha MacMahon, Mimi and Fiona Plunkett, Kathleen Clarke and Rose McGuinness. Photo courtesy of National Library of Ireland, NPA CNB.

tion of the War Office Patent (WOP) Miniature Rifle. Up to 20,000 of these .22 calibre weapons were manufactured under licence by BSA, Birmingham and LSA, London, between 1906 and c.1916. They were designed specifically for training young civilians and cadets in the use of bolt-action service rifles. As the weapon gracing the earliest CnamB badges, the symbolism behind their choice is intriguing: a modern lightweight weapon indicating the intent of women to train in the use of firearms?

The second rifle of choice for the CnamB badges was the Lee Enfield, specifically the SMLE (short, magazine, Lee Enfield). Introduced in 1903, it became the standard service rifle of the British Army in WW1 and is depicted on many badges in loving detail (Fig. 2, B1). Its choice not only provides us with an index of badge date – possibly post 1916 – but originally must have signified something more: perhaps the coming of age of CnamB as a fully-fledged revolutionary organisation?

**FLAGS:** CnamB effectively wielded propaganda to their advantage throughout the Irish revolutionary period. The organisation produced and amassed a wide variety of ephemera, which grew to include badges, rosettes, ribbons, posters, banners, handbills and flags. The earliest newspaper evidence for the first public unfurling of a CnamB flag was during the Annual Wolfe Tone Commemoration at Bodenstown on 20th June 1915 by CnamB Central Branch: 'The two Dublin Branches of Cumann na mBan were over

100 strong, and made a most creditable turn-out, the Central Branch contingent carrying for the first time their beautiful banner of gold, green and white, embroidered with the badge of the Association'. We are also very fortunate to have this occasion captured on camera as two group images from the event survive in public and private possession (Fig. 3). Both feature a group of CnamB Central Branch members posing with the flag. It has not been possible to identify all women present but the project is ongoing, and attempts are being made to retrieve names through other sources. Several of those present are wearing a CnamB badge and uniform hybrid, while the social status and age of others can be ascertained through the style of dress. The inclusion of an inaugural copy of Arthur Griffith's newspaper, *Nationality*, in both images is also significant.



Fig. 4: Group of women in Cumann na mBan uniform. The woman in the back row, far-right is Florence MacDermott aka Blathnaid Nic Diarmada. c1916. Photo courtesy of Kilmainham Gaol/wm\_2010.0016

There are no clues given as to the manufacturer of the CnamB flag, but it is reasonable to suggest that members embroidered the flag themselves. Central Branch members, Molly Gill and Máire Nic Shiubhlaigh were both employees of the Dun Emer Guild, a home industries establishment. Dun Emer manufactured the Starry Plough flag for the Irish Citizen Army, which was launched at a meeting in April 1914. Therefore, it would have been well within the guild's capabilities to produce a CnamB flag.

One key question that arises from this research is whether the CnamB emblem first appeared in flag or badge form. The CnamB badge was widely advertised in nationalist newspapers as early September 1914 and several individuals may also be observed wearing same in the 1915 Bodenstown commemoration images, thereby confirming that the CnamB badge was in circulation before the launch of the organisation's flag.

CnamB branches were encouraged to make their own individual flags to 'arouse curiosity and inquiry' and for use in ceremonial events such as republican processions, parades and funerals. An undated New Ross CnamB flag is currently on loan to Kilmainham Gaol Archives and the accompanying description notes that the flag was found in the house of Susie Browne at Bailey St, New Ross, Co. Wexford in the 1990s. It features a CnamB emblem set against a blue background. Above the image written in yellow Gaelic font is 'Ros Mhich Treóin' which demonstrates the branch's firm affiliation with the Irish language and the Gaelic League. Browne was a member of Wexford CnamB and held as an

anti-Treaty political prisoner in Kilmainham Gaol during the Irish Civil War.

In conclusion, the historical value of CnamB regalia can be ascertained through the combined application of archaeological techniques and documentary research to create a dialogue between an object and its historical context. Before the CnamB Executive set the standard, early CnamB uniforms were of a homemade composite style comprising varying articles, fabrics and shades leading Kitty O'Doherty to remark that some looked 'as if they were cut out with a knife and fork'. At the outset of the War of Independence, CnamB uniforms were abandoned in favour of plain civilian clothes for ease of movement through military and police cordons.



Fig. 5: Memorial Plaque commemorating the East Clare Brigade of IRA, and Cumann na mBan, in Tuamgraney, Co. Clare.

The predominant rifles to appear on CnamB badges during this period are the WOP Miniature (A1) and the Lee Enfield (B1) or stylised versions of same. It is also possible to trace a design evolution in the production of these badges with the Dundalgan Press prototype being followed closely by local jewellers' modifications of the design to satisfy customer commissions.

The unfurling of the CnamB Central Branch flag at Bodenstown in 1915 sought to firmly and openly entrench the organisation within the republican tradition and the survival of the New Ross CnamB flag suggests that many branches may have had their own flag for use in local parades and ceremonies.

**Acknowledgements:** Thanks to Kilmainham Gaol Archives, National Library of Ireland and Conchúir O'Duilacháin ([facebook.com/groups/EarlyIrishMilitaria](https://facebook.com/groups/EarlyIrishMilitaria)) for information on and/or access to badges in their collections.

#### About the Authors:

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## The RAF in Ireland, 1918

RE8 on the ground in Omagh. Photo courtesy of the JH Bruce JS Leslie Collection.

BY GUY WARNER

**W**as anti-submarine patrolling the real reason that 105 and 106 Squadrons came to Ireland in May 1918, establishing six airfields? Omagh, Birr and Athlone were far from ideal locations from which to search for U-boats, all being about as far inland as it was possible to be, though Fermoy, Castlebar and Oranmore were more feasible.

Why did Captain Howard Pixton travel through 24 counties in the middle of 1918, inspecting 65 potential landing grounds and noting the nearest military or police barracks?

Were these, instead, the first tentative steps towards an RAF doctrine that would come to be known as 'air control' in Waziristan, the North-West Frontier, Iraq, Sudan and Aden?

At that time Ireland was 'in a strange condition of mingled excitement, foreboding and suspense' following the Home Rule Crisis and the Easter Rising, awaiting a storm that would surely come. Sinn Féin had emerged as the political wing of the Irish revolutionary movement, and a boycott campaign against members of the RIC had reduced police morale considerably.

One modern commentator has described the British Government's position thus: 'While lethargically seeking a formula for eventual constitutional settlement, it continued to administer Ireland on the basis of mild coercion – repression too weak to root out opposition, but provocative enough to nurture it.'

The temperature was raised by a proposal in the spring of 1918, in light of a major German offensive on the Western Front, to introduce military conscription in Ireland, and by the arrest and imprisonment of 73 leading Sinn Féin activists. In May, Field Marshal Viscount French was appointed as Lord Lieutenant of Ireland. Of Irish extraction, dating back to 14th century Wexford, French considered himself to have particular insight into 'the Irish Problem'. French advised the prime minister that he planned to use aircraft based in 'strongly entrenched air camps' for 'air patrolling with bombs and machine guns', which 'ought to put the fear of God into those playful Sinn Féiners', and to 'destroy Sinn Féin in order to create an environment in which Home Rule could safely be granted.'

These bellicose ambitions were not fulfilled and, thankfully, keeping the peace by such means was not adopted as official policy.

On 5th May 1918, No 55 Wing was formed with its headquarters at Parkgate, Dublin, and comprising 19 Training Squadron (Curragh Camp) and the two operational squadrons, 105 and 106; the former, based at Omagh, with detached flights at Castlebar and Oranmore, was under the command of Maj Douglas Joy, and the latter, based at Fermoy, with flights at Birr and Athlone, commanded by Major EAB Rice. Both squadrons were equipped with the then standard RAF reconnaissance two-seater, the RE8.

In Omagh there was an immediate impact on the town's infrastructure as its first hard-surfaced road was laid between the railway station and the airfield, from where Captain George Bowen carried out his first operational patrol on 20th May. Of two hours and 40 minutes duration, it is recorded in his log book as, 'NE Patrol Omagh, Derry, Aldergrove, Dungannon.' He repeated the route next morning before undertaking a SE patrol on the 22nd ('Omagh, Monaghan, Dungannon') and a southern patrol on the 24th ('Omagh, Enniskillen, Dundalk').

