

‘...and that created terror’. The dynamics of
civilian – combatant interactions in County
Kerry, 1918 – 1923

Doctorate of Philosophy
School of Histories and Humanities,
Trinity College Dublin
2018

Thomas Earls FitzGerald

I declare that this thesis has not been submitted as an exercise for a degree at this or any other university and it is entirely my own work. I agree to deposit this thesis in the University's open access institutional repository or allow the Library to do so on my behalf, subject to Irish Copyright Legislation and Trinity College Library conditions of use and acknowledgement.

Summary

This thesis explores the dynamics of civilian – combatant interactions in County Kerry in the Irish revolutionary period of 1918-1923. Using contemporaneous Irish and British newspapers, police and army records, documentation produced by the Irish Republican Army (IRA) and memoirs this thesis looks at the ways in which the combatants of the Irish revolution both thought about and interacted with the civilian population around them. The thesis shows that violence against civilians and control over the civilian population was vital to both British policy in Ireland and the IRA during the conflict(s). The thesis also looks at how these issues played out in the civil war of 1922-23. County Kerry, in the south west of Ireland, is used throughout as a case study.

The first chapter examines how in later years IRA veterans tended to maintain that their revolution had high levels of popular support, but side by side with this narrative they also recalled facing substantial civilian opposition from those who continued to support the British presence in Ireland. The second chapter, from the opposite perspective, shows, how, in the records of the crown, there existed a belief that support for the IRA's violent revolution only came from the lowest sections of society or was the result of IRA intimidation. The chapter also examines how despite the crown forces maintaining they had high levels of civilian support their records also give numerous justifications for the necessity of using violence against civilians. These two chapters introduce the combatants' feelings of resentment towards civilians which helps explain the high level of violence they orchestrated against civilians. These issues are also examined in relation to the civil war of 1922-23, it is shown that the Free State had remarkably similar views on civilians to their predecessors in the crown forces, while the IRA developed a more contemptuous view of civilians in the latter conflict.

Chapter three shows that in reaction to the breakdown of the Royal Irish Constabulary (RIC) in the spring and summer of 1920 the IRA filled this policing breach by adopting the role of a regular police force in rural Ireland. This chapter explores the commendable activities of the IRA in suppressing regular crime but also the more troubling area of IRA policing in attempting to create social control and homogeneity through the restriction of emigration and apprehending members of the Irish Traveller community. Chapter four develops these themes further by examining instances of violence against women by combatants, on all sides, and the issues around social homogeneity, misogyny, and concepts of national purity and revenge that arise from an analysis of these attacks.

Chapter five looks at the dynamics of IRA violence in 1920 and shows how the IRA were more likely to engage in acts of intimidation/violence against civilians, they perceived as opponents than in acts of violence against their armed opponents. This chapter explains the IRA's methods, choice of targets and whether these attacks can be explained as a military necessary or as attempts at revolutionary and societal control. Chapter six analyses the response of the crown forces to IRA violence, and reveals that in response to a limited IRA threat there was an overreaction from the crown forces in the form of extreme violence against civilians. This chapter goes against the current historical trend by arguing that violence of the crown forces was not spontaneous and fuelled by desire for revenge and alcohol but rather a calculated example of counter revolutionary violence intended to break republican morale, and that this violence fits into patterns of other contemporary conservative violence in Europe.

The final chapter explores how in response to the brutality implemented by the crown forces, the IRA in 1921, in turn, orchestrated more military operations against the crown forces but also acts of , lethal violence, against civilians. The chapter concludes by showing how these acts of violence and intimidation persisted into the truce and civil war periods of the Irish revolution.

The thesis argues that despite changing variables and fluctuations in the levels/forms of intimidation and violence against civilians, these types of actions remained constant features of the period – and that the violence and intimidation experienced by civilians, together with combatants, desire and attempts for control over the civilian population, are crucial for a thorough and balanced reading of both Irish nationalist violence and British governance in Ireland

Contents

<i>List of figures and tables</i>	II
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	IV
<i>List of Abbreviations</i>	VII
<i>Introduction</i>	1
1. Republican views on civilians	22
2. The views of incumbents' on civilians	48
3. Republican policing in County Kerry in 1920	72
4. Violence against women	97
5. IRA actions and interactions with civilians 1918-1920	117
6. Reprisals and other interactions with civilians by the crown forces	160
7. IRA actions and interactions with civilians 1920-1923	216
Conclusion	272
Bibliography	279

Figures, tables and maps	Page
1. Map of Kerry.	8
2. Kerry IRA No.1 Brigade battalions and company areas.	8
3. Kerry IRA No.2 Brigade battalions and company areas.	9
4. Dates and locations of the burning by the IRA of RIC huts and barracks in Kerry	72
5. Name, date and location of all women who had their hair forcibly removed by the IRA in Munster and Connacht in 1919-1920.	102
6. Breakdown of instances of forcible hair cutting by the IRA per Munster and Connacht counties.	104
7. Form of attack/interference/intimidation directed against civilians and number of instances in County Kerry in 1920	151
8. Number of instances of attack/intimidation/interference per Kerry IRA battalion in 1920.	153
9. Instances of regular IRA violence directed against combatants per Kerry IRA battalion	153
10. Instances of IRA violence directed against combatants per month in 1920	154
11. Instances of IRA violence directed against civilians per month in 1920	155
12. Incidents of IRA interactions with civilians versus between other combatants, per battalion area in 1920 in graph.	156
13. Incidents of IRA interactions with civilians versus between other combatants, per battalion area in 1920 in graph.	156
14. Form of action by the crown forces against civilians, 1920-1921 and a number of instances	204
15. Forms of action against civilians by crown forces, in 1920-21 in graph	205

16. Name, date and location of civilians killed by the crown forces in Kerry 1920-1921	206
17. Instances of IRA action against combatants per month, January 1921 to 11 th July 1921.	230
18. Instances of attack/intimidation/interference with civilians by the IRA per Kerry I.R.A battalion, January 1921 to 11 th July 1921.	232
19. Instances of IRA interactions with civilians versus with other combatants per battalion area in first six months of 1921 in graph.	233
20. Instances of attack/intimidation/interference with civilians by the IRA per month, January 1921 to 11 th July 1921.	233
21. Instances of IRA interaction with civilians versus with other combatants in the first six months of 1921 by graph.	234
22. Forms of attack/interference/intimidation of civilians by IRA January to 11 th July 1921, and number of instances.	234
23. Name, date, location of civilians killed by the IRA in County Kerry 1920-1921 together with whether they had previous service in the crown forces.	243

Tables 3– 23 are constructed from data collected from a reading of every available copy of *The Kerryman*, *Cork Examiner* and R.I.C. Inspector General, County Inspector and weekly summary of outrage reports from January 1920 – July 1921.

Acknowledgements

This project has been in gestation, in some shape or form, since 2010 and along the way many people have provided me with invaluable assistance and support over what has been a rewarding, but often difficult and taxing, process.

Firstly, I would like to extend my thanks to my supervisor Professor Eunan O’Halpin, for his quiet but persistent encouraging of my work and gentle but insistent prodding as to how it should develop. I would like to thank Eunan for his dry sense of humour and well informed view on Irish history and unique expertise in archival sources , that I have found endless informing and entertaining to be party to.

Also at Trinity Professor Anne Dolan has been, for many years, consistently encouraging and helpful , and I am very thankful for our many interesting and stimulating conversations on Irish revolutionary history and for her early support. Professor David Fitzpatrick was incredibly tolerant and encouraging of an intrepid and arrogant undergraduate and for allowing my work into *Terror in Ireland 1916-1923* in 2012, I would also like to thank David for his challenging of my ideas and always showing the necessity of having both sides of an argument presented. His mischievous sense of humour has always been much appreciated.

Early on Dr Brian Hanley very kindly shared his thoughts on the Irish revolution, historiography and on what sources to use. Dr Fearghal McGarry, gave me the most invaluable advice on what to study, how my work should proceed and how to conduct myself as a scholar, for which I will always be grateful.

A major thanks is extended to the Irish Research council for their financing of this project.

Along the way in Trinity I would also like to extend my thanks to Dr Martine Cuypers and Professor Alan Kramer for their help. All of the staff at Trinity Long Room Hub, particularly Professor Jane Ohlenmeyer, for their assistance and for providing me with such a pleasant environment in which to work.

Fellow students and colleagues at Trinity with whom I am grateful for their sharing of ideas and good company include ; Peter Brown, Colm MacGearailt, Chloe O’Reilly, Des Dalton, Elzpeth Payne, Alex Tierney, Daniel Purcell, John Porter, Conor Joy, Richard Howard and Thomas Tormey. In particular I would like to thank my good friend James DeHaan for his friendship and conversation

Professor Richard Grayson, of the University of Goldsmiths, was an early supporter of my work and I would like to thank him for his helping in clarifying my thoughts and with my application process. Dr John Borgonovo, of University College Cork, for his unfailing comradely attitude and sense of good fun over our in depth discussions on IRA violence.

Other people who have either given assistance, shared ideas with me, given me a public platform, or read over or published some of my work who I would like to thank include; Dr Adrian Grant, T. Ryle Dwyer, Weeshie Fogarty, Fergal Keane, Professor Patrick Geoghegan, Dr Conor Morrissey, Dr Fionnuala Walsh, Dr Brian Hughes, Dr Eve Morrison, Dr Gavin Foster, Jim Monaghan, Dr Páidraig Óg Ó Ruairc, John Dorney, Dr Mary McAullife, Dr Marnie Hay, Dr Tomás Irish, and Dr Richard McElligott.

I would also like to extend my gratitude for the helpful attitude and assistance of the staff at the National Archives of Ireland, the Irish military archives, the National archives of the United Kingdom, the County Kerry archives in the Tralee library and the archival staff in the British Imperial war museum, and Yvonne O'Brien and everyone at the Fingal Libraries for organising my talks on the 1916 Rising.

I would like to thank my uncle Maurice Earls and Enda Doherty, of the Dublin Review of books, for providing me with so many interesting books to review, and their giving such opportunities to a young scholar. I would also like to thank everyone at Books Upstairs for providing such a pleasant environment on which to take to my breaks.

My dear friends Sam McGovern, Brendan Cummings, Liam Gough, Joe McGuire, Jack Hogan and Chris Lock for their unfailing support, encouragement, good company in what is often quite a lonely pursuit. Thanks lads.

My sister Kate put me up several times during my research trips to London, I would like to thank her for this, her support, her interesting conversation and encouragement over the years, and for all the great places she took me to in the city when I wasn't in Kew.

My parents, Desmond and Catherine, deserve enormous credit. My father Desmond read countless draft applications and draft chapters, and I cannot express how much I have enjoyed our talks on everything from the particularities of certain parts of County Kerry to the writings of Mervyn Peake – and everything else in between, during our walks around the Dun Laoghaire area. My mother Catherine has been an unfailing source of support, good humour and love. I don't where I would be without their support.

This thesis has a twofold dedication.

Over the course of my research my uncle Brian Earls passed away. A scholar and a diplomat Brian possessed a unique and inspiring intellect whose company I enjoyed immensely from a young age. Brian took great pride and interest in my scholarly pursuits – but sadly passed away just as I was beginning this PhD. I am very sorry he did not get to see this finished product.

Finally my most heartfelt thanks go out to my partner, and love of my life, Bronwen. I will always be grateful for her encouragement, sharing of ideas, good humour, introducing me to so many new things and ideas – something sorely needed, and for her academic partnership, or Punkademic partnership I should say!

Over the final year of this PhD I was fortunate enough to see much of the world with her, and I would like to thank her for making this past year the most enjoyable I have yet experienced. This thesis is dedicated to her with love.

Abbreviations

AOH – Ancient Order of Hibernians

BMH – Bureau of Military History.

CI – County Inspector.

CP – Collins’ papers.

C/S – Chief of Staff.

CW Ops. – Civil war operations reports

DE – Dáil Éireann.

D/I – Director of Intelligence.

DI – District Inspector.

FS – Free State.

GHQ – General Headquarters.

GWR. – General Weekly report.

GS. General survey

HQ – Headquarters.