These RAF aircraft were apparently being sent out to get the lay of the land, to see if there was anything going on that shouldn't be. If a Sinn Féin rally, a muster of volunteers, drilling or manoeuvres were taking place, then the idea would be to make a 'show of presence' by flying over the area. It would certainly appear that Captain Pixton's expedition was an indication that the authorities in Ireland were looking seriously into the possibilities of aerial intervention in the event of increased political tension.

Before the end of the month Capt Bowen flew four consecutive NW patrols from Omagh, over Limavady, Derry, Letterkenny, and Strabane. The next few flights were fairly local, looking for possible sites for making a forced landing, and included 'stunting over tennis court' and 'dropping message on tennis court' – presumably to impress the young ladies of the area?

On 2nd June the squadron carried out a formation flight over the town, which Bowen recorded as '6 machines VG.' More patrols followed, taking in new locations including Dungiven, Ballymoney and Coleraine. Within the first couple of weeks he had therefore overflown parts of six counties – Tyrone, Derry, Antrim, Monaghan, Fermanagh and Louth. He soon went



105 Sqn in Omagh, 1918.



Lt Taylor and his fiancée with RE8.



RE8 E24 of 105 Squadron. Photo courtesy of via Stuart Leslie.

further afield to Co Cavan, on a 'Special Patrol to Cootehill' in connection with the East Cavan by-election, where Sinn Féin's Arthur Griffith was standing against JF O'Hanlon of the Irish Parliamentary Party. (Griffith's victory in the hard fought contest helped Sinn Féin to maintain its momentum.)

Meanwhile, Major Joy was feeling the pressure of being the new social focus for the area. Writing to his wife he said: 'Truly dear the RAF are "it" over all the north of Ireland. You would be truly amazed at the hospitality we are receiving from the principal people between Belfast, Derry and Sligo, and thank heaven the officers are all playing the game. Not once have I been let down by their manners, behaviour or anything else. And that is a lot to say these days.'

On 25th June, for the squadron's 'At Home Day', a formation of 12 aircraft was assembled and flew to Fintona and back. Capt Bowen then performed stunts over the airfield for the guests. Another letter from Capt Joy to his wife read: *'Our "tea party" on Tuesday afternoon was a great success, fine weather. Everybody came (about 300) from the village barber to the Earl of Belmore. In the middle of the afternoon the police turned up and took the numbers of all the cars!'*

In August, No 3 Training Wing was formed, headquartered in Collinstown and with training depots at Gormanston, Co Meath, and Baldonnel, Collinstown, and Cookstown in Co Dublin. Both No 3 Training Wing and No 55 Wing became part of the newly formed No 11 (Irish) Group, which had its HQ at 9 Merrion Square in Dublin.

On 8 November the Tyrone Constitution reported: *'On Saturday evening last, whilst two soldiers were walking on the bank of the river at Strathroy, one noticed the body of a man in the water.'* He was identified as Private Charles Pryde [an officer's servant], reported missing some six weeks before and for whom an extensive search had been made in September. The coroner decided it was likely that the deceased had fallen in while trying to draw water from the river.

When the Armistice was declared on 11 November it was reported that streamer-decked aeroplanes from the aerodrome swept low over Omagh, discharging large quantities of coloured paper on the cheering crowds below and firing coloured flares from Very pistols.

However, a tragic event occurred only two days later on 13 November when three RE8s were returning to Strathroy from Oranmore. Nine miles from Omagh two of the aircraft collided. One, flown by Lieutenant James Wilson (20) and with his fitter, Corporal Thomas Bradshaw (19), in the observer's seat, burst into flames as the petrol tank exploded. The other, flown by a Canadian pilot, 2nd Lieutenant Lawrence Booth (21), accompanied by Air Mechanic Robert Gaudie (22) and Booth's dog, lost its left wings. Both aircraft plummeted to the ground, killing Wilson, Bradshaw and the pet dog, mortally wounding Booth, and badly injuring Gaudie. Farmers and labourers rushed to the scene to render what assistance they could. Doors were brought to act as makeshift stretchers for Gaudie and Booth, who were taken to a nearby cottage where the young pilot died some two hours later. Booth was subsequently buried in the town cemetery with full military honours and lies there to this day.

**About the Author:** Guy Warner has been a regular contributor to *Ulster Airmail*, the journal of the Ulster Aviation Society and has written for *An Cosantóir*. A prolific author, he has published over 33 books through Colourpoint Books, Pen & Sword Books, Kea Publishing and the Ulster Aviation Society. His current book *U-Boats Around Ireland: The Story of the Royal Navy's Coast of Ireland Command in the First World War* (2018) was reviewed in *An Cosantóir* last month. ■

# COGADH NA SAOIRSE: AR MUIR IS AR TÍR

(*War of Independence: On Sea and on Land*)

**A Changed World:** In 1919, the war to end all wars was over. The 19th January saw the start of peace negotiations in Paris, which would culminate in signing of the Treaty of Versailles in June. This momentous year saw the drafting of the covenant of the League of Nations, the surrender and scuttling of the German high seas fleet in Scapa Flow. It also on the 21st January saw the first Dáil sit in the Mansion House in Dublin, where they declared Irish Independence in fulfilment of the goals of the grand heroic failure of the 1916 Easter Rising. Also on that fateful day in Soloheadbeg, volunteers of the 3rd Tipperary Brigade under the command of Séan Treacy and Dan Breen ambushed and shot two constables of the Royal Irish Constabulary. These were the first two deaths of an estimated 1,400 deaths between 1919 and 1921. While most of the fighting occurred on land across Ireland, the sea had a major role to play in the both the Rising and the War of Independence.

**Lonely Edge of Europe:** Ireland holds a geostrategic maritime position on the lonely edge of Europe, facing out into the North Atlantic where the European and North American sea-lanes veritably bustle with all manner of shipping.

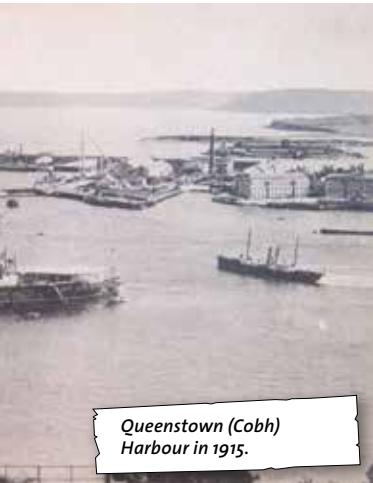
At the turn of the century Ireland's seas and maritime domain were under the firm control of the British Empire and the might of the Royal Navy. The ports and deep sheltered harbours of Cork, Berehaven and Lough Swilly, protected by massive forts and coastal artillery batteries, had played their part in centuries of British domination of the high seas and from these ports where shipped troops to fight in Britain's many wars. Many a period of rebelliousness across Ireland was subdued by forces shipped from these Naval installations, helping to underpin the British presence in Ireland as the dark clouds of war gathered on the European horizon. Those clouds burst in August 1914.

**War and Rebellion:** At the outset of World War I, the focus of the Royal Navy was on contending with the German High Seas Fleet in North Atlantic, their forces concentrated from Scottish ports such as the Firth of Forth and Scapa Flow. Cork Harbour and the other main Irish ports were fairly quiet, until submarine activity saw one of the most pivotal sinking's of WWI, where on the 7th May 1915, the 'Lusitania' was torpedoed at the lost of 1,201 souls. This lead to a change of attitude and management of the Royal Naval



BY CPO/ERA RUAIIRI DE BARRA

Cork City Following Auxillary  
Rampage December 1920



Queenstown (Cobh) Harbour in 1915.



HMS Urchin in 1917.



Submarines in Bantry Bay during WWI.



Cork City, RIC Black and Tans and Auxies

forces in Ireland and a much increased presence of naval vessels of in Irish waters. Then, in 1916 came the preparations for the Easter Rising.