IG – Inspector General.

I/O – Intelligence Officer.

IPP – Irish Parliamentary Party

IRA – Irish Republican Army.

IRP – Irish Republican Police.

IWM – Imperial War Museum.

JUS. –Department of Justice

KC – Kerry Command.

MAI – Military Archives of Ireland.

MD – Minister for Defence.

MR – Monthly Report.

MSP – Military Service Pension.

NAI – National Archives of Ireland.

ND – Not dated.

NLI – National Library of Ireland.

O/C - Officer Commanding.

RIC – Royal Irish Constabulary.

SF – Sinn Féin.

TCD BL – Trinity College Dublin, Berkeley Library

TD - Teachtaí Dála.

TNA – The National Archives of the United Kingdom.

UCDA – University College Dublin archives.

VC – Victoria Cross.

WO – War Office.

WS – Witness Statement.

Between 1917-1923 much of Europe witnessed the birth of new nation states, together with national or social revolutions, civil war and unprecedented levels of paramilitary violence. Ireland was no exception to this process.¹ Between the years 1913-1923 the island of Ireland experienced a tumultuous and violent process that culminated in the establishment of two new political entities – Northern Ireland and the Irish Free State. Northern Ireland was the eventual product of Ulster Unionism's resistance to any type of break of the link with Great Britain together with an unwillingness on the part of the Protestant dominated north to have any part in a largely Catholic unitary state. Conversely, the Free State was the partial appeasement of Irish Nationalist demands for self-governance. Nationalism, together with the question of land ownership, had dominated Irish political life well before the establishment of the Union of Great Britain and Ireland in 1801. The Free State was considered, by some, to have been an incomplete solution to the national question which, for many now hinged on maintaining, what was seen as, the already established Republic. Intra - nationalist conflict broke out over the creation of the Free State. Some nationalists also violently resisted the establishment of the new Northern Irish state.

Violence had, however, been an aspect of Irish life for centuries but it became an all-encompassing factor in the early twentieth century. In 1912 the Larne gun running by Ulster Unionists had brought the possibility of physical force back into Irish politics and the subsequent Easter Rising in 1916 by Irish republicans made that possibility into a reality. Between the Easter Rising and the creation of the new states the island experienced the collapse of the traditional constitutional nationalist party. This was followed by the continuing rise of paramilitary bodies, the 1918 general election in which the majority of Irish nationalists backed the Sinn Féin party - giving their republican platform a clear mandate - and the development of a guerrilla warfare campaign by the Irish Republican Army (IRA). The IRA's campaign then provoked a British counter-insurgency campaign but by the summer of 1921 the British decided to engage in dialogue. The upshot of this process was the creation of Northern Ireland and the Irish Free State which, in turn, provoked the southern civil war of 1922-23 which saw the new Free State having to fight old comrades who refused to accept the legitimacy of the new states. In effect from 1918-1923 much of the country was consumed by irregular guerrilla warfare and counter-insurgency campaigns. Civilians or non-combatants would find themselves, as is inevitable in all guerrilla and revolutionary conflict, at the centre of this process. Combatants, of all sides, interacted with civilians in a myriad of forms, usually in violent and intimidatory ways. This

¹ See Robert Gerwarth, *The vanquished: why the First World War failed to end 1917-1923* (London, 2016).

thesis assesses the levels and nature of these civilian- combatant interactions, and uses County Kerry as a case study.

The Irish revolution is a historical phenomenon that is hard to define – was it a national or political revolution, or does the fact that from 1918-1921 the Irish nationalist IRA were primarily fighting the mainly Irish Royal Irish Constabulary (RIC) suggest that it was a type of civil war? This process was then followed by the intra - nationalist civil war of 1922-23. Bill Kissane, a leading authority on civil wars, notes that in civil war there are ‘no fixed battle lines...(making for civilians) escape from the theatre of war...much harder’.² The findings of this thesis correlate with Kissane’s - in Ireland civilians found themselves in the middle of guerrilla conflict few could entirely avoid. In fact non-lethal and then lethal violence against civilians was an integral element of the campaign by the IRA, crown forces and Free State army, making an understanding of this intimidation of civilians necessary for any reading of the revolution.

The revolutionary process has, understandably, preoccupied historians. The professionalization of Irish revolutionary studies began with the landmark publication of David Fitzpatrick’s *Politics and Irish life: provincial experience of war and revolution 1913-1921* in 1977 that examined the economic, social and political ramifications of the revolutionary process at local level. This was followed by other pioneering work in the 1980s and 1990s by, among others, Charles Townshend, Michael Hopkinson, Michael Laffan, Joost Augusteijn, Peter Hart, Richard English and John M. Regan. In more recent years work by Fearghal McGarry, Anne Dolan, John Borgonovo, D.M. Leeson, Gemma Clark and Gavin M. Foster have added further layers to our understanding of the period. These publications have challenged and redefined perceptions of the revolutionary process. Over the last twenty years biographies of leading personalities,³ in-depth political histories,⁴ the social composition of the IRA and the dynamics of the actual violence,⁵ a number of regional histories,⁶ the nature of the British counter-

² Bill Kissane, *Nations torn asunder: the challenge of civil war* (Oxford, 2016), pp. 31-2.

³ See Richard English, *Ernie O’Malley IRA intellectual* (Oxford, 1998) and Fearghal McGarry, *Eoin O’Duffy: a self-made hero* (Oxford, 2005) and Peter Hart, *Mick: the real Michael Collins* (London, 2005).

⁴ Michael Hopkinson, *Green against green: a history of the Irish civil war* (Dublin 1988), Michael Laffan, *The resurrection of Ireland: the Sinn Féin party 1916-1923* (Cambridge, 1999) and John M. Regan, *The Irish counter revolution, 1921-1936: Treatyite politics and settlement in independent Ireland* (Dublin, 1999) and John Borgonovo, *The dynamics of war and revolution: Cork city, 1916-1918* (Cork, 2013).

⁵ Joost Augusteijn, *From public defiance to guerrilla warfare: the experience of ordinary volunteers in the Irish war of independence* (Dublin, 1996), Peter Hart, *The IRA & its enemies: violence and communities in Cork 1916-1923* (Oxford, 1998) and Peter Hart, *The IRA at war 1916-1923* (Oxford, 2003).

⁶ Marie Coleman, *County Longford and the Irish revolution, 1910 -1923* (Dublin, 2003) and John O’Callaghan, *Revolutionary Limerick: the republican campaign for independence in Limerick, 1913 -1921* (Dublin, 2010).

insurgency,⁷ the question of the legacy of the civil war,⁸ and examinations of arson and class conflict in the southern civil war have appeared.⁹ However, considerable gaps still exist in relation to a full understanding of the period. One major gap is the nature of the state formation process in relation to what became Northern Ireland.¹⁰ Most of the studies produced, so far, also place a heavy emphasis on the combatants of the revolution at the expense of understanding how civilians or non-combatants lived through this period. Now this thesis is, admittedly, combatant centred – as any study of violent revolution cannot help but be somehow combatant centred - but it aims to try and lessen the gap by examining how the combatants both thought about and interacted with the civilian population around them.

This is not to say that civilians and their role in the conflict has not been examined by other scholars. Since the late 1990s and the publication of Peter Hart's *The IRA & its enemies: violence and community in Cork 1916-1923* the role of civilians has become increasingly considered within the historiography. Hart highlighted the brutality of the IRA's campaign in Cork and how frequently civilians fell victim to this brutality.¹¹ Hart's assertion of their being, at least, some partial anti-Protestant sectarian aspect in regard to civilians targeted by the IRA has proven highly controversial and continues to be debated, and will be discussed shortly.¹² But Hart's work very much set a standard and clearly influenced Fearghal McGarry's approach to exploring the conflict in County Monaghan,¹³ while on the other hand John O'Callaghan's examination of the conflict in County Limerick made a number of criticisms of Hart's conclusions.¹⁴ In recent years other scholars have also further developed and explored themes for which he set a precedent. Gemma Clark's *Everyday violence in the Irish civil war* examines the prevalence of arson in the civil war and how civilians suffered disproportionately in that conflict.¹⁵ Similarly, Brian Hughes has recently examined the prevalence of IRA intimidation

⁷ D.M Leeson, *The Black and Tans: British police and Auxiliaries in the Irish war of independence* (Oxford, 2011).

⁸ Anne Dolan, *Commemorating the Irish civil war: history and memory, 1923-2000* (Cambridge, 2003).

⁹ Gemma M. Clark, *Everyday violence in the Irish civil war* (Cambridge, 2014) and Gavin M. Foster, *The Irish civil war and society* (London, 2015).

¹⁰ Honourable exceptions include T.K Wilson, *Frontiers of violence: conflict and identity in Ulster and Upper Silesia, 1918-1922* (Oxford, 2010), Tim Pat Coogan, *Michael Collins: a biography* (London, 1990) and Robert Lynch, *The northern IRA and the early years of partition 1920-1922* (Dublin, 2006). The subject is clearly worthy of further academic research.

¹¹ Hart, *The IRA & its enemies*, pp. 292-315.

¹² See John M. Regan, 'The 'Bandon Valley massacre' as a historical problem' in *The Journal of the Historical Association*, Volume 97, Issue 325, January 2012; Barry Keane, *Massacre in west Cork: the Dunmanaway and Ballygorman killings* (Cork, 2014) and Andy Bielenberg, John Borgonovo and James Donnelly, 'Something of the nature of a massacre: the Bandon Valley killings revisited', *Éire Ireland*, Volume 49, Issue 3 & 4, 2014.

¹³ McGarry, *Eoin O'Duffy*, pp. 47-73.

¹⁴ O'Callaghan, *Revolutionary Limerick*, pp. 127-8.

¹⁵ See Clark, *Everyday violence*.

of civilians between 1918-1921.¹⁶ This study is admittedly indebted to Hart, Clark and Hughes' work, however, it brings in a new series of factors. Primarily, this thesis is concerned with how the IRA and the crown forces treated civilians – considerable work by Hart, Clark and Hughes has examined how the IRA dealt with civilians, but no scholar has examined how both groupings treated civilians and how these respective treatments compared to one another. Indeed, there has been an unfortunate dearth of scholarly research into the campaign by the crown forces against civilians in Ireland, and, it also needs to be said, loyalist paramilitary violence against civilians in what was to become Northern Ireland.

It is now necessary to consider how this thesis adds to the most recent historiography of this period and why the focus was placed on one county. During the course of my research two monographs were published that touch directly on themes and topics close to those explored in this thesis; Brian Hughes with *Defying the I.R.A: intimidation, coercion and communities during the Irish revolution*, and Gemma Clark with *Everyday violence in the Irish civil war*. In the former study the emphasis is placed on concepts of defiance; specifically, who defied the IRA, what were the motivations behind this defiance and, like this study, Hughes theorises as to how we can understand the IRA's targeting of these people. He identifies concept of self-preservation, alternative codes of identity outside of the national structure, such as that of family and self-preservation, which motivated acts of defiance. Hughes concludes that such acts of defiance, and indeed the IRA's targeting of those they deemed as oppositional, are 'inextricable from the broader narrative' of the revolution.¹⁷

This thesis concurs with Hughes' conclusion, but approaches the issue of combatant-civilian interactions from a separate perspective. Hughes is interested in concepts of army-civilian relations and how the new civilian Dáil government used the IRA as a means to further their alternative state building project, his work deftly and deliberately avoids looking at the actual military confrontations between the IRA and their enemies. This study adopts a different angle: the IRA considered themselves to be at war, at the most basic of levels they considered themselves to be fighting for Irish national autonomy. They considered themselves to be soldiers and much of their rhetoric focused on such. Accordingly, the findings of this thesis are placed next to how the actual intra combatant conflict played out, as the conflict was the most crucial aspect of their identity – the thesis examines how these two strands of IRA activity, violence against civilians and violence between combatants, related to one another, the similarities and differences between the two, but also, crucially, the fluctuations and levels with

¹⁶ See Brian Hughes, *Defying the I.R.A: intimidation, coercion and communities during the Irish revolution 1917-1921*, (Manchester, 2016).

¹⁷ Ibid, p. 207.

which both were implemented by the IRA. This gives the historian the tools to correlate and see which strand was more common.

Hughes' study examines local and grass roots experience of the revolution to examine what he describes as the 'common experience' or the 'closest to that felt by most on the island', as will be discussed below, he eschews the county model by instead focusing on certain communities.¹⁸ Clark on the other hand uses a three county model to examine the civilian experience of civil war in the Munster counties of Limerick, Tipperary and Waterford. Similarly, thematic, as opposed to chronological, Clark examines arson and specific forms of intimidation. Clark's conclusions are that in the uncertain times there were moves to create a type of national homogenisation through persecution of those deemed to be outside of the appropriate national or ethno-religious boundaries together with attacks occurring based on land hunger and generations-old grudges, and a decreasing minority population was the result of this process. Clark's world is a murky one where the line between civilian and combatant and, indeed, the IRA are often indistinguishable from agrarian agitators; sometimes those behind an outrage appear to be acting in both capacities. It is obviously difficult, given the sources, to make definitive conclusions but the fact that political actors are not differentiated from agrarian agitators means the motivations behind the outrages she examines are hard to fully substantiate, leaving the actions, she examines, shrouded in uncertainty. In order to create a certain degree of clarity instead this thesis focuses on actions that can be attributed to either military incumbents or insurgents.

Clark's work argues that the violence experienced in Ireland was certainly restrained by the standards of the violence occurring in post-war Europe.¹⁹ This is irrefutable. Ireland is sometimes compared to Finland – a country with a similar sized population, it had experienced a linguistic/cultural revival at much the same time as Ireland and had a tradition of achieving greater autonomy from Russia through constitutional means. In Finland's civil war, however, unlike Ireland's, there were mass indiscriminate shootings, conducted by both sides, together with prison camps for insurgents that put the Curragh or Kilmainham jail to shame in terms of brutality.²⁰ Regardless of this apparent restraint, Clark writes that 'no one was safe', in other words any protestant or a person seen as a loyalist was liable to be attacked.²¹ Similarly, Hughes writes that the violence, he examines, was the most likely people were to suffer from.²² This

¹⁸ Ibid, p. 205.

¹⁹ Clark, *Everyday violence in the Irish civil war*, p. 178.

²⁰ See Pertti Haapala and Marko Tikka, 'Revolution, civil war and terror in Finland in 1918' in Robert Gerwarth and John Horne (eds), *War in peace: paramilitary violence in Europe after the Great War* (Oxford, 2012).

²¹ Clark, *Everyday violence in the Irish civil war*, p. 203.

²² Hughes, *Defying the I.R.A.*, p. 207.

creates a paradigm in which civilians were most likely to be under threat from the IRA or to lesser extent nationalist agrarian agitators: this is unsatisfactory. Yes, violence was restrained, when compared to the Finnish example, but, incumbent violence by the crown forces, though the levels of actual killing were low, displays unrestrained and indiscriminate traits, that bears a resemblance to contemporary violence in continental Europe, that Hughes and Clark do not assess.

This thesis shows that violence by the crown forces directed against civilians dwarfed that conducted by the IRA and was more brutal, indiscriminate and long drawn out. Similarly, in Hughes and Clark's work as their studies are thematic as opposed to chronological, they do not allow for the violence they examine to have variables influenced by certain moments in the revolution. Hughes, for instance, writes that the IRA started killing civilians, as spies and informers, in early 1921 as they believed their former methods of using written warnings to deter collaborators etc, used in 1920, were no longer working and that more extreme measures needed to be resorted to.²³ This leaves out the crown forces who had begun to murder civilians in late 1920. This thesis will explore whether the fact that the crown forces brought in unprecedented levels of brutality, should be seen as an influencer in the IRA's decision to adopt similar methods.

Similarly, Clark places great emphasis on the role of arson in the civil war period. As a precedent she describes arson as a weapon by sectarian mobs, on both sides of the divide in Ulster between 1920-1922, and a number of other examples of the use of arson, used by Irish Catholics, going as far back as 1690.²⁴ She also writes that 'arson was also a persistent feature of the Irish war of independence, not only in clashes between auxiliaries and Black and Tans, and the local IRA in what would become the Irish Free State, but also, in the republicans' campaign in mainland Britain'. She goes on to describe fires started by republicans in Britain in some depth.²⁵ The word 'clashes' is curious, the inference being that when the Black and Tans engaged in arson they were involved in military operations against other combatants that necessitated its use. This thesis shows that in no case, when the crown forces engaged in arson, were they under fire, meaning their acts of arson cannot be termed military 'clashes', rather operations against civilians. As civilians did not fight back they definitively cannot be termed 'clashes'. Therefore, Clark does, seem to underplay the level of violence, in terms of arson, used against civilians by the crown forces between 1919-21, and to relegate it to an entirely military sphere.

²³ Hughes, *Defying the I.R.A.*: (PhD thesis, Trinity College Dublin, 2014), p 189.

²⁴ Clark, *Everyday violence in the Irish civil war*, pp. 55-60.

²⁵ *Ibid*, p.56.

This thesis contends that to understand how IRA violence developed, as Hughes and Clark describe it, first an understanding of the methods of the crown forces is also necessary for a more complete understanding of both the development of the IRA's methods but also the use of violence against civilians in the revolutionary period. Hughes in his conclusion writes this is the case and suggests that more scholars should look at the activities of the crown forces.²⁶

In this respect, to understand the development of violence in Ireland, a chronological approach, as opposed to thematic, is helpful as it is possible to see how factors and methods changed over time, often in relation to new stimuli, crucially the introduction of the Black and Tans and Auxiliaries in 1920. Accordingly, the crucial chapters, five, six and seven, that outline the development of combatant-civilian interactions adopt a chronological approach.

Obviously, the reader, at this point, may be asking why the selection of county Kerry. The study of a single county as pioneered by David Fitzpatrick and Peter Hart and added to by among others, Marie Coleman and Fergus Campbell, or the multi-county model adopted by Joost Auguesteijn and Gemma Clark appears to be well covered ground. Seemingly, the county or multi county model has been well examined and does not need to be extended to every single county in Ireland and new methods and means of analysing the period should be adopted. Brian Hughes, for instance, is interested in the experience of communities and uses the original and effective method of alternating between the national and then the very local.²⁷ The county model, as used in this thesis, does I believe, still, hold several merits as a means of understanding or analysis.

Firstly, the IRA themselves were defined on the basis of the county. Charles Townshend has written that the Brigade structure that developed became integral to the 'identity and purpose' of Volunteers in each district.²⁸ The county structure has also been used as the administrative basis of local government and since its inception the GAA has always used the county structure. In many respects the county model remains the logical model for local studies in Irish history, due to county identity being such a strong aspect in Irish identity. But, the study of a county can in fact reveal more, as this thesis will show. Kerry IRA men rarely ventured outside of the county, but, what makes this more interesting is that Kerry IRA men rarely ventured far from their own parishes. Members of the Listowel battalion, in north Kerry, had limited contact or involvement with their colleagues in Tralee. As will be seen, other traditional rivalries, that still persist, between Killarney and Tralee existed within the Kerry IRA of the revolutionary period.

²⁶ Hughes, *Defying the IRA*, p. 212.

²⁷ Ibid, p. 15.

²⁸ Townshend, *The republic*, p. 38.

Table one. Map of Kerry.



Table two. Kerry IRA No.1 Brigade battalions and company areas.²⁹

Kerry No.1 Brigade battalions	Company areas.
Tralee, 1 st and 9 th Batts.	Boherbee, Strand Street, Curraheen, Rock Street, Farmer's Bridge, Oakpark, Blennerville, Ballyroe.
Ardfert, 2 nd Batt.	Ardfert, Ballyheigue, Kerryhead, Causeway, Kilmoyley, Abbeydorney, Killflynn, Churchill.
Lixnaw, 3 rd Batt.	Lixnaw, Leam, Rathea, Ballydonoghue, Ballybunion, Ballyduff, Ardoughter, Kilflynn.
Castlegregory, 4 th Batt.	Cloghane, Cappa, Ballinara, Kilcummin, Aughacasla, Kilshannig, Fahamore. Castlegregory, Camp, Churchill.
Dingle, 5 th Batt.	Annascaul, Lispole, Dingle, Ventry Ballyferriter, Ballydavid, Cuas, Milltown.

²⁹ See John O'Callaghan, 'Munster' in John Crowley, Donal Ó Drisceoil, Mike Murphy, John Borgonovo (eds), *Atlas of the Irish revolution*, (Cork, 2016), p. 554.

Listowel, 6 th Batt	Tarbert, Behins, Bedford, Fingue, Newtown, Listowel, Knockanure, Beale, Duagh, Ballylongford, Asdee, Kilmorna
Ballymacelligott, 7 th Batt.	Ballymacelligott, Brosna, Castleisland, Cordal, Knocknagoshel, Lyrecroumpane, Kielduff.
Ballybunion, 8 th Batt. A subsequent merger of the 3 rd and 6 th Battalions formed in the summer of 1921.	Ballylongford, Ballydonoghue, Tarbert, Beale, Asdee, Ballybunion.
Tralee, 9 th Batt. Formed in the summer of 1921 out of Tralee companies no longer loyal to Brigade structure.	Strand Street, Blennerville, Curraheen, Churchill, Ballyroe.

30

Table three. Kerry IRA No.2 Brigade battalions and company areas.

Kerry No. 2 Brigade.	Company areas.
Castleisland, 1 st Batt	Anablaha, Currow, Rathnanane, Knockrour, Scartaglin, Lyreacroumpane, Brosna, Cordal.
Firies, 2 nd Batt	Ashill, Ballymacelligott, Currans, Firies, Killatallagh, Keel.
Kenmare , 3 rd Batt	Glenlough, Sneem, Tahilla, Templenoe, Kenmare, Crossroads, Kilgarvan, Bonane, Dauros, Ardee, Lauragh.
Killarney, 4 th Batt,	Ballyhar, Beaufort, Black Valley, Fossa, Killarney, Kilcumin, Lissivigeen, Listry, Muckcross.
Rathmore, 5 th Batt	Anablaha, Barraduff, Bealnadeega, Rathmore, Gneeveguilla. Glenflesk,
Kilorglin, 6 th Batt.	Kilorglin, Milltown, Glencar, Kilgobnet, Glenbeigh, Dungeel, Caragh lake.

³⁰ Idem.

In 2002, the late, Michael Hopkinson, in *The Irish War of Independence* wrote ‘personal antipathies and clannish feuding within the IRA’ created a lack of co-ordination and few notable achievements.³¹ This might seem an accurate assessment if the relationships between IRA leaders in the county are examined. Outside of Tralee few in Kerry No.1 got on with Brigade Commander Paddy Cahill, a journalist and cinema owner. IRA intelligence officer Tadhg Kennedy recalled that ‘Paddy was very difficult to get on with’ unless you became close to him.³² Liam Deasy, O/C of the west Cork No.3 Brigade, described him as ‘headstrong’.³³ But having a prickly or difficult disposition was not the sole reserve of Paddy Cahill. In the civil war the Kerry No.1 Commander Humphry Murphy, did not get on with the Kerry No.2 Commander John Joe Rice.³⁴ Murphy also did not get on with his effective second in command, John Joe Sheehy, while flying column commander, Thomas McEllistrim, in fact, sat out of the civil war and disliked Murphy.³⁵ John Joe Rice, O/C Kerry No.2, also recalled that disputes and disagreements were not the sole preserve of the leadership but occurred at lower levels within the IRA’s structure in the county. He remembered that he had to spend ‘all my time tramping from one company to another fixing disputes and squabbles’.³⁶ These rivalries or idiosyncrasies created revolutionary experiences that differed from town to town, or parish to parish. Peter Hart wrote that ‘the revolution was not so much a national conflict as a collection of regional ones’.³⁷ The fact that Kerry’s experience was so varied in both intensity and form from place to place make it a fruitful area to study to highlight these features, and will help, perhaps, to re-examine the concept of a county history.