The Royal Navy Admiralty had intelligence that the Rising was planned for Easter Sunday and that there may have been a planned landing by German forces on the 20th April 1916. A Royal Naval fleet lay in wait off the coast when the German Auxiliary vessel the *Libau*, rigged to disguised itself as a Norwegian vessel the *Aud*, arrived at Kerry Head carrying a cargo of arms and ammunition for the rebels, in the hopes of a rendezvous with the German U-Boat U-19, from which Sir Rodger Casement rowed ashore to the lonely Banna Strand on the night of the 21st. And while he was been chased and captured, another dramatic chase was beginning, the *Aud* which had come under suspicion of been up to nefarious deeds was chased along the coast, until its Captain Carl Spindler still feigning ignorance and innocent was escorted into the mouth of Cork Harbour on the morning of the 22nd. He ran up his true colours of the Imperial German Navy, and then he scuttled and abandoned her.

The British took heart from these events and thought that the Royal Navy had helped to smother the flames of rebellion before they took hold at all. As dawn broke on the bright Monday morning of the 24th, the most prepared of the British forces for the rebellion was the Royal Navy. It was the force which, although it did most of its work unseen, was also the force which played one of the most important roles in quelling it. From the *Helga* shelling rebel positions in Dublin to the large movements of troops from England to Dublin to reinforce the British garrisons. Many other ship movements took place as troops were dispatched to deal with areas judged to be at risk of open rebellion. With this brief rebellion subdued, the Royal Navy was able to again focus on fighting the real war, on the seas in support of the entrenched warfare in Europe. With 1918 came a cessation of hostilities and peace in Europe, however such peace was not to last in Ireland.

**Strike for Independence:** The Royal Navy was pivotal during the War of Independence, working as Naval forces do, out of sight on the seas supporting both the military and the civil powers, which found the new guerrilla style of warfare increasingly difficult to confront and put down. The maintenance of supply lines and trade coupled with the ability to land troops were needed, made the Royal Navy indispensable. There were little direct destructive attacks on either the Royal Navy or Coastguard installations, although there were numerous raids for small arms, which happened in places such as: Ballyheigue, Ringsend and Enniscrone.

In Fenit, Co. Kerry in June 1920, the Destroyer HMS *Urchin* was alongside the pier there and

members of the ships' company were deployed to protect the Coast Guard station there. On the night of the 2nd, when the attack began on the local RIC barracks situated beside the station, the weather was very poor. The bad visibility rendered the *Urchin* only capable of firing blank rounds from its forward 4-inch gun, in case a stray round might hit the defenders not the rebel attackers. *Urchin*'s armed landing parties which had pistols, rifles and Lewis machine guns exchanged fire with a large party of rebels, who were well organised and had stuck from good cover. The assault which began at 3am with a rocket blast, ended as suddenly as it began with two loud blasts on a whistle. The IRA lifted their fire and were off into the night.

The network of Royal Irish Constabulary barracks across the country was the preferred target for rebels who need arms and ammunition. However, as the War of Independence progressed the British tactic of placing Royal Marine detachments at the stations was proving to be ineffective and unsatisfactory, so these troops were withdrawn and many of the remote stations where evacuated. As the war spread into every corner of Ireland, hundreds of RIC barracks where burnt across the country to ensure they could not be reoccupied. The Royal Irish Constabulary Special Reserve, better known by their more infamous name the 'Black and Tans' aided by the Police Auxiliary Division or 'Auxies' where unleashed upon the population of Ireland. They were not subject to correct levels of military discipline and they were responsible for many arbitrary acts of extreme violence against the civilian population. They meted out a shocking level of brutality and even torture of IRA prisoners and sympathisers. They were responsible for the massacre of civilians in Croke Park on Bloody Sunday in November 1920 and the burning of Cork city in December 1920, and around the country they enforced the official British policy of taking reprisals against the rebels, burning their property and harassing their families.

Despite our willingness to compartmentalise the Black and Tans away from the other branches of the British Forces, with regards to their viciousness and thuggery, it is a simple and indisputable fact that the Royal Navy was key to the maintenance of British military power in Ireland. The brutal suppression of the insurrection needed the combined effort of all forces of the British Empire. As we enter into another period of commemoration and remembrance, we need to ensure the romanticization of the 'plucky' rebels and the demonization of the 'vengeful' Tans is balanced by honest accounts of what occurred. The truth of the War of Independence is that war in all its forms is a destructive and brutal affair. We can be proud of those rebels who fought to free our Nation while still being aware that that freedom came at a price. ■

# THE BURNING OF THE CUSTOM HOUSE

BY LIZ GILLIS



On 25th May 1921, the Irish Republican Army launched its largest and most audacious operation of the War of Independence when it attacked the Custom House in Dublin, the heart of the British administration in Ireland. Photo: Micheál Ó Doibhilín/Kilmainham Tales

**T**he burning of the Custom House by the Dublin Brigade IRA in May 1921 was a pivotal moment in the War of Independence, and was the largest action undertaken by the Dublin Brigade since the Easter Rising. But why was the building attacked and what did the Republican movement achieve with this action?

The Custom House was the last symbol of British civil administration in Ireland. In the preceding two years Sinn Féin and the IRA had successfully undermined the running of government throughout the country, through Republican Courts and local councils. One of their aims was to make the

country ungovernable and in this they were quite successful.

The Custom House had always been in the IRA's sights. As early as 1918, Dick McKee, OC Dublin Brigade, put forward the idea to attack the building, in response to the British threat to introduce conscription to Ireland. McKee again put forward his plan to GHQ IRA in Dublin in early 1920, just as the War of Independence was escalating.

GHQ did not disapprove of his idea; it was just that they had a much bigger operation in mind – to destroy as many local tax offices around the country as they could. The IRA successfully carried out these attacks in March/April 1920,

thus leaving the only copies of income tax records in one place; the Custom House. So it was not a matter of if the Custom House was to be attacked, but when.

That moment came in December 1920 on Éamon de Valera's return from his fundraising tour in America. Having been away for most of the conflict he had seen how the international media was portraying events in Ireland. He wanted the IRA to move away from ambushes and assassinations, as he felt that in propaganda terms they were not casting the Irish in a favourable light. He favoured large-scale actions, showing the IRA as the legitimate army of the legitimate government of the Irish Republic.

In early 1921 a meeting of the Army Council was held at which de Valera put forward his plans. Oscar Traynor, now OC Dublin Brigade, recalled:

*... He [De Valera] made it clear that something in the nature of a big action in Dublin was necessary in order to bring public opinion abroad to bear on the question of Ireland's case.*

De Valera suggested two possible targets: Beggars Bush Barracks, the Auxiliaries' HQ; or the Custom House, 'the administrative heart of the British Civil Service machine in this country.'

After gathering intelligence on both targets, Traynor suggested that they should attack the Custom House, which held all local government records, including all tax files for Ireland. If the operation was a success 'its destruction would reduce the most important branch of British Civil Government in Ireland to virtual impotence and would, in addition,

ing, under the dome. Colley believed '*...that this was the only combustible part of the building capable of forming a large fire; and with the dome overhead, to act as a chimney, might make it possible to burn the whole building.*'

Tom Ennis, OC 2nd Battalion, was in charge of the operation as his battalion would be carrying out the assault, with men from the other battalions on the periphery giving protective cover. It was estimated that at least 120 men would be needed for the attack. (New research indicates, however, that close to 300 men took part in the overall operation.) Each man would have six rounds of ammunition. The operation was to last 25 minutes.

Collins was not happy with the risk of losing so many men, but de Valera's response was, '*...if these 120 men were lost and the job accomplished, the sacrifice would be well justified.*'

With plans finally agreed, the date was set for 25th May.

Equipment gathered for the operation included 280 tins of paraffin oil and petrol, bales of cotton waste, hatchets, bolt cutters, and transport. Dublin Fire Brigade, whose members included both IRA and ICA, provided information on the best way to burn such a large building.

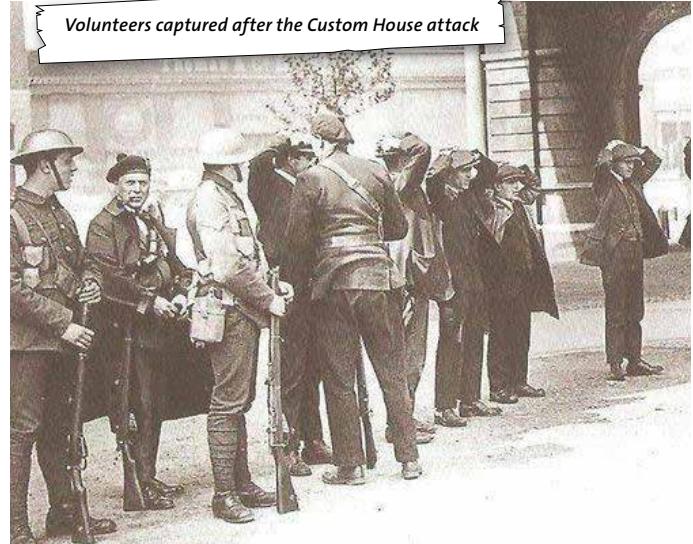
On the morning of the 25th those involved in the operation met at specified locations around the Custom House, predominantly Beresford Place, Strand Street and Lower Gardiner Street. There, they were fully briefed on the operation and given their tasks.