Kerry in itself was selected on the basis of two reasons. Kerry in the south west is situated in an isolated and predominately rural part of the country, but within the county there is considerable geographical and socio-economic variety. The northern part of the County, where Listowel is the major town, and the eastern part of the county, where Castleisland and Killarney are the major towns, is generally made up of flat prosperous farm land and gentle hills. The western and southern parts of the county, made up of the Ivereagh and Dingle peninsulas are altogether more wild and mountainous. In doing initial research into Kerry it became obvious that each section of the county experienced wildly different versions of revolution. In the north and east, due to presence of larger farms, agrarian and counter-agrarian agitation took place,

³¹ Hopkinson, *The Irish war of independence*, p. 127.

³² Tadhg Kennedy, BMH, WS, 1413.

³³ Ernie O’Malley, *The men will talk to me: the west Cork interviews*, Andy Bielenberg, John Borgonovo, Pádraig Óg Ó Ruairc (eds) (Cork, 2015), p.188.

³⁴ KC, GWR, 1 Jan. 1923, MAI/CW/OPS/08/08.

³⁵ KC, GWR, 21 Mar. 1923, MAI/CW/OPS/08/08.

³⁶ Townshend, *The Republic*, p. 295.

³⁷ Hart, *The IRA at war 1916-1923*, p. 31.

but this was not repeated in the less prosperous south and west. Similarly, in each region the local IRA units adopted non-homogenous methods to deter people seen as opponents or potential opponents. For instance, Cahirciveen, in the south western corner of the County, experienced little intra-combatant violence but the forced hair cutting of women was more common there than anywhere else in the county. Other areas have similar idiosyncrasies: in Tralee the tarring and feathering of potential opponents occurred but was not repeated elsewhere in the county. By placing these separate experiences, side by side, Kerry can show that methods used by revolutionary insurgents can differ from place to place and how the choice of methods by these insurgents can make the experience of irregular conflict, for the victim, very different even within a seemingly homogenous zone. Focusing on Kerry, can show, the experience of a county cannot be reduced to a single narrative. The discrepancy of forms within Kerry itself necessitates a county study, even if to highlight that a county's experience cannot be easily reduced. There is another reason though.

In 2001 Kerry historian T. Ryle Dwyer wrote his admirable *Tans, terror and troubles. Kerry's real fighting story, 1913-1923*. Dwyer provides a thorough narrative of events in Kerry, whilst also placing the county's experience in the perspective of events at national level, but as a summary of events and a popular history Dwyer leaves considerable room for the historian to further analyse the events he examines. For instance, Dwyer places considerable focus on the large-scale reprisal in November 1920, and how it was unprecedented and, indeed, recognised as such in the international press at the time.³⁸ On initial research it appeared to be an interesting avenue to pursue considering Kerry's, apparent, reputation for quiescence. In 1933, the leader of the semi – fascist Blueshirt movement, Eoin O'Duffy, an IRA veteran himself, went as far as to declare that Kerry's only contribution to the war of independence was 'the shooting [of] an unfortunate soldier the day before the Truce'.³⁹ In a lesser known quote west Cork IRA leader, Tom Barry, would say that all Kerry did was to shoot a decent police inspector and his colleague at the Listowel races.⁴⁰ These claims were absurd and reflected the tempestuous and sometimes fanciful views of both men but these sentiments have influenced how the county has been treated in the historiography Hopkinson described the county's contribution to the war as 'disappointing'.⁴¹ The elephant in the room is that Kerry, of course, borders County Cork. Cork, as Peter Hart has shown, experienced the most IRA violence per capita in all of Ireland

³⁸ T. Ryle Dwyer, *Tans, terror and troubles. Kerry's real fighting story 1913-1923* (Cork, 2001), pp. 228 -254.

³⁹ Michael Hopkinson, *The Irish war of independence* (Dublin, 2002), p.125.

⁴⁰ Michael Hopkinson, 'Barry, Thomas Bernadine', James Maguire and James Quinn (eds), *Dictionary of Irish biography* (Cambridge, 2009).

⁴¹ Hopkinson, *The Irish war of independence*, p.125.

meaning that Kerry will always be judged harshly next to its nearest neighbour.⁴² As the experience of a county in the Irish revolution tends, or seems, to be judged by the level of IRA violence, should we instead now ask more about the implementation of violence by the crown forces?

This thesis shows that the crown forces in Kerry displayed unprecedented, and unprovoked, levels of violence against civilians; what is explored here is the rationale, effects and implementation of this violence. Interestingly it acted as a deterrent to some IRA units and a spur or call to arms for increased violence for others, often directed at civilians making it a vital component of understanding the process of escalation. In the recent scholarship the role of incumbent violence as a primary escalatory factor in the conflict has not been sufficiently recognised: making one area of particularly high incumbent violence a fruitful area of study.

Not that there are exceptions. D.M. Leeson, in his 2011 book *The Black and Tans: British police and auxiliaries in the Irish war of independence*, considers the issue of incumbent violence in the 1919-21 conflict in considerable depth. Leeson, like Hughes, takes a national angle but focuses on how particular towns experienced reprisals. Following in the path of historians, such as Augusteijn and Hart, who considered who joined the IRA, and why they fought the way they did, similarly, Leeson examines who joined the RIC in 1902 looking at their social background, their motivations and why they acted the way they did. Leeson's conclusion on incumbent violence are that 'in many cases the police chose their victims with care, even in the midst of a riot' and that, 'the police attacked well known republicans and left other people alone'.⁴³ Looking at Kerry, goes against Leeson's theory, as the violence conducted by the crown forces was slapdash, often misdirected at members of Sinn Féin as opposed to the IRA, and created indiscriminate suffering for the entire civilian community as opposed to selective suffering. The thesis argues that these activities should be considered as part of wider a phenomenon of post-war reactionary conservative violence intent on eliminating threats to the status quo and preserving national integrity, in this case maintaining the UK's traditional borders. It is hoped that by looking at one county, with high levels of incumbent violence, it can highlight, that the current understanding of such violence, as upheld by Leeson, in the 1919-21 conflict can be expanded upon.

Since the publication of *The IRA & its enemies* in 1998, much of the historical debate on revolutionary Ireland has focused on the southern protestant experience. Hart in controversial and striking terminology wrote the southern protestant experience was far more brutal and

⁴² See Hart, *The IRA at war*, pp 30-62.

⁴³ Leeson, *The black and Tans*, p. 173.

unpleasant than had been generally accepted and that the experience of many protestants bore a resemblance to ethnic cleansing.⁴⁴ Similarly, Gemma Clarke has written, in less dramatic language than Hart, ‘the unavoidable trend that emerges is one of minority [i.e. southern protestant] persecution’.⁴⁵ The conclusions of Hart have been hotly debated, many feel that his conclusions are exaggerated, and the emerging consensus appears to be that protestants were often unduly targeted but that the decline in the protestant population after the foundation of the Free State can be attributed to a range, or combination of factors, but that persecution did play a role.⁴⁶ In the final chapter of this thesis which deals with truce and civil war period this issue, almost inevitably, comes up.

The extended Blennerhasset family, a family of protestant farmers who had branches in east Kerry, Kilorglin and around Tralee, frequently fell victim to attacks by the IRA motivated by factors, including, but not exclusively, land hunger, dislike of unionism and open sectarianism. As this thesis shows they were not the only protestant people in Kerry to fall victims to such attacks, while the IRA leadership seem to have turned a blind eye. This is a crucial aspect of the thesis and cannot be discounted or ignored. Yet, there is the simultaneous pitfall of being dragged down by this one issue in Irish revolutionary history with the result being that these events are not being placed in their proper context. Accordingly, this thesis argues that these events should be placed in the context of an environment that had undergone unprecedented violence that created a situation where acts of brutality could become more permissible. Violence against protestants did occur, but violence was also conducted against all sides of the community and that, too, needs equal recognition. Clark writes that in the civil war, for the minority protestant population or for those with too obvious a link to the old administration, that among these groups ‘no one was safe’.⁴⁷ This can be extended though, between 1918-1921 ‘no one was safe’ if they had too obvious a connection to the crown forces, but, crucially, regardless of politics, religion, ethnicity or personality type from 1920-1921 ‘no one was safe’ from the indiscriminate and brutal violence of the crown forces in Ireland. This thesis contends that these aspects are ‘inextricable’ from any understanding of the revolutionary period.

The first chapters examine how combatants thought about civilians. Initially, the thesis shows that in later years republican veterans liked to maintain that the majority of civilians,

⁴⁴ See Hart, *The IRA at war*, pp. 223-241.

⁴⁵ Clark, *Everyday violence in the Irish civil war*, p.198.

⁴⁶ See David Fitzpatrick, ‘Protestant depopulation and the Irish revolution’, in *Irish historical studies*, (November, 2013), volume 34, issue 52, and, Andy Bielenberg, ‘Exodus’: the emigration of southern protestants during the Irish war of independence and the civil war’, *Past and present*, (February, 2013), volume 218, issue 1.

⁴⁷ Clark, *Everyday violence in the Irish civil war*, p. 203.

supported their campaign, but that side by side, with this more standard narrative most republicans also accepted, and recognised, that they faced considerable civilian opposition. These oppositional civilians were remembered with a notable, and particularly aggressive, vitriol. The next chapter then shows that, from the opposing side, in the records of the crown forces, there existed a belief that a moderate majority continued to oppose the republican movement and that those who supported the republican movement were lower down in society or not respectable people. But alongside this attitude there also existed the belief that reprisals were necessary and had the desired effect on 'disloyal' civilians, and other startling justifications for the use of violence against civilians. Both chapters reflect a hostility towards civilians that introduces and provides the context for the levels of violence that would be orchestrated against civilians by both sides during the conflict. These two chapters also address how these issues and concerns developed and played out in the civil war of 1922-23, looking at how republicans and the forces of the Free State considered civilians, showing how republican insurgents and state incumbents all held remarkably consistent views through the period.

The following chapters reveal that these anti-civilian sentiments, in fact, reflected how combatants actually treated civilians. The third chapter discusses the republican police force that developed in reaction to the breakdown of the regular police force, the RIC, in the spring of 1920. These republican police were involved in the prevention of regular crime but also involved in quite severe social control by preventing emigration, restricting alcohol consumption and restricting the movement of Irish Travellers. Chapter four examines violence against civilian women in the form of forced hair cutting and specifically acts as a link between the chapters on IRA violence and violence by the crown forces, as it examines how the tactics of the two sides came to mirror one another.

The fifth chapter reveals that in 1920 the IRA were, in fact, more involved in intimidating and attacking, in non-lethal ways, civilians regarded as active or potential opponents than they were in attacking their armed opponents. The sixth chapter then shows that in late 1920, in reaction to relatively limited lethal IRA action, there was a disproportionate response, directed primarily against civilians, from the newly arrived reinforcement crown forces in the form of the Black and Tans and Auxiliaries. The response of these new recruits was inconsistent and shambolic but it consistently targeted civilians. The violence of the crown forces against civilians was more brutal than republican intimidation of civilians, but importantly acted as a spur for the IRA to take on the crown forces more often but also to engage in new and different forms of violence against civilians.

The seventh chapter shows how in late 1920 up until the truce of 1921, in response to the reprisal policy of the crown forces, more regular military engagements took place, initiated by the IRA. Alongside the intensification of violence, this chapter also shows that the IRA adopted a more aggressive policy towards civilians, and began to shoot those whom they believed to be actively working against them. This chapter, goes on to show the levels and forms of violence against civilians by the IRA continued through the truce of 1921 and into the civil war and even post-civil war periods in ever fluctuating and changing forms.

The chapters on the nature of the IRA's campaign include summations of their regular military campaign against the RIC and British Army. This is in order to show the background against which the IRA's activities against perceived civilian opponents took place but also to show how the two aspects – the military campaign and their activities against civilians – related to one and other and which of the two the IRA were more likely to engage in.

The thesis argues that a chronological-based understanding is central to the dynamics of intimidation. It is evident that the IRA's campaign, against civilians, moved from benevolent policing and non-lethal intimidation in 1920 to more murderous and ruthless policy in 1921-23, and the root of this change was the arrival of British reinforcements in 1920 who were willing to use lethal violence against civilians from the outset. Accordingly, this thesis shows how non-lethal violence was prevalent but transitioned to lethal violence as a result of changing variables. However, also recognising the inherent hostility towards civilians that existed before the arrival of these new recruits, is a key element of the thesis, as civilians were being intimidated and attacked by the IRA as early as 1918-19 but in non-lethal ways. Together with providing explanations for this hostility and violence against civilians by the IRA this thesis will show violence was rooted in military necessity but also other factors such as the desire for national political and cultural homogeneity. The thesis also argues the violence of the crown forces against civilians can be best understood in the context of other counter-insurgency campaigns and other contemporary European violent conservative forces trying to maintain the status quo.

The structure of this work changed over time in reaction to what appeared in the sources. Initially, I had hoped to produce a comparative study between two counties – Roscommon was the other selected county – to see how the issues I wanted to investigate played out in two separate areas, hoping to highlight regional similarities and discrepancies. It quickly became apparent, however, that a more in depth look at one county was necessary to provide the necessary totality and for the purpose of focus or clarity. This was not least due to regional variations within Kerry itself that provide fruitful comparisons, together with how violence and

intimidation developed and had certain particularities due to unique conditions in Kerry –and these issues being so complex and varied making it necessary to work on Kerry alone. It was felt, accordingly, that a single county study would be necessary for the purposes of clarity and the need to be concise. Separate regions have wildly different dynamics and the thesis may have simply been an analysis of inconsistencies and thus have lacked focus, and also diluted the importance of certain issues by not giving them enough attention.

This thesis does set out to be more than exclusive county study though. In order to achieve a greater degree of context a number of other elements are included. All chapters make substantive references to individuals and events outside of the county – to show that the treatment of civilians had similar dynamics and variables across the country. The material for this had been collected from earlier stages of research when the thesis had a larger geographical scope.

The thesis hopes to show how the Kerry example relates to the findings of Peter Hart’s examination of Cork and Augusteijn’s survey of Derry, Tipperary, Wexford and Mayo, together with the work of other scholars whose themes touch on issues raised in the thesis, such as by John Borgonovo, Gavin Foster, Gemma Clark and Brian Hughes. It is hoped the thesis acts as a case study of violent revolution and counter-revolution in one area rather than as a straight chronological county history.⁴⁸

The primary source material for this thesis come from a variety of archives. The following is an outline of the sources used and how they were used. One of the main sources are Bureau of Military History (BMH) statements - collected by the Irish Military from veterans of the 1916-1923 period, in the 1940s and 1950s. The BMH is an invaluable record of how the period was remembered, particularly in regard to motivations, personalities involved, how the conflict(s) played out beyond county level but to parish level, and indeed for how the conflict played out generally. But due to the lapse of time between the events remembered and when they were actually recorded I would be wary of using the BMH statements in regard to establishing a factual record of events – dates, names and events are often misremembered. As will be shown, degrees of arrogance and the desire to establish a certain version of events are common in many of these statements – many statements, in fact, contradict each other. Instead the BMH statements are used mainly to show how IRA veterans conceived of civilians and their memories of a particular reprisal or IRA action and the context around these events. They are not used though to build up some of the quantitative conclusions.

⁴⁸ The best example of this type of scholarship would be O’Callaghan, *Revolutionary Limerick*

There has been a failing in some of the emerging historiography to treat sources, such as the BMH, in the requisite manner, sadly making some recent scholarship unsatisfactory. An over reliance on the BMH is seen, and frankly to be expected, in the more nationalistic/sentimental non-academic histories, however, this approach of being selective with sources is now apparent in more scholarly works.⁴⁹ In 2015 Paul Taylor published *Heroes or traitors: experiences of southern Irish soldiers returning from the great war 1919-1939*, which was the end product of a PhD thesis undertaken at Oxford. In this book Taylor produces a number of tables which apparently prove that ex-servicemen were not overrepresented among the victims of IRA intimidation and that if they were targeted it was due, more often than not, to legitimate suspicions rather than simply for being ex-servicemen.⁵⁰ My own findings in this thesis, to an extent concur with those of Taylor. However, for his sources he used no contemporaneous material instead relying on the BMH and Irish Grants Committee (ICG) both bodies being set up after the event. The failings of the BMH purely as a source to create quantitative data regarding actual occurrences on certain dates have been addressed above, but the ICG is equally problematic.

Set up in 1926 the ICG was to award people from the Free State who suffered on account of their 'loyalty' to the British Government, primarily after the Truce of July 1921. Brian Hughes has recently shown that the ICG received applications from any numbers of opportunists and liars, and often applications were not, in fact, successful.⁵¹ It seems almost bizarre to use either the BMH or ICG as a means of creating a data base of quantitative fact – when both let people engage in flights of fancy and were subject to the idiosyncrasies of the author of the particular applicant or witness. Also Taylor uses next to no contemporary sources such as newspapers or contemporary IRA or crown forces documents, to bolster his data. This thesis hopefully avoids these problems by placing sources such as the BMH in their appropriate context, and through the fullest utilisation of as many contemporary sources as are available to me, and sources from all sides to the conflict(s) as possible.

The following explains my research methods. Firstly, three contemporary newspapers were examined in an exhaustive fashion; the British national daily, *The Manchester Guardian*, the Irish daily, the *Cork Examiner*, and the weekly county based paper, *The Kerryman*, – every available copy of these papers have now been examined for this period. *The Kerryman* was

⁴⁹ See for instance Joe Ambrose, *Sean Treacy and the Tan war* (Cork, 2007), this is not true of simply studies of the 1918-1923 period but the earlier revolutionary period see for instance Ruan O'Donnell, *Sixteen lives: Patrick Pearse* (Dublin, 2016).

⁵⁰ Paul Taylor, *Heroes or traitors: experiences of southern Irish soldiers returning from the great war, 1919-1939* (Manchester, 2015), pp 75-88.

⁵¹ Hughes, *Defying the IRA*, p. 109.

selected on the basis of it being Kerry's primary local paper, the *Cork Examiner* as it was one of Ireland's national papers but as it was printed in Cork it had a Munster centric focus, and *The Manchester Guardian* as it probably the one paper printed in Britain which showed the most interest in reporting on events in Ireland. This was complemented by the RIC reports of the Inspector General of the force and the County Inspector for Kerry together with the Weekly reports of outrages produced from mid-1920 onwards. The RIC reports rarely, if ever, tackle or deal with the issue of reprisals at all, but, they do provide the historian with the most extensive contemporaneous record of all IRA activities. The newspapers, on the other hand, are the best sources for contemporaneous accounts of the dynamics and presentation to the public of all types of activities by the crown forces and IRA. Both the activities of the IRA, the crown forces and Free State Army are supplemented by extensive reference to contemporaneous material in Richard Mulcahy's papers in the UCD Archives, other contemporary IRA records and material relating to the republican movement and Dáil Éireann available in collections in UCD, the National Library of Ireland, Irish Military Archives, the Irish National Archives and in the Kerry County Library in Tralee together with contemporaneous British Army records in the Imperial War Museum and compensation claims and War Office files in the British National Archives. These sources are used to create quantitative data on the levels, forms and frequency of IRA violence and violence by the crown forces in County Kerry from 1920-1921.

But at this stage it may be asked that when considering the role of civilians in violent revolution why Northern Ireland, or some area in Northern Ireland such as Belfast, was not selected. The historian Robert Lynch, for instance, notes that most of the casualties of political violence in Northern Ireland were civilians.⁵² The intensity of the conflict, in Belfast alone, outweighed the intensity of the conflict in even the most violent counties of Munster.⁵³ Firstly, in order to show how the conflict developed in a separate way in Ulster, references are made throughout to how the findings in this thesis correlate with Fearghal McGarry's research into county Monaghan, which experienced high levels of communal and sectarian tension.

However, it would be best to outline my decision not to work primarily on Ulster – firstly, despite the number of publications on revolutionary violence in southern Ireland there are, as has been just established, still considerable gaps in our knowledge as to the dynamics of revolutionary insurgency and counter-insurgency in the south. Also, violence in Belfast usually took the form of rioting and street fighting, in other words intra-civilian violence, the IRA playing a notably limited role in the violence, with one group of combatants – the crown forces

⁵² Robert Lynch, *The Northern IRA and the early years of partition 1920-1922* (Dublin, 2003), p. 18.

⁵³ Ibid, p. 13.

– being the major power force, supplemented by unionist mobs.⁵⁴ This thesis, however, wanted as its focus intra-combatant-civilian dynamics as opposed to intra-civilian violence. Accordingly, an area where there was less of discrepancy between the combatants, and one in which the IRA held relatively substantial local authority was selected. Also, as throughout Ulster, the IRA possessed limited operational ability.⁵⁵

Some questions or criticism may arise in relation to the structure of this thesis, not least in relation to the civil war of 1922-23 (though, as will be addressed, I would contend that the 1918-21 conflict was a type of civil war). The later civil war is addressed in chapters one, two, and seven. On one level it should be stressed that within the scope of four years research and the limits of the word count of the PhD thesis format it simply was not possible to cover the 1922-23 conflict with the same levels of depth. This results in chapter seven only being a survey, and not comprehensive, examination of civilians targeted, by the IRA, from 1921-23. This is to provide a sense of context, to show 1919-21 had direct consequences and sequels that need to be examined in some form when considering the former conflict. However, I consider the aspects of the civil war covered within the thesis act as a Launchpad for more extensive research on the 1921-23 years, which I hope to engage in shortly.

It might be asked why when, considering that this study gives a partial examination of the IRA's campaign against civilians in the civil war period, there is no similar engagement with how the Free State army interacted or intimidated civilians. Unfortunately, again this is due to the limited time available and word count – but, as said, I hope to be able to engage in the civil war period in more extensive detail subsequently. Indeed, it is my intention to explore the levels of IRA and Free State Army interactions with civilians in the truce and civil war years as a follow up research project, to make this thesis more complete as a potential monograph.

The campaign, by the crown forces and Free State army in relation to civilians also had completely different dynamics and levels of intensity in relation to tactics. The crown forces hoped to break republican resistance through a policy of collective punishment of the entire civilian community, who were perceived as giving succour to the IRA. As this thesis will show civilians suffered unprecedented levels of intimidation and violence at the hands of the crown forces. The Free State, on the other hand, needed all possible support to ensure the legitimacy of the new state; to attack civilians in reprisals would damage the legitimacy of the new state. It was also illogical that the forces of a nationalist government would attack nationalist civilians. And accordingly the levels of violence against civilians that occurred in 1919-21 by the crown

⁵⁴ Hughes, *Defying the IRA*, p. 153.

⁵⁵ Townshend, *The republic*, pp. 173-5.

forces, were not repeated by the Free State in 1922 -23. Instead, the Free State opted to break the spirit of their republican opponents through a policy of executing prisoners, caught in open rebellion against the state. This was a brutal policy that left a particularly bitter legacy, but it did leave civilians alone. Despite the low levels of intensity of Free State action against civilians it is an issue worthy of further analysis that will hopefully be covered.

There is an unfortunate tendency in Irish historiography, to be self-referential or have a sense of Irish exceptionalism at the expense of an understanding of how the Irish experience fits into the wider world. This is a difficult but interesting concept. Bill Kissane notes that U.S. Secretary of State Robert MacNamara considered that in America the war in Vietnam was seen as part of the Cold War, but that for the Vietnamese it was perceived as an internal dispute or civil war relating to the particularities of Vietnam.⁵⁶ Similarly, for Irish Nationalists the conflict was explicitly seen as being a continuation or culmination of the struggle for national self-determination going back to 1167, but from an outside perspective the 1918-1923 years, in Ireland, can also be seen as a part of a European-wide phenomenon of conflicts for national self-determination or social change that occurred as a result of the weakening of imperial power structures after the First World War, or even as one example of a type of guerrilla conflict that had occurred before and would occur again across the world. This thesis, accordingly, is focused primarily on Irish particularities but also looks beyond Ireland to show the extent to which the issues covered here correlate with current academic understanding of civil and irregular conflict and utilises some specific non-Irish conflicts for direct points of comparison.