Tom Ennis and members of 2nd Battalion, along with some members of the Squad, entered the building at 12.55pm carrying tins of paraffin. The other battalions and the Active

Custom House in flames 25th May 1921



Volunteers captured after the Custom House attack



*inflict on her a financial loss of about two million pounds.'*

Three months' planning followed, involving sections of all battalions of the Dublin Brigade. Surveillance of the target proved easy. Carrying official-looking envelopes, Traynor himself was able to walk freely around the Custom House. Liam O'Doherty, OC 5th Battalion (Engineers) obtained plans of the building from a friendly contact in the Board of Works. A number of IRA men also worked as clerks in the Custom House and provided intelligence.

One of these, Harry Colley, observed that for the operation to be any way successful, they needed to destroy the Will Room, on the ground floor in the middle of the build-

Service Unit (ASU) took up positions in the surrounding area and occupied fire stations around the city. As the Volunteers entered the building, members of 5th Battalion cut telephone communications from the Custom House.

Once inside the building the Volunteers began to gather the staff and bring them to the Central Hall under the supervision of the ASU and the Squad. Once the rooms were cleared and prepared, Tom Ennis was to use a whistle blast to signal that they were to be set on fire. Two whistle blasts would indicate completion of the job and the evacuation of the men.

Custom House staff were taken completely by surprise,

and when they realized that this was more than just a common raid, many became hysterical.

Daniel McAleese, an employee in the Custom House, who was having lunch in the dining room when the attack began, recalled:

*... Several young men passed us carrying tins of petrol. One of the leaders announced that the Custom House was being set on fire and warned us against causing any commotion.'*

Although communication lines had been cut, word of the attack got to the military, who promptly dispatched a party of troops, including an armoured car, to investigate. Despite an order not to fire first, Volunteers fired on the soldiers as they passed Liberty Hall. The troops returned fire.

Unfortunately, inside, preparations for firing the building were not complete. On hearing shots, the men took up positions at doors and windows and opened fire. In the confusion a whistle blast was heard, although not all of the rooms were ready. The men were ordered to finish their task, causing a few minutes delay, after which the building was set alight.

In the meantime, more troops began to arrive, covering the building with machine-guns from armoured cars and a Lewis gun from under the Loop Line Bridge.

As the fire began to take hold inside, calls flooded into the city's fire stations from worried civilians. All callers were answered calmly and reassured that help was on the way. However, the authorities and the public were unaware that the fire stations were in the hands of the IRA; help would not arrive any time soon.

As the fire quickly took hold, members of the Squad and ASU engaged the enemy from their positions in the windows, but eventually they were forced to fall back. With every round of ammunition spent, the order was given to evacuate, dump arms, and mingle with the staff in order to get away. The majority did, but others, including Jim Slattery and Sean Doyle, decided to try to break out. Both men were shot; Doyle was fatally wounded while Slattery was hit in the hand.

Oscar Traynor and Captain Paddy Daly were observing the situation outside when they came under fire from a military lorry. Volunteer Dan Head, threw a bomb at the lorry, saving Traynor and Daly, but was himself shot and killed.

Tom Ennis was the last to leave the burning building. Armed with a gun in each hand he was hit twice, in the hip and leg, as he made a dash from a side gate to a laneway. Despite being horrifically wounded, he managed to get to safety.

Those who had mixed with the staff were gathered outside. As each staff member was identified and led away, those left were searched by the military and questioned. Some Volunteers, like Ned Breslin, were beaten by the Auxiliaries. Others, like Vinny Byrne, managed to bluff their way out.

Most of the captured Volunteers were brought to Arbour Hill, although some were taken to Mountjoy Gaol and Dublin Castle; as Christopher Fitzsimons testified:

*'We were segregated on the quayside and taken to Dublin Castle. We were interrogated at the Castle for three days and suffered pretty severe handling from the Auxiliaries.'*

Those at Arbour Hill were held for some weeks and then transferred to Kilmainham Gaol.

Although the IRA had suffered heavy losses, five dead and over 100 captured, and many weapons lost, the administration had been dealt a deadly blow. The Dublin Brigade was not decimated, and that night and in the weeks following proved their ability to carry on the fight by launching several attacks.

Meanwhile, news of the day's events raced around the world, focusing international attention on what was happening in Ireland, as de Valera had intended. Some, seeing the losses suffered by the IRA, said the operation was a failure. However, others, including those who took part, saw beyond, to the crippling blow that had been delivered to the British administration in Ireland; thousands of records essential for running the country had been lost.

The success of destroying these documents was not just down to the IRA, however, but also the Dublin Fire Brigade. When they arrived on the scene it was their task to try to save the building. However, once it was possible to enter the building safely and begin to fight the fire, they did the exact opposite. Fireman Michael Rogers recalled that on entering the building to search it and establish the seat of the fire, he and others had the building at their mercy and spread the fire into parts of it that had not previously been on fire. They also found four IRA men hiding in the building and managed to get them away by dressing them up as firemen.

Sadly, although it was never the intention for anyone to die in the attack, nine people did: Volunteers Dan Head, Sean Doyle, Patrick and Stephen O'Reilly (brothers), and Edward Dorrins; and civilians John Byrne, James Connolly, Francis Davis (caretaker), and Mahon Lawless.

Despite many later claims that the operation was a disaster and that the IRA was wiped out, that is not the case. The aim of the operation was to bring international attention on Ireland; that happened. It was done to make it extremely difficult for the British civil administration to function in Ireland; that was achieved. And most importantly, despite having their ranks depleted and losing weapons, the IRA quickly and easily adapted to their difficulties, and continued the war. Within weeks, negotiations to end hostilities began.

*Dramatic shot of two men being challenged by two armed British Army soldiers outside the burning Custom House. A third man lies on the ground face down in the background. Photo courtesy of South Dublin Libraries/wm\_ADo05*



**About The Author:** Liz Gillis, a historian and a researcher on RTÉ Radio One's 'The History Show' and has written a number of books on the Irish Revolution, including *May 25th: Burning of the Custom House 1921* (2017), *Women of the Irish Revolution: A Photographic History* (2016), *We Were There: The Seventy-Seven Women Imprisoned in Richmond Barracks 1916* (2016) (co-written with Dr Mary McAuliffe in conjunction with Dublin City Council), and *The Hales Brothers and the Irish Revolution* (2016), published by Mercier Press. ■

# NOTICEBOARD

## SLEEPING FLAGS – AWARENESS CAMPAIGN

The Organisation of National Ex-service Personnel or ONE have launched an awareness campaign to highlight the need for funding and donations required to run their homeless hostels to help Veterans of the Defence Forces who have fallen on hard times. ONE has three homes around the country, in Dublin, Letterkenny and Athlone, and hopefully with another one opening up in Cobh in the coming months. These homes have provided a safe, supportive place for over 900 veterans to date, with many of those suffering from depression, disabilities and PTSD. These are individuals who served the Tricolour with pride in conflict zones around the world, as the United Nation's most distinguished peacekeepers. At home they served during The Troubles, or in ensuring the safety and stability of the State, yet received little recognition or support when their service came to an end.

*"95% of the veterans helped by ONE escape the cycle of homelessness and move on to permanent housing, while others need to remain in our hostels indefinitely."* As an independent charity ONE relies heavily on donations. With your help they can keep their doors open and our country's



homeless veterans off the streets, now and in the future. Text 'FLAG' to 50300 to donate €4 or visit [www.sleepingflags.ie](http://www.sleepingflags.ie) #sleepingflags

## WORD SEARCH

CROSS OFF THE WORDS IN THE LIST AS YOU FIND THEM.