To be more specific, the thesis considers how it fits in with the findings of Stathis M. Kalyvas in *The logic of violence in civil war*. Kalyvas' book is a synthesis or examination of the unifying strands apparent in guerrilla conflicts from the peninsular war in the early 19th century to the Afghanistan war of the early 21st, and also considers how the Irish experience relates to Bill Kissane's recent *Nations torn asunder*, a volume which looks at the patterns and dynamics of civil conflict. The thesis also uses the examples of the Second Anglo-Boer war of 1899-1902 and various aspects and theatres of the American civil war, together with reference to other contemporary violence in eastern and central Europe, Finland and Italy. I do consider that through the extensive utilisation of as many IRA records, contemporary newspapers and material produced by the crown forces, definitive answers to the issues addressed between 1918 and the truce of 1921, in relation to County Kerry is here presented.

⁵⁶ Kissane, *Nations torn asunder*, p. 67.

Chapter one: republican views of civilians

'within their poor resources' introduction.

Across much of Europe, immediately after the First World War, inter-state and revolutionary violence developed in unique and unseen forms. For instance these conflicts were, often, led by non-professional armies or paramilitaries that meant the line between combatant and civilian became blurred if not, at times, indistinguishable. Julie Eichenberg writes 'violence after the end of the First World War marked a break in the relations between civil society and military formations, eroding the usual dichotomy between combatants and civilians'.¹ Certainly in Ireland the IRA were a force of radicalised civilians who operated from within the civilian population and continued to wear civilian clothing making them different from regular soldiers. In some testimony the IRA act as the natural revolutionary expression of the majority of the people of Ireland.

Tom Barry, probably, the most successful IRA field commander of the 1919-21 conflict and the 1922-23 conflict, in 1949 wrote the most enduring and popular account of the 1919-21 years in *Guerrilla days in Ireland*. His narrative presents west Cork as an unjust and divided society. Barry wrote 'the large majority of the people had a hard struggle for existence' living on poor land while the descendants of the protestant settlers of the plantations lived on the fertile land. 'In 1919 the "big house" near all the towns was a feature of first importance in the lives of the people. In it lived the leading British loyalist, secure and affluent'. Other smaller protestant farmers had 'a privileged position upheld by British domination, and it was their mission in life to see that their privileged and aloof status was maintained'. Barry also recognised co-religionist opponents a 'small number of the bigger merchants and strong farmers, although catholic in religion, aspired to become members of the loyalist society through motives of snobbery or gain. They were strong in wealth and not in numbers'. Against the British army and their civilian supporters 'were three quarters of the people of west Cork... From these people sprang the Irish Republican Army'.²

According to Barry, the 1919-21 conflict was not simply a war of national liberation but a conflict in which the IRA as a natural expression of the poor 'majority' were in rebellion against Britain and the rich elite minority of west Cork. Barry also characterised the IRA as protectors

¹ Julie Eichenberg, 'Soldiers to civilians, civilians to soldiers: Poland and Ireland after the first world war' in Robert Gerwarth and John Horne (eds), *War in peace: paramilitary violence in Europe after the Great War* (Oxford, 2012), p.186.

² Tom Barry, *Guerrilla days in Ireland* (Cork, 1949), pp. 6-8.

of the people.³ His contention here disrupts Eichenberg's claim of erosion of 'the usual dichotomy between combatants and civilians' in that IRA men very much did not consider themselves as civilians. And though from the civilian population the IRA regarded themselves as being separate from it like a type of benevolent guardian. Tellingly, the west Cork IRA characterised the arms levy they imposed on the local population as necessary for the people's 'protection'.⁴ Barry also, importantly, argues that the IRA did not have universal backing of the civilian population. This is a common theme for IRA men.

Sean Moylan, leader of the north Cork Flying Column, was equally adamant that it was, indeed, the rural poor who supported the IRA's campaign. Moylan, in his extended statement, to the BMH described the type of people who harboured the I.R.A:

In the evening we arrived at the district where we had proposed to halt for a few hours, bleak, cold, bare, unfruitful land: ugly, small and ill kept houses. Here was the submerged tenth of the Irish farming community. Here for one who loved his fellow man was one incentive to revolution. These were the people to whom Kickham's sympathy went out. They sheltered Doheny and the Fenians. They were those for whom Davitt planned and worked and suffered: for them, too, as for the town labourer Connolly died. 'To hell or Connaught', but not the whole Gaelic race crossed the Shannon. Within the limits of their poor resources they fed and cared for the fighting men.⁵

Like Barry, Moylan was equally strident in his views on those civilians who did not support the IRA. In the spring of 1922 Moylan said 'there were some people who did not stand by us the last time and they would not be forgotten'. Moylan also declared that the IRA would 'give a call to the fine fat Unionists with fine fat cows. The domestic enemy was the most dangerous, and they would have to start fighting him now'.⁶

In the civil war the leadership of the anti-Treaty movement seemed to have recognised a lack of universal backing. At the close of the civil war in 1923 Eamon de Valera told the IRA that the people 'are weary and need a rest' and republicans should understand that the war weary people would eventually come back to their cause.⁷ De Valera, seemingly, believed that the

³ Kenneth Griffith and Timothy O'Grady, *Curious journey: an oral history of Ireland's unfinished revolution* (Dublin, 1982), p.146.

⁴ Hughes, *Defying the IRA Intimidation*, p.92.

⁵ Sean Moylan, BMH, WS, 838. 'To hell or Connaught' is a reference to Oliver Cromwell's policy of forcibly driving Irish Catholics from Leinster, Munster and Ulster into Connaught to make more land available for Protestant English and Scottish settlers in the 1650s.

⁶ Hart, *The IRA & its enemies*, pp. 146 and 288.

⁷ Hanley, *The IRA. A documentary history*, p.62.

IRA had held the support of the people but had lost it. Is this accurate? Did the IRA have the support of the people? Did they feel that they needed it? Did most IRA men believe, like their commander Ernie O'Malley, that 'we... never consulted the feelings of the people'.⁸ This chapter looks at these concerns, examining how in later years IRA veterans chose to remember civilians. Issues addressed include who the IRA believed they had support from and where these people came from in Irish society. These questions are also asked of the people the IRA regarded as their civilian opponents.

The material for this chapter is drawn from the BMH, memoirs, and oral testimony from IRA men collected by Ernie O'Malley and Uinseann MacEoin.

Fond memories

How did other Volunteers rate the civilian community? The leadership of the movement in December 1920 emphatically claimed 'we have the ardent goodwill of the population'.⁹ Some IRA men later also certainly believed this to be the case. Séan Ó Faoláin, the Cork city short story writer and IRA veteran, wrote 'they [the IRA] could not, it must be said, have done anything without the silence, patience, and loyal help of the whole people'.¹⁰ John L. Sullivan, an IRA leader from Clonakilty, in west Cork, recalled 'the whole country was behind us'.¹¹ Martin Fallon, from north Roscommon felt that by the time of the truce 'the people were supporting us splendidly'.¹² James Quigley, from south Roscommon, remembered that the relatively inactive south Roscommon flying column 'billeted and lived on the local people who were only too glad to accommodate them'.¹³ Edmund Tobin, from Kilmallock in east Limerick, recalled that members of the flying column 'stayed in the Glenbrohane area where they received a great welcome in every house there'.¹⁴ Likewise Michael Brennan remembered that after members of the east Clare brigade helped in the attack on Kilmallock RIC Barracks in May 1920 that 'as we passed through a village a few miles from Kilmallock men and women rushed out of their houses and cheered us'.¹⁵

A similar picture, seemingly, appears in Kerry. Patrick Sheehan of Ardfert in the north west of the county recalled that most people gave money to the republican cause. 'I, with other

⁸ Ernie O'Malley, *The singing flame* (Dublin, 1978), p.36.

⁹ Hughes, 'Defying the I.R.A: intimidation', (PhD thesis), p.30.

¹⁰ Séan Ó Faoláin, *Vive moi! An autobiography* (Boston, 1963), p.181.

¹¹ Griffith and O'Grady, *Curious journey*, p.127.

¹² Martin Fallon, BMH, WS, 1121.

¹³ James Quigley, BMH, WS, 692.

¹⁴ Edmund Tobin, BMH, WS, 1451.

¹⁵ Michael Brennan, *The war in Clare 1911-1921: personal memoirs of the Irish war of independence* (Dublin, 1980), p.51.

members of the Company, took part in collecting for the Dáil Éireann loan. The people of the area subscribed very generously: they, for the most part, were by now strong supporters of Sinn Féin and the IRA generally'.¹⁶ John Joe Rice, from Kenmare, felt that 'when the flying columns were formed, the nation was solidly united in support of the IRA'.¹⁷ Jeremiah Murphy, from Rathmore in east Kerry on the border with Cork, recalled that 'it was good fighting country and the loyalty of the people was never in doubt'.¹⁸ Dan Keating, the last surviving veteran of the period from Castlemaine, but who was in the Tralee IRA and a lifelong republican, recalled that across Kerry:

They were great, the local people at the time, they were the soul of Ireland. Without the local people, the Flying Columns couldn't exist. They'd [the RIC] get no response from the people. The people were opposed to them at the time, and it continued that way right up to the Truce.¹⁹

Denis Quille, from Listowel, maintained that in north Kerry 'all local disputes were settled or put down and a splendid morale between the IRA and [the] people was maintained'.²⁰ In November 1920 when a Flying Column developed in west Kerry around Paddy Cahill and Tadhg Brosnan, the main IRA leader on the Dingle Peninsula, column member Billy Mullins recalled that they 'never (had) any difficulty in finding billets and the question of clothing and food was very satisfactory. The people were very good to us in this way'.²¹ Peter Browne, of Scartaglin, east Kerry, put it very simply 'the people were wonderful. There was always an open door for those genuinely on the run'.²² Johnny O'Connor, of Ballymacelligott, who was active in both the Kerry No.1 Brigade area and No.2 Brigade area recalled that 'the people were very good then all through the country. They would be jealous if you didn't stay at their particular home'.²³ James Fitzgerald, of Lispole on the Dingle Peninsula, remembered that at the time of the Lispole ambush in March 1921 'almost all the civil population were favourable to us'.

¹⁶ Patrick Sheahan, BMH, WS, 1088.

¹⁷ Shirley Quill, *Mike Quill – himself: a memoir* (Connecticut, 1985), p. 24.

¹⁸ Jeremiah Murphy, *When youth was mine: a memoir of Kerry 1902-1925* (Dublin, 1998), p. 150.

¹⁹ Dan Keating and Diarmaid Fleming, 'Dan Keating: last man standing', in *History Ireland*, Vol 16. No.3 (May-June 2008), p.39.

²⁰ Denis Quille, MSP, 34, REF 12059.

²¹ William Mullins, BMH, WS, 801.

²² Peter Browne, BMH, WS, 1110.

²³ Ernie O'Malley, *The Men will talk to me. Kerry interviews by Ernie O'Malley*, Cormac O'Malley and Tim Horgan (eds) (Cork, 2012), pp. 220-1

Not so fond memories and question of location

Interestingly, while Barry believed that the majority of the people supported the IRA he also noted that there were always exceptions, Fitzgerald's testimony mirrors this. Phrases like 'almost all' are not uncommon in IRA testimony. Others that occur are 'with the exception of a few Loyalists'²⁴ and 'the people were nearly all behind us'.²⁵ This reflects an acceptance of the lack of universal support. Joost Augusteijn has written that sympathy may not even have been so widespread writing that 'even in the most active counties the number of volunteers and their sympathisers was still marginal in many districts'.²⁶ Likewise, Sinead Joy has written of County Kerry that 'some fighters were careful about who they approached since in most areas there were only a half-dozen houses that could really be considered "safe"'.²⁷ Similarly, the only areas in which the south Tipperary Brigade flying column could operate in relative safety in the latter stages of the conflict were in the isolated and very sparsely populated Galtymore Mountains and in the Nire Valley.²⁸ This would reflect Stathis N. Kalyvas' conclusions in *The logic of violence in civil war* that even in 'highly polarised [conflict] environments...active participation' of civilians with guerrilla troops tends to be very low.²⁹

And certainly many Volunteers, in Kerry, were particularly aggressive when remembering civilians from whom they did not receive support. Seamus 'Jimmy the master' O'Connor, of Knocknagoshel in east Kerry, felt that support for the IRA between 1919-21 was hardly universal and many people were simply waiting to come out against the IRA. O'Connor believed fear prevented many people from showing their true colours. O'Connor recalled:

We all thought that during what is called the Tan war, in 1920 and 1921, the people were 100 per cent behind the Republic. Not even a whisper was to be heard against the republican government or the volunteers, or their actions... [the] hardcore of British sympathisers were kept quiet during the Tan time by fear, and for this Michael Collins and the intelligence service were largely responsible...Drastic punishment was so certain that and was so imminent that it was as much as a man's life was worth to utter a discordant note.³⁰

²⁴ Sean Glancy, BMH, WS, 964.