Word searches are fun, they also bring benefits you may not realise and can play an important role in keeping you mentally fit.

### War of Independence 1919

G I W U O U O B Q I J K B L E	ARMY
U K X L Y M R A G D V H P X X	BRITISH
E Y R I A K G E C O P R M Y K	FORCES
R D H H Y D Q N G U I D A Z V	GUERRILLA
R E L G J E Z N X J Q T Y Y Z	INDEPENDENCE
I N D E P E N D E N C E J E B	IRISH
L O M E C O T V Z O Y L W R U	OF
L I O M S Y B F H U C A I S J	PARTITIONED
A T L S R Y E I P A R T E Z K	REPUBLICAN
K I T N Q T X T B W I C M G Z	WAR
X T C W T F Y N P S R R G H X	
X R V M O D K L H O I P K K V	
u A W Z Z Z W O F C S N V O Z	
R P L V R E P U B L I C A N J	
Y B Z D Y Q H S I R I T I U F	



## COMPETITION €50 VOUCHER

Q. HOW MUCH IS THE PROFORCE HEAVY DUTY BUNGEE CORDS ON [WWW.PROTAC.IE](http://WWW.PROTAC.IE)?

Post your answer along with your name, address and contact number to us or email [subs@military.ie](mailto:subs@military.ie) for a chance to win a PROTAC €50 Voucher to use in store or online.

Last month's winner of the PROTAC €50 Voucher was Dean O'Sullivan, Co Tipperary. Closing date is 19th March 2019.

Protac, Market Green, Curragh Camp, Co Kildare. [www.protac.ie](http://www.protac.ie) [info@protac.ie](mailto:info@protac.ie)  
Ph: +353 (0) 45 441798 or visit us on: [www.facebook.com/protacmilitary](http://www.facebook.com/protacmilitary)



# THE MILITARY ARCHIVES

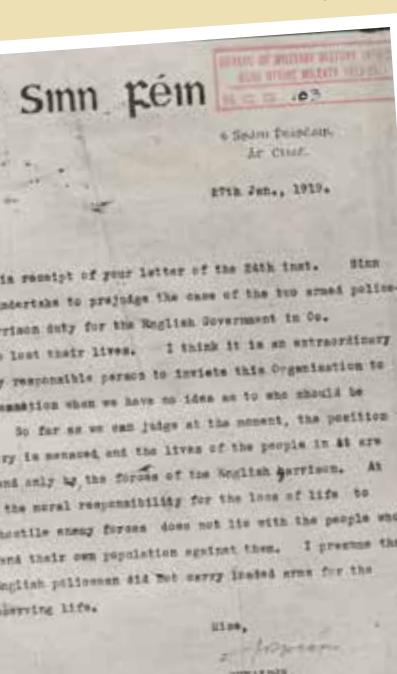
## and the War of Independence

BY CAPTAIN DANIEL AYIOTIS, OFFICER-IN-CHARGE,  
THE MILITARY ARCHIVES

**A**s the former Officer-in-Charge of the Military Archives Comdt Stephen MacEoin observed in an article published in the Defence Forces Review 2016, commemoration, memory and history are three different things. Connecting all of them however, is the fact that they are affected by the availability, or absence, of archives – those records deemed to be of enduring value as sources of documentary evidence. The Decade of Centenaries has not only seen a broadening of the availability of good primary sources but increasing equality of access to those records. At a talk in 2016 as part of the Imperial War Museum's Centenary Partnership Programme Comdt MacEoin described this phenomenon, aided by the internet and digitisation of records, as a 'democratisation of history.'

The State centenary commemorations of 1916 – encompassing both the Rising and the Somme – were confident, mature, nuanced, meaningful and commendable. This was thanks in no small part to the excellent work of Irish heritage professionals and institutions. In particular the Defence Forces and Dept. of Defence's own heritage institution, the Military Archives, played a very significant supporting role in these commemorations. (Before I get accused of self-aggrandisement I was undertaking my archival training at the time so do not claim any credit!)

We have now entered the centenary of the War of Independence, which will be followed closely by the centenary of the Civil War. These commemorations, as we have gotten used to hearing, will be more 'difficult.' Personally, as an archivist at least, I think 'uncomfortable' is a better term. We have already seen, for example, the discomfort in some quarters surrounding the commemoration of the Soloheadbeg ambush. There is nothing difficult for archivists



Letter from Sinn Féin offices at 6 Harcourt St. in relation to Soloheadbeg ambush, Bureau of Military History, Contemporary Documents.

in making the documentary evidence of such episodes available, but there is evidently a natural discomfort in confronting them. The broadening and democratising of archival sources can and will reveal uncomfortable truths. Professor Michael Laffan, for example, has written on the subject of the War of Independence that 'as always happens in such conflict the poor were exploited and old scores were settled in the name of principle or patriotism. Warfare produced thugs as well as heroes.' That said, such instances shouldn't be over stated; the War of Independence was a defining event in the struggle for Irish freedom and independence, and the heroism and sacrifices of those who played a part serves to inspire pride and strengthen the nation to this day.

Regardless of discomfort or difficulty, remembering and commemorating our nation's history is important, and in order to do it properly and inclusively a thorough and nuanced understanding of that history is vital. In his book 'A Nation and Not a Rabble,' on the subject of Irish revolutionary commemoration Professor Diarmaid Ferriter references Catriona Crowe's comment that 'history, if it is to be in any way accurate, depends on good primary sources.' As we have done to date, the Military Archives will continue to preserve and make available as broad a range of documentary evidential sources, both previously available and newly released, on the War of Independence and Civil War.

If you are interested in researching the War of Independence, the following are some of our major resources at the Military Archives. If any readers have specific areas of interest our Duty Archivist can be contacted at [militaryarchives@defenceforces.ie](mailto:militaryarchives@defenceforces.ie).

**The Military Service (1916-1923) Pensions Collection (MSPC): Brigade Activity Records.** The MSPC is the country's single most significant collection of archival material in relation to the War of Independence and the revolutionary period in general. The collection consists of over a quarter of a million files, tracing their origin to the decision of the Oireachtas in June 1923 to compensate combatants and dependents of deceased combatants. The project began in 2008 and the first online release of material was in 2014. Given the extent of the collection, the records are released in tranches and to date well in excess of a million individual pages have been digitised and made available online.

February 23rd seen the launch of the much-anticipated Brigade Activity Files series. These 151 files were compiled between 1935 and the mid-1940s by Brigade Committees, tasked with compiling the material in order to assist the Referee and Advisory Committee in the consideration of pension applications made under the Military Service Pensions Act. This material will provide unprecedented insight into the War of Independence and will transform local history research and commemoration. A full article dedicated to the Brigade Activity Reports by the project manager, Cécile Gordon, will feature in an upcoming issue of *An Cosantóir*. The MSPC can be accessed at [www.militaryarchives.ie](http://www.militaryarchives.ie).



Members of East Cork Flying Column, 1920-21  
from the MSPC Brigade Activity Reports.



Patsy O'Hagan, Uinseann MacEoin, Nora Connolly, Sighle Bean Uí Dhonnchadha and Bobbie Edwards at the launch of Survivors, 1980. Uinseann Mac Eoin Series.

**The Bureau of Military History (1913-1921)** is a collection of 1,773 witness statements and accompanying material collected by the State between 1947 and 1957, in order to gather primary source material on the Irish revolutionary period. Along with the Military Service Pensions Collection, the Bureau is among the most important primary sources of information on this period available anywhere in the world. The Bureau was locked away in the Dept. of An Taoiseach for forty-five years after the last statement was collected, and in 2001 it was decided to transfer the Bureau to Military Archives and prepare it for release into the public domain. A team of archivists and support staff, under the direction of Commandant Victor Laing (former OC of Military Archives) successfully prepared the collection for its launch in March 2003. The Bureau is accessible on a separate website, [www.bureauofmilitaryhistory.ie](http://www.bureauofmilitaryhistory.ie), but as part of the ongoing development and consolidation of our online resources we plan to migrate the collection to [www.militaryarchives.ie](http://www.militaryarchives.ie) by 2020.

#### **The Military Archives Oral History Project – Uinseann Mac Eoin Series:**

Uinseann MacEoin was a journalist, architect, campaigner for the preservation of Georgian Dublin, veteran republican and keen mountaineer. He was also the author of three books – *Survivors* (1980, based on interviews with veteran republicans), *Harry* (1986, biography of Harry White), and *The IRA in the Twilight Years 1923-1948* (1997).