²⁵ Thomas Lavin, BMH, WS, 1001.

²⁶ Augusteijn, *From public defiance to guerrilla warfare*, p. 70.

²⁷ Joy, *The IRA in Kerry*, p. 69.

²⁸ Charles Townshend, 'The Irish Republican Army and the development of guerrilla warfare, 1916 -1921', in *The English historical review*, Vol. 94, No.371 (Spring, 1979), p.328

²⁹ Stathis N. Kalyvas, *The logic of violence in civil war* (Cambridge, 2006), p.103.

³⁰ Seamus O'Connor, *Tomorrow was another day: irreverent memories of an Irish rebel schoolmaster* (Dublin, 1970), p.38.

O'Connor is unusual in that he believed many people were not sympathetic with the republican movement, but fear kept them in check, but most other veterans seemed to believe many people were opposed to them. In IRA testimony these people belonged to certain social groups or lived in certain towns. This now brings in the question of location.

The 1919-21 conflict was unusual in that in some counties violence and reprisals became daily occurrences [the west and south] while in others violence remained the exception rather than the rule [the east and midlands]. Peter Hart wrote that 'the revolution was not so much a national conflict as a collection of regional ones'.³¹ This localism also produced a particular pride of place for republicans. Charles Townshend has written that the Brigade structure that developed became integral to the 'identity and purpose' of Volunteers in each district.³² However, when a town or district failed to pull its weight in the national struggle the people in these areas became the target of anger from their republican neighbours.

Tom Barry was especially hostile to the town of Skibbereen, in west Cork. His feelings on the people of that town are worth quoting at length:

Its inhabitants were a race apart from the sturdy people of west Cork. They were different and with a few exceptions were spineless, slouching through life meek and tame, prepared to accept ruling and domination from any clique or country, provided they were left to vegetate in peace. Like the opium eaters of the East they were incapable of enthusiasm or effort for anything more strenuous than promenading or gossip... If Satan himself appeared in the Skibbereen of 1920-21 the great majority would doff their hats to him, and if he wagged his tail once in anger, he was sure to be elected high in the poll of the Skibbereen district council.³³

Such sentiments were not unusual.

Peter Hart's research shows that republicans were critical of the people of Fermoy, Middleton and Dunmanaway.³⁴ David Fitzpatrick noted in 1977 that 'the towns were never so susceptible to political infections as the countryside, where communal pressure invariably enforced a remarkable uniformity of loyalties and opinions' and that the concentration of police and military in towns 'hampered not only revolutionary violence but also republican propaganda'.³⁵ Indeed, in Kerry the crown forces maintained a presence and consistently controlled the larger

³¹ Hart, *The IRA at war 1916-1923*, p. 31.

³² Townshend, *The republic*, p. 38.

³³ Barry, *Guerrilla days in Ireland*, pp. 89-90.

³⁴ Hart, *The IRA & its enemies*, p. 151.

³⁵ Fitzpatrick, *Politics and Irish life*, p.101.

towns; Tralee, Killarney, Castleisland, Dingle, Cahirciveen and Listowel. Kalyvas has noted that 'because some areas are controlled early on by one political actor, they may develop a reputation of being loyal to this one political actor'.³⁶ In Kerry, accordingly, most of these towns became associated, in republican minds, with constitutional nationalists, ex-members of the crown forces and loyalists generally. Interestingly, the people of towns, where there was no strong presence of the crown forces could also fall under suspicion.

Kilorglin in south west Kerry was particularly unpopular – despite the crown forces not having a strong presence there. Indeed, going against Kalyvas' conclusions the IRA were often critical of a town not because of it having a strong connection to the crown forces' garrison but rather because of its traditional links to non-republican forms of nationalism. James Cronin from Milltown near Kilorglin said 'It should be noted that the IRA had few friends in the town of Kilorglin. There was no local company active in the town during the Tan war'.³⁷ Bertie Scully, Vice Commandant of the 6th Battalion, simply told Ernie O'Malley 'the Kilorglin town crowd were no good'.³⁸ Christy O'Grady believed that in Kilorglin a 'great spirit of friendliness existed between the Black and Tans and civilians in Kilorglin'.³⁹ Tom O'Connor, also from Milltown, O/C 6th Kilorglin Battalion Kerry No.1 Brigade explained Kilorglin's deficiencies to Ernie O'Malley. O'Connor felt it came down to the popularity of constitutional nationalism in the town. He said 'Tom O'Donnell [a former Irish Parliamentary Party MP] had a great hold on here. The A[ncient] O[rder of] H[ibernians] had been strong and they went Free State later'.⁴⁰ Likewise Greg Ashe, of Lispole on the Dingle Peninsula, felt that 'the Redmondites – [supporters of constitutional nationalism] had a great grip in Tralee and in Kilorglin'.⁴¹ Bertie Scully, in fact, maintained the people of Kilorglin were actively hostile to the IRA. He remembered: 'I had an uncanny feeling all along that the RIC. were being supplied with a lot of useful information obtained either directly or surreptitiously, talk in pubs, questions here and there'.⁴²

Republicans views on the AOH reveal the interesting regional variation of the conflict. In Kerry the AOH were not particularly well established or popular. John Joe Rice said 'it was not strong' in Kerry.⁴³ Accordingly, though Kerry republicans were suspicious of the AOH they

³⁶ Kalyvas, *The logic of violence in civil war*, p. 129.

³⁷ James Cronin, BMH, WS, 1000.

³⁸ Ernie O'Malley, *The Men will talk to me: Kerry interviews*, p. 156

³⁹ Joy, *The IRA in Kerry*, p. 71.

⁴⁰ O'Malley, *The Men will talk to me: Kerry interviews* p. 139. The AOH is a fraternal Catholic nationalist society that developed in Ulster as a counter organisation to the Orange Order.

⁴¹ Ibid, p. 121.

⁴² Sean (Bertie) Scully, BMH, WS, 788.

⁴³ O'Malley, *The Men will talk to me: Kerry interviews*, p. 311.

did not interpret it as a threat to their hegemony, no AOH members were killed as informers in the 1919-21 period. In Ulster, on the other hand, where the AOH was strongest the IRA viewed the AOH as rivals for control of the nationalist community and members were killed as informers.⁴⁴ Michael Doherty, from Castlefin in east Donegal, recalled that in 1918 'the AOH organisation was very antagonistic towards us at that period. In fact, its members were more hostile than the Unionists'.⁴⁵

The people of a number of other towns came under attack. In north Kerry Patrick J. McElligott, recalled that in the town of Tarbert, in the north east of the county, the IRA received little support. McElligott maintained that there were no active IRA men in the town and that 'the people of Tarbert were in the main opposed to us. Tarbert always had been the home of retired army colonels and loyalists generally'.⁴⁶ Dan Mulvihill remembered that the people of Castlemaine, near Tralee, were 'a more dangerous problem [to the IRA] than the Tans'.⁴⁷ In Sneem, in the south-west of the county on the Ivereagh peninsula, which was notably inactive in comparison to the rest of the county, Denis J. O'Sullivan recalled that 'although the RIC. had left we still had a lot of loyalist houses in the area, which included - Parknasilla, Col. Walden's, Col. Hartley's, Lord Dunraven's and Fraser's, so we had to be careful'.⁴⁸ Like Kilorglin, none of these areas were not centres for the crown forces. Curiously, these views could be extended to what can be considered to have been republican heartlands. In September 1921 a memo by the Kerry No.2 Brigade announced that in Ballymacelligott the IRA 'could always rely on having plenty of people to misrepresent their actions'.⁴⁹ Ballymacelligott was home of IRA Flying Column leader, Thomas McEllistrim, and other active IRA men, such as John Cronin, was regarded by Tralee Auxiliary Commander, Major MacKinnon, to be the home of republicanism in Kerry.⁵⁰

However, sometimes, according to republicans, certain events could change the minds of pro-British townspeople. Fermoy, in north Cork, was regarded as being a particularly pro-British town. James Hackett of Fermoy went as far as to state that it was only as a result of the death on hunger strike of Michael Fitzgerald, the O/C of the Fermoy Battalion, in October 1920

⁴⁴ McGarry, *Eoin O'Duffy*, p. 65.

⁴⁵ Michael Doherty, BMH, WS, 1583.

⁴⁶ Patrick J. McElligott, BMH, WS, 1013.

⁴⁷ Joy, *The IRA in Kerry*, p. 71.

⁴⁸ Denis J. O'Sullivan, BMH, WS, 958.

⁴⁹ Joy, *The IRA in Kerry*, p. 49.

⁵⁰ *The Kerryman, Kerry's fighting story 1916-21. Told by the men who made it* (Cork, 2009), p.250.

in Cork city jail that ‘seemed to awaken a big percentage of the people of Fermoy to the fact that they were Irish’.⁵¹

Similarly, Patrick Garvey felt that the shooting of Major MacKinnon, the particularly brutal Auxiliary commander in Tralee, by the IRA brought many people in the town over to their cause:

The shooting of McKinnon brought about a great change in the attitude of the pro-British element in the locality. They had always been glad of his company at golf, tennis and tea parties, but after his death kept away from his associates and friends. In so far as the townspeople were concerned, such as the shopkeepers, their assistants and the workers in factories, the death of McKinnon brought about a more co-operative attitude towards the IRA Information when available in regard to the activities of enemy forces, such as proposed raids, was readily passed on to the IRA with enthusiasm. People generally were eager to subscribe to our weekly collections in aid of the IRA.⁵²

Curiously, certain types of people within towns themselves came consistently under fire; publicans, shopkeepers and ex-service men and their relatives. John Joe Rice quoted Sinn Féin TD for north Kerry, Fred Crowley’s opinion on the publicans of Listowel to Ernie O’Malley: ‘If Judas Iscariot walked down the streets of Listowel with his 30 pieces of Silver, every publican there ‘would be pulling him by the tail to make him spend his money’.⁵³ Shopkeepers were common targets. Greg Ashe disliked the shopkeepers of Dingle. He told Ernie O’Malley that the ‘shopkeepers in Dingle were very rich. A lot of them were worth from £80,000 to £100,000 and they were more British than Churchill’. Ashe also recalled ‘the women in Dingle went with the Tans’.⁵⁴ Timothy Houlihan’s statement also reflected a distrust of the shopkeepers of Ballybunion. ‘The company from time to time warned the local shopkeepers by posters not to supply the RIC with groceries as we knew they [the RIC] were getting a lot of information in these shops about the movements of the local IRA’.⁵⁵ Likewise Dennis O’Sullivan, from Sneem in the south west of Kerry, stated ‘We applied a boycott to the RIC

⁵¹ James Hackett, BMH, WS, 1080.

⁵² Patrick Garvey, BMH, WS, 1011.

⁵³ O’Malley, *The Men will talk to me: Kerry interviews*, pp. 310-11.

⁵⁴ *Ibid*, pp 121-3.

⁵⁵ Timothy Houlihan, BMH, WS, 969.