In 2017, on the recommendation of Professor Diarmaid Ferriter, his family donated the material associated with the research for these books, including 105 audio cassettes of interviews, to the Military Archives. These interviews, recorded from the later 1970s to the 1990s, feature many veterans of the War of Independence who went on to join the anti-Treaty side. Such interviewees include Pax O'Faoláin, Peadar O'Donnell, Máire Comerford, Sheila Humphries, Sean MacBride, Eithne Coyle and Nora Connolly O'Brien. These cassettes have been digitised and are in the process of having detailed, time coded abstracts with accompanying contextual information written with a view to making them available to the public in early 2020.

**The Collins Papers** give a unique and significant insight into one of the most influential figures of the War of Independence. The collection primarily consists of typed and handwritten correspondence between Michael Collins and Irish Republican Army personnel during the years 1918-1922. These include typed memoranda, files notes, typed

and handwritten correspondence between Directors and Staff, General Headquarters (mainly Department of Intelligence, Adjutant General, Director of Training, Director of Organisation, Chief of Staff and Deputy Chief of Staff) and members of the IRA.

Alongside Collins, the collection contains material attributable to individuals including Gearóid O'Sullivan, Liam Tobin, Richard Mulcahy, Eoin O'Duffy, Cathal Brugha, Emmet Dalton and JJ 'Ginger' O'Connell.

**The Brother Allen Collection** was donated to the Military Archives in 2016 as a gift to the nation by the Christian Brothers of O'Connell School, Richmond St. 134 men and youths who had been educated in O'Connell's took part in the Easter Rising, including Éamonn Ceannt, Con Colbert and Séan Heuston who were executed for their part. Given the school's credentials in relation to the cause of an Irish Republic it's no surprise that one Brother, William Palladius Allen, a man with a keen sense of history, created perhaps the most significant private collection of material relating to the Irish revolutionary period in the country. His collection of books (The Allen Library) was donated to the National Library of Ireland. The documents and museum items, counting in their thousands, were donated to the Military Archives, and form The Brother Allen Collection. Over 70 items from the collection currently form part of the 'Soldiers and Chiefs' and 'Proclaiming a Republic' exhibitions at the National Museum of Ireland, as part of a temporary loan, demonstrating the significance of the Military Archives and the Defence Forces as a player in the Irish cultural arena.

As this is not a standard archival collection it contains within it an extremely rich and diverse wealth of material associated with the War of Independence. ■



Clever used to break Séan Hogan's manacles following the Knocklong rescue, 13th May 1919 (Brother Allen Collection).

# WEXFORD'S MILITARY

## Past and present

BY SGT WAYNE FITZGERALD PHOTOS ARMN JAMIE BARRETT



CSM Martin Doyle (second to right) in his Royal Munster Fusiliers uniform with BA colleagues.



CSM Martin Doyle greets Queen Mary at a garden party for 300 VC recipients in June 1920.

**W**exford and its people have long been associated with military activity. The county's main town from which it takes its name, was founded around 800AD by Vikings, who named it *Veisafjørðr*, meaning 'inlet of the way' or 'way fjord'. Viking rule lasted until the 11th century when the King of Leinster, Dermot MacMurrough, and his Norman ally, Robert FitzStephen, besieged the town. The Norse inhabitants resisted fiercely, until the bishop of Ferns persuaded them to accept a settlement.

Wexford is no stranger to atrocity. During the Irish Confederate Wars (1641-1653) a fleet of privateers consisting mainly of sailors from Flanders and Spain, as well as local men, used Wexford Town as a base to attack Parliamentary ships. As a result the town was targeted and brutally sacked by the New Model Army in 1649, at the start of the Cromwellian Conquest. Cromwell's army broke into the town while the garrison commander was trying to negotiate a surrender and slaughtered soldiers and civilians alike.

Later, during the 1798 Rebellion, New Bawn, Co Wexford, was the scene of a notorious massacre of local loyalists after the United Irishmen suffered heavy losses in the Battle of New Ross.

Wexford also has a strong tradition of military service. From the middle of the 19th century to the end of the Great War, four Wexford men received the Victoria Cross, the British Army's highest award for heroism: Lance Corporal John Sinnott and Leading Seaman John Harrison during the Indian Rebellion (1857); Private William Kenealy at Gallipoli (1915); and New Ross man, Coy Sgt Maj Martin Doyle on the Western Front (1918).

### The latter's citation reads:

*"For most conspicuous bravery on the 2nd September, 1918, near Riencourt, when as Acting Company Serjeant-Major, command of the company devolved upon him consequent on officer casualties.*

*Observing that some of our men were surrounded by the enemy, he led a party to their assistance, and by skill and leadership worked his way along the trenches, killed several of the enemy and extricated the party, carrying back, under heavy fire, a wounded officer to a place of safety. Later, seeing a tank in difficulties, he rushed*

*forward under intense fire, routed the enemy who were attempting to get into it, and prevented the advance of another enemy party collecting for a further attack on the tank. An enemy machine gun now opened on the tank at close range, rendering it impossible to get the wounded away, whereupon CSM Doyle, with great gallantry, rushed forward, and, single-handed, silenced the machine gun, capturing it with three prisoners. He then carried a wounded man to safety under very heavy fire.*

*Later in the day, when the enemy counter-attacked his position, he showed great power of command, driving back the enemy and capturing many prisoners. Throughout the whole of these operations CSM Doyle set the very highest example to all ranks by his courage and total disregard of danger."*

After the war, Martin Doyle, like many others, came home to a different Ireland. With armed rebellion underway, Doyle's military experience and battle-hardened know-how was in great demand by those leading the fight against his former paymasters. He joined the IRA and fought in the War of Independence, before taking the pro-Treaty side in the subsequent civil war.

Doyle went on to serve in the National Army until his retirement in 1937. He died of polio in 1940, aged only 49, and is buried in Grangegorman Military Cemetery, Blackhorse Avenue, Dublin.

My research of Martin Doyle brought me to his home county of Wexford, where I met a number of Wexford IUNVA members.

The veterans association has two posts in the county: Post 3 Gorey (a recent amalgamation of two posts in Wexford and Gorey), which has 24 members; and Post 31 (Enniscorthy), which has 17 members.

We met nine members of these posts in the recently built Enniscorthy Peace Park and Presentation Centre, on the grounds of the old Presentation Covent, where IUNVA has a memorial to deceased members of the Defence Forces.

Mick O'Neill (Chairman Post 31), who was the driving force behind the memorial, said that the monument was originally erected in the town's 1798 Centre in 2013, but was moved to its new location due to uncertainty over the future of the centre.

CSM Martin Doyle's Victoria Cross



UN Veterans from IUNVA Post 3 and 31 stands beside the new memorial with Vinegar Hill in the background.



Mick expressed his gratitude to Wexford County Council and local agencies for facilitating the memorial's move to the new park, which is due to open in March. Members of Posts 3 and 31 will provide a ceremonial element at the opening, but the rededication of the memorial won't take place until IUNVA's annual Remembrance Day, in August. They also plan to erect a plaque with the names of deceased members of both posts.

I asked our hosts for a brief description of their military careers.

Peter Nolan (Secretary and Welfare Officer Post 3) enlisted in 1972 and served until 2006 (34 years and 92 days' service). His units included 2 Hosp Coy and 2 Fd Med Coy, where he was the medical training and admin sergeant. He completed six tours in Lebanon and served with 2 Tpt Coy, UNOSOM II, in Somalia.

Patrick Cody served from 1963 to 1966 with 1 ACS in the Curragh, and travelled overseas with 38 Inf Bn (Congo) and 40 Inf Bn (Cyprus).

Charlie Raleigh joined 5 Inf Bn in 1961, served for three years, and rejoined and completed another three years in 1971. He served with 36 and 38 Inf Bns in the Congo as an infantry rifleman and remembers receiving his brand new FN FAL 7.62mm rifle.

Michael Keegan served for three years with 2 Cav Sqn from 1969, serving overseas with 20 Inf Gp in Cyprus. Ten years later he rejoined and served overseas again, with 51 Inf Bn in Lebanon, during which he experienced the Israeli invasion of Lebanon and the murders of three of his colleagues by Michael McAleavy at Tibrin Bridge.

Shay Byrne enlisted in 1968 and served for 31 years, starting with 5 Inf Bn, then AHQ Sigs and later in the Glen of Imaal as part of the camp staff. He served as Rations CQ with 46 Inf Bn in Lebanon, a challenging trip that included the Smallhorne and Barrett tragedy.

Willie Gilbert served for 25 years from 1963

until 1988, starting in 2 Fd Sigs and then moving to 5 Inf Bn before being promoted to sergeant major in 2 Inf Bn at the age of 36 – a great achievement. He served overseas with 3, 10, and 20 Inf Gps in Cyprus and 57 Inf Bn in Lebanon. He fondly recalls the great camaraderie and esprit de corps of his days in the Defence Forces.

Michael O'Neill served with 1 ACS from 1961 to 1987, breaking his service for around nine months in 1968 before reenlisting. He was Cook Sgt in Plunkett Bks and served overseas in Cyprus (three trips) and Lebanon (four trips). He clearly remembers driving the newly-arrived Panhard AML 60s armoured car and cooking under canvas with the M59 cooker.

Joe McGrath enlisted with 5 Inf Bn in 1958 before moving to 2 Fd Sigs where he underwent a linesman's course. In July 1960 he travelled overseas with 32 Inf Bn, the first Irish contingent to serve in the Congo. He recalls how the Irish way of interacting with the local people in Goma set them apart from other white nationalities that the locals encountered.

Another memory he has is one of their early warning signals that trouble was brewing. *"If you looked around and saw no children out – you grabbed your gun immediately, as something was bound to happen,"* he told us.

(With so many experiences of that crucial period in the development of the modern Defence Forces, Joe would make an excellent candidate for the Military Archives Oral History Project – MAOHP – to preserve his experiences for future generations.)

After spending time with these guys, it was evident that they enjoy each other's company and camaraderie. They all agreed that the best part of being a member of IUNVA was the social gatherings and the reminiscing, as well as taking part in events and anniversaries.

You can find out more about these Wexford posts and the rest of IUNVA on [www.iunva.ie](http://www.iunva.ie). ■



Mick O'Neill, Chairman of Post 31, and the driving force behind the memorial explains the roll of honour of deceased members of the Defence Forces.



CSM Martin Doyle is buried in Grangegorman Military Cemetery in Dublin. Photo Stephen Callaghan/Flickr

# THE 1919 ALL IRELAND FOOTBALL FINAL



Kildare: L Cribben, J Conlon, J Moran, T Goulding, M Buckley, J O'Connor, P Doyle, L Stanley, M Sammon, G Magan, J Stanley, C Flynn, B McGlade, James O'Connor and F Conlon.

BY SGT WAYNE FITZGERALD

**M**ost sports probably haven't changed a whole lot over the last 100-years or so, rules maybe, but clothing has really developed with technology advancements and we will see this in the adjoining article. For now, we look at a big game in 1919 - where in the midst of a World War, and the War of Independence the GAA held the All Ireland Football Final.

The 1919 All-Ireland final would be the last one to be played in the same year of the championship for several years. Because of the War of Independence and the Civil War that followed the 1920 final wasn't played until 1922, and the succeeding All-Irelands were also deferred for a number of years.

In Leinster, Kildare had beaten Dublin in the run up to the final, Kildare were surprise winners as Dublin had been 'tipped' to be the team to put a stop to Wexford's bid for five in a row. Kildare then beat Cavan in the semi-final and were to meet Galway in the final. This would be Galway's first time reaching the final and it was well earned after they defeated Kerry in a semi-final replay.

The final was played in Croke Park on 28th September 1919, in front of record crowd of 32,000 - according to the GAA's official historian Marcus De Burca.

Kildare were led by one of the great names in football history Larry Stanley and Galway had their infamous 'Knacker' Walsh for inspiration.

Galway's talisman Walsh was kept under wraps only kicking one point the whole game – it wasn't looking good for the Galwaymen.

Kildare were leading at halftime going in at 1-2 to 0-1 ahead. They put the one sided game to bed early in the second-half with Stanley cleaning up at centrefield and a second goal settled the matter. The goals were scored by Frank 'Joyce' Conlan and Jim O'Connor. The final score was Kildare 2-5 and Galway 0-1.

Galway were also beaten finalists in 1922, but went on to win their first

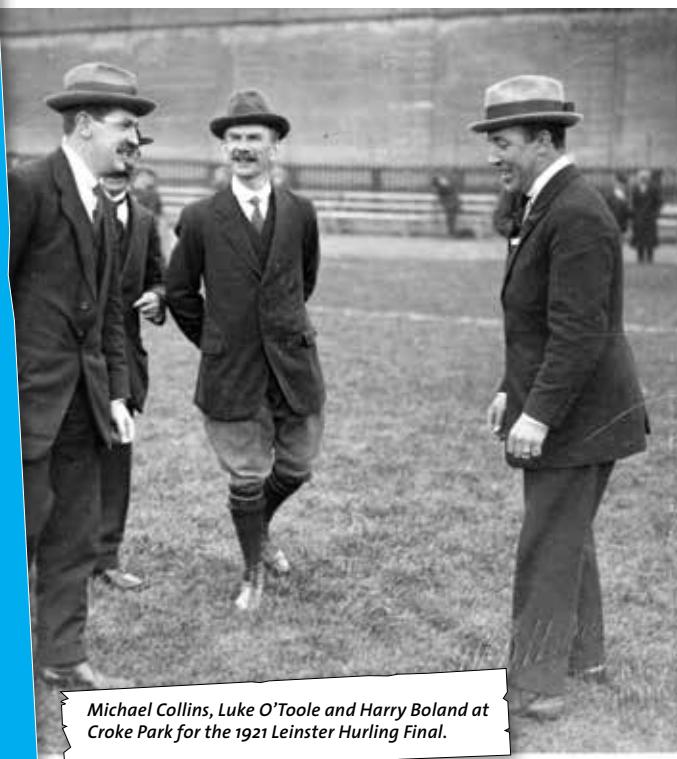
All-Ireland football title in 1925. ■



Galway: T Egan, D Egan, J Egan, P Higgins, M Walsh, P Roche, J Hanniffy, G Jennings, L Raftery, M Flannelly, H Burke, G Feeney, Knacker Walsh, T McDonnell and M Cawley.



The Galway and Kildare teams walk out before the 1919 final.



Michael Collins, Luke O'Toole and Harry Boland at Croke Park for the 1921 Leinster Hurling Final.

# Teamwear



## SUPPORTING THE DEFENCE FORCES WITH HIGH PERFORMANCE SPORTS CLOTHING

REPORT AND PHOTOS BY SGT WAYNE FITZGERALD

**R**ecently *An Cosantóir* met up with Declan Duffy of Pacelli Sports and Teamwear.ie, who is a long-term supplier of branded sports clothing to the Defence Forces, including different athletic clubs within the DF. In the late 80s Declan was selling high-end sports clothing to the Defence Forces' Canteen Board shops all around the country. At that time the canteen shops were a great place to meet socially and professionally. Declan added, "not only buying your sports clothing and runners etc but for having a cup of tea and meeting people and discussing different sports and clothing. And I did this in most barracks around the country."

In 1995 Declan setup Pacelli Sports selling directly to the retail shops like Elverys and Lifestyle Sports. "Now we are selling to military sports clubs at the same price we would sell to retailers. Our website [teamwear.ie](http://teamwear.ie) sells clothing like half- and full-zip tops, all weather wear, tracksuits, training drill tops, hoodies, pants, shorts, base layers, socks, gloves and hats. Suitable for any sports club or military unit, examples include soccer, gaelic,

equestrian, gymnastics, volleyball and basketball and ideally physical training instructors (PTIs)."

Teamwear have always been a great supporter of the Defence Forces, and other organisations like the Special Olympics, who wore Stanno clothing to the World Games. A few years ago, when the Naval Service were heading to the Mediterranean as part of the humanitarian operation, Teamwear donated 100 pairs of long football socks to wear under their wellington boots. Declan said, "I was very happy to provide these to the Naval Service who are doing a great job in the Med."

Declan has now over 32 years' experience in the sports clothing business, and I was interested to know what there much development in the types of material used. "Fabrics have changed from the use of natural fibres like cotton and wool to synthetic wicking fabric, designed to take the moisture away from your skin," said Declan. He explained that clothing has changed quite significantly, "now we have 360 stretch fabric or 4 way stretch fabric with body mapping technology." There are lots of

different grades of synthetic fabric, but Declan explained in a way that to make it simplistic he will narrow it down to three main types. Grade 1, is a professional grade, which is high performance and holds no smells. Grade 2 is your high street retailer brand including replica football jerseys. And Grade 3 is your active sports category, which is a low-grade quality synthetic like budget retailers Lidl and Aldi. Declan explains the difference could be, "the last 15 minutes of a game, is your clothing clogging your skin and not aerating you? Are you underperforming? Stanno only supply Grade 1 elite Climate-Tec grade clothing and has been voted Best Quality Sportswear Brand in Europe."

Teamwear offer full service from design to supply, including embroidery or bespoke design to exact requirements delivered as quickly as 2-3 weeks. Whatever the sport contact Declan and his staff for all your team's clothing.

Teamwear, 13 Fashion City, Ballymount, Dublin 12. Ph: 01 429 5727 or email: [info@teamwear.ie](mailto:info@teamwear.ie) ■

# BOOKS BOOKS

## A FEW GOOD READS ON THE IRISH WAR OF INDEPENDENCE

The centenary of the Irish War of Independence is upon us and many are looking for books and films to watch that cover this turbulent period in our nation's history.

Though a classic read, every soldier needs to read *Guerrilla Days in Ireland* written by Commandant Tom Barry. This book is an excellent read about his campaign against Crown Forces in County Cork between 1919-21. It's packed with action and gives a detailed account of a number of operations he carried out during this period.

Another classic is *With the Dublin Brigade* by Charles Dalton. One of Collin's men this is a riveting read of the 'get them before they get us' war that was carried out in Dublin.

Michael Barry's latest work, *The Fight for Irish Freedom*, is a wonderful book incorporating text and photographs that covers the period. This is really a must have book, as the reader having read it once, will be dipping in and out for the next few years.

Books specific to a local area, such as *War and Revolution in the West of Ireland* by Conor McNamara and *Kilkenny in Times of Revolution* by Eoin Swithin Walsh are two very good reads.

*After the Rising* by Seán Enright is another good book dealing with the path towards the War of Independence.

*Bloody Sunday* by James Gleeson deals with the operation against British agents in November 1920 and is a good detailed account of this action.

To find out what happening on the other side, author William Sheehan's works *A Hard Local War*, *British Voices in the Irish War of Independence* and *Hearts and Mines* are highly recommended reading.

Researching in British archives, Sheehan captures what it was like to be a British soldier in Ireland fighting a counter-insurgency campaign.

*Havoc* by Paul O'Brien, a regular contributor to *An Cosantóir*, is an action packed work that covers the Auxiliary Division of the Royal Irish Constabulary (ADRIC). He looks at them as a Special Forces Unit that take the fight to the IRA, and details many of the actions they were involved in.

Historian and author Ernest McCall also examines the ADRIC in his expertly researched works, *Tudor's Toughs*, *the Auxies* and *The First Anti-Terrorist Unit*. All essential reads.

*Truce* by renowned Historian Pádraig Ó Ruairc is a well-researched and well written book on the period leading up to the Truce in July 1921 and the killings perpetrated by both sides during this time.

*Kilmichael* by Seán A. Murphy is a good read and an in-depth look into the ambush that claimed the lives of a number of Auxiliaries in County Cork. Controversial, but a highly recommended read.

The biggest operation carried out by the IRA during this period was the attack on the Custom House in 1921. This action is captured in, *MAY 25: The Burning of the Custom House* by Historian Liz Gillis and is a great read covering many aspects of this operation.

And from one of our own serving soldiers Gnr Terrence O'Reilly's *Our Struggle for Independence: Eye-witness accounts from the pages from An Cosantóir*, and gives real insight into the thoughts of the fighting men of the Wol and is available as an eBook from Amazon.

These books are just some good reads on this particular war that are available through your local library, from your local bookshop or can be ordered on the net.

Unfortunately for some reason there are very few good films on this period. *Michael Collins* directed by Neil Jordan and starring Liam Neeson is a well-known work. However, the best one for me is *The Wind that Shakes the Barley* directed by Ken Loach and starring Cillian Murphy and Liam Cunningham.

This work captures the sheer brutality of the war and the tragedy of the Civil War that was to follow. **WF**





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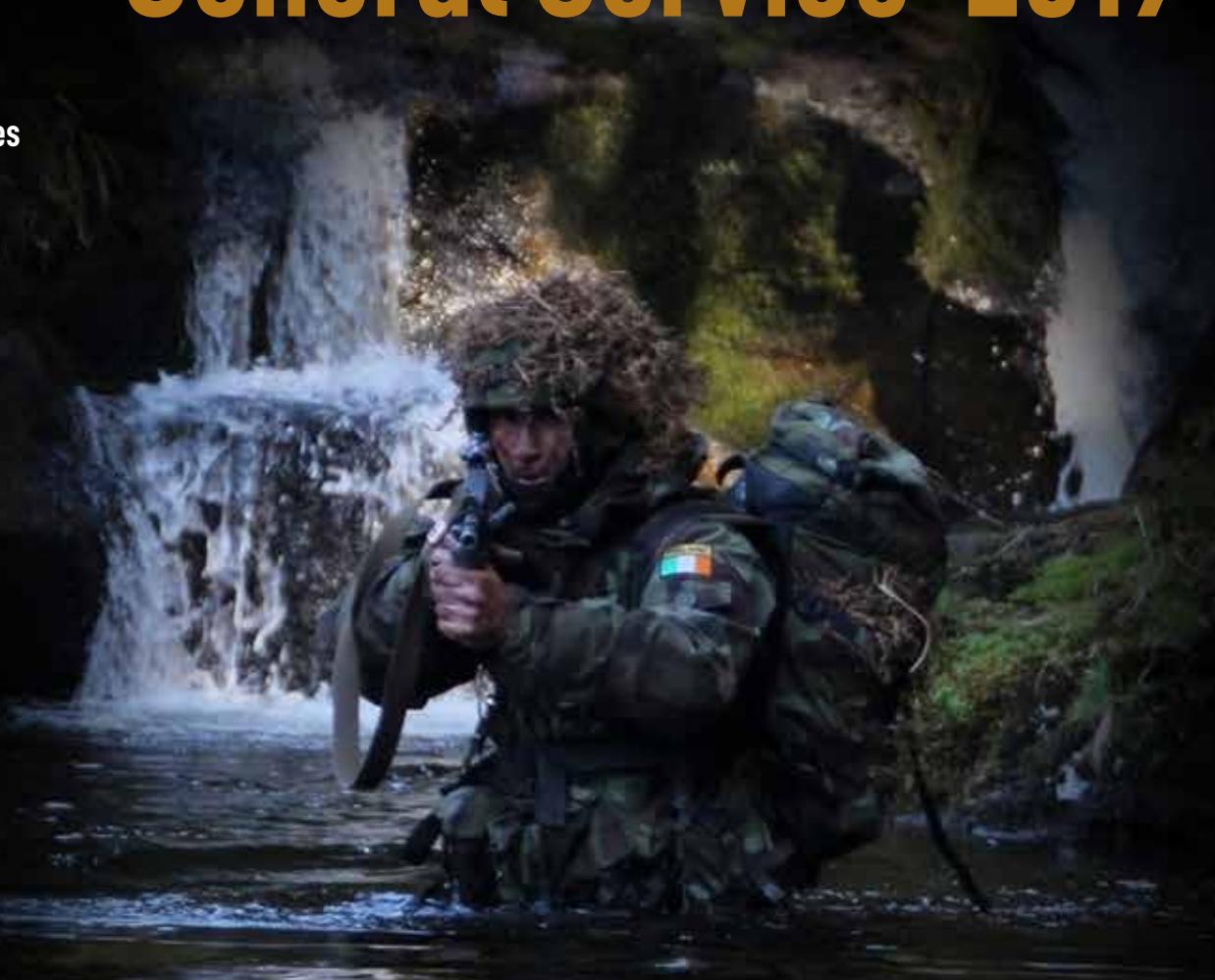
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