They had some friends in Sneem amongst the shopkeepers and we went round the shops carrying arms and warned them to stop supplying the RIC'.⁵⁶

Distrust of shopkeepers extended to outside Kerry. T. Crawley from Loughlynn south Roscommon recalled when the boycott of the RIC was introduced that it 'was not very effective as the traders continued to supply them under the pretence that the goods were commandeered by the RIC'.⁵⁷

Ex-servicemen and their relatives were also common targets. John 'Jaco' Lenehan, of Listowel, was highly critical of the people of Charles Street where he lived: 'the street was well known for the pro-British types of people living in it. They were ex-British soldiers, their wives and children as well as members of the RIC stationed in the barracks'.⁵⁸ Such feelings about the relatives of those connected to the crown forces were not uncommon in other parts of the country. Michael Brennan recalled that after he removed a Union Jack from the County infirmary in Ennis he was chased by 'a shrieking and apparently drunken mob' of soldiers, ex-soldiers and their civilian supporters.⁵⁹

In contrast some Republicans believed the people of the countryside to be more nationally minded. Some Volunteers in Kerry certainly made distinctions between urban and rural. John Joe Rice was adamant that the people of the mountainous regions of Kerry were more supportive of the IRA than people in more prosperous flat areas. Rice told Ernie O'Malley that

the civil population was better in S[outh] Kerry than W[est] Cork but the local people who were around the "big houses" were no good. On the flat and in the glens you find two different races. The glens are an independent fighting crowd, who are good and solid.⁶⁰

But, inconsistently, Rice also seemed to believe that large swathes of the mountainous and isolated Ivereagh peninsula in the south-west of the county were not supportive. Rice told O'Malley that 'Cahirsiveen to Kenmare is a planted country and very different to the people of the glens'.⁶¹ Patrick O'Shea, of Castlegregory in the Dingle Peninsula, made a distinction between the people of the towns and the hills:

⁵⁶ Dennis J. O'Sullivan, BMH, WS, 958.

⁵⁷ T. Crawley, BMH, WS, 718

⁵⁸ John 'Jaco' Lenehan, BMH, WS, 968.

⁵⁹ Brennan, *The war in Clare 1911-1921*, p.39.

⁶⁰ O'Malley, *The Men will talk to me: Kerry interviews*, p. 311.

⁶¹ Ibid, p. 305.

At that time the village of Castlegregory was poor as far as the national spirit was concerned. It was a recruiting ground for the RIC and many of the families had some relative in that force. The people of the surrounding area had, however, strong national feelings. It should be understood that while the people of the village were not friendly they were not actively hostile.⁶²

This would reflect Augusteijn's conclusion that after the Soloheadbeg ambush, in south Tipperary in January 1919 'although many people expressed their misgivings after the Soloheadbeg ambush, the perpetrators were never given away'.⁶³

Rich and poor

The distinction made between rural and urban leads on into the issue of rich and poor. Greg Ashe seemed suspicious of the wealthy and other IRA men disliked urban shopkeepers as opposed to the noble poverty of the men and women of the hills. Ted O'Sullivan, of west Cork, put it simply that 'all [the people in] the mountain and poor areas were good'.⁶⁴ And also that 'south of Bandon was good land and bad people, w[est] of Bandon were good people and band land'.⁶⁵ Petie J. MacDonnell, the IRA leader in Connemara, recalled that in Connemara 'neither the members of the IRA nor its supporters were amongst the wealthy'.⁶⁶ Kalyvas writes that as 'towns... [and] accessible terrain in general tends to be associated with incumbent control whereas mountains and rugged terrain are generally insurgent strongholds'.⁶⁷ For instance the pro-Confederate guerrilla fighters in Missouri relied on mountainous and heavily wooded areas when they had to evade Federal troops.⁶⁸ This would, seemingly, reflect the IRA's campaign. The volunteer flying columns that developed had to operate in isolated country regions out of sheer necessity to avoid detection.

But the glorification of rural Ireland did not correlate with the backgrounds of most Volunteers who were primarily drawn from the towns rather than the countryside.⁶⁹ Fitzpatrick's claim that the countryside was more prone to revolutionary feeling cannot be entirely substantiated.

⁶² Patrick O'Shea, BMH, WS, 1144.

⁶³ Augusteijn, *From public defiance to guerrilla warfare*, p. 270.

⁶⁴ Hart, *The IRA & its enemies*, p. 146

⁶⁵ Ernie O'Malley, *The men will talk to me: the west Cork interviews*, Andy Bielenberg, John Borgonovo, Pádraig Óg Ó Ruairc (eds) (Cork, 2015), p.165.

⁶⁶ *The Kerryman, With the IRA in the fight for freedom 1919 to the truce: the red path of glory* (Cork, 2010), p.374.

⁶⁷ Kalyvas, *The logic of violence in civil war*, p.132.

⁶⁸ Albert Castell, 'Quantrill's Bushwhackers: a case study in partisan warfare', in John T. Hubbell (ed), *Battles lost and won. Essays from civil war history* (Connecticut, 1975), p. 178.

⁶⁹ Joost Augusteijn, 'Accounting for the emergence of violent activism among Irish revolutionaries, 1916-21', in *Irish Historical Studies*, Vol. 35, No. 139 (Spring, 2007), p.333.

Augusteijn has noted that the Volunteers' initial structure developed in urban areas, often based around old IRB circles, and the Volunteer organisation then spread into the countryside.⁷⁰ Accordingly, feelings of frustration with rural people were also not uncommon.

Interestingly, for many, rural poverty did not equate with support. In Connemara Colm Ó Gaora, in his Irish language memoir, *Míse*, wrote that he and his comrades in the Connemara Flying Column disliked having to rely on the local population for food 'because we knew that they often had even less than we did'. Ó Gaora also wrote that a large number of people never supported the IRA but he does not put this down to class reasons: 'There was always a large number of people who were happy to live from day to day and cared little whether Ireland was free or not'.⁷¹ Clearly living 'day to day' suggests that those who were not active supporters of the IRA in Connemara were not particularly well off. In the testimony of Ó Gaora's comrade in the Connemara flying column, Petie Joe McDonnell, the IRA seemed to have been a nuisance to local people. McDonnell remembered that while the column were in position 'the Kylesmore people knew that we were there for they gathered away their sheep the next day for fear we would kill any of them'.⁷²

Faith in the poor people of the mountainous parts of Kerry was also not universally felt by republicans. Greg Ashe told Ernie O'Malley 'the western people [people from the Gaeltacht on the Dingle Peninsula] were inclined to follow them [unionist shopkeepers] for slavery was driven into them'.⁷³ Tadhg Kennedy, IRA intelligence officer for Kerry No.1, in a similar fashion recalled of the Gaelic speakers of west Kerry that 'the people who preserved intact the language and culture intact' were in fact not remotely republican and displayed affection for the main Protestant landowner in west Kerry, Lord Ventry, for the kindness he displayed to the locals.⁷⁴ This fear and mistrust of west Kerry people is reflected in the statement by Patrick Houlihan, from Annascual, who simply recalled that 'the only real danger [to the IRA] came from our own people acting as spies for the British so we had to be careful'.⁷⁵

Similarly, Tadhg Kennedy, recalled that in his own town of Annascaul that 'in my boyhood days there was a good deal of poverty in my native parish. The farmers were poor and a good

⁷⁰ Ibid, p.334.

⁷¹ Ruan O'Donnell, Michael Ó hAodha (eds), *On the run: the story of an Irish freedom fighter. A translation of Colm Ó Gaora's Míse by Micheal Ó hAodha*. (Cork, 2011), pp. 287 and 296.

⁷² Ernie O'Malley, Cormac O'Malley and Cormac Ó Comhraí (eds) *The men will talk to me: Galway interviews*, (Cork, 2013), p.77.

⁷³ O'Malley, *The Men will talk to me: Kerry interviews*, p. 121.

⁷⁴ Tadhg Kennedy, BMH, WS, 1413.

⁷⁵ Patrick Houlihan, BMH, WS, 959.

many of the labourers were in want and their children hungry.’⁷⁶ However, like Ó Gaora, Kennedy did not equate the poverty and Gaelic traditions of the people of the Gaeltacht with support for the IRA or nationalism in general. Kennedy remembered that in Annascaul, the British administration in Ireland was part and parcel of people’s existence and provided employment for many: ‘most of the young people, save a boy and a girl from each house, had to go outside to earn a living, some going to the United States, some boys to the Royal Irish Constabulary, and quite a number to the British Navy’.⁷⁷

In fact, it can be argued, that in some respects the IRA disliked social and political issues connected to poverty. The major issue for the rural poor in Ireland in the early twentieth century related to access to profitable land and land redistribution. It will be seen in the chapter on republican policing, the Kerry IRA did not support agrarian agitation and regarded it as a distraction from the more important national struggle. The agrarian agitation conducted by the poor of the west of Ireland, in 1919-20 and again during the civil war, did not see the involvement of republicans and neither was it condoned by republicans. In north Kerry in early 1920 the IRA were in fact, as will be seen, active in stamping out the agrarian agitation that developed in the spring of 1920.⁷⁸

Peter Hart felt that for the IRA ‘poverty was only a political virtue when it was respectable’.⁷⁹ For instance, John Joe Sheehy, of Tralee, had little sympathy for those involved in the agrarianism that was springing up in Kerry just prior to the civil war. Sheehy recalled:

we had land trouble. People trying to enlarge their holdings. Anyone who could claim that an ancestor had been evicted put the boot in. There were too many trying to take advantage of things. But I suppose it was the spirit of the times.⁸⁰

What appears here is arguably inconsistent and reflects the prejudices and loyalties of each IRA man in question but what does seem to emerge is a sense that the IRA were in some senses suspicious of nearly all groups in Irish society – the rural poor, the urban poor, and the urban upwardly mobile – I would argue this reflects an acceptance of an absence of consistent or universal support.

⁷⁶ Tadgh Kennedy, BMH, WS, 1413.

⁷⁷ Idem.

⁷⁸ See Thomas Nelian Crean, ‘The labour movement in Kerry and Limerick, 1914-1921’ (Unpublished PhD thesis, Trinity College Dublin, 1995), p.355.

⁷⁹ Hart, *The IRA & its enemies*, pp.147-8.

⁸⁰ Uinseann MacEoin, *Survivors* (Dublin, 1980), p. 358.

But who in fact harboured the IRA in these years? Mountainy men or landless men? In south Kerry many republicans found the most welcoming and kind civilians were their parents and sisters. Daniel Mulvihill of Castlemaine was keen to state that:

I would say that my Mother was one of the greatest Irishwomen I ever knew. She never spared anything during the Tan time and Civil War. She knew more about Irish history than anyone I have ever met since. The house was always full, both during the Tan time and Civil War and even though it was a marked spot in the Civil War, the boys stayed there the whole time through. We found ourselves at the end of the Civil War having to sell out the main farm as we had got rid of about £3,000 and were nearly £2,000 in debt...My two sisters were in the Cumann na mBan and did a lot of work in the line of despatches. I think it took most of the time of my mother and sisters, cooking for and feeding the lads from the summer of 1920 to the spring of 1924. I don't think in all that period - the Truce included - that the house had one night that there was not some stranger in it.⁸¹

Connie Neenan, of Cork city, was particularly emphatic on this subject. 'My mother was wonderful. She was outstanding. My mother was so good'.⁸² Similarly, Michael Spillane and Michael J. O'Sullivan based in Killarney recalled that the endurance and dedication of the Kerry No.2 active service unit or flying column did not receive the recognition it deserved but also that:

Forgotten, too, are the families of those men, their parents who gave shelter and rest, their sisters who cooked for the men whom they guarded, and even the children, born scouts, who were quick to tell of any suspicious signs they observed in the locality. And all of them, if questioned, knew nothing and saw nothing.⁸³

This seems common in guerrilla conflict – for instance Confederate guerrilla fighters in Missouri received shelter and food from their 'wives and sisters', as opposed to the population at large.⁸⁴ Julie Eichenberg, for instance, notes that one of the features that separated the IRA from regular armies was that by largely operating in their own areas they kept the links with

⁸¹ Daniel Mulvihill, BMH, W.S 938.

⁸² MacEoin, *Survivors*, p. 236

⁸³ Michael Spillane, Michael J. O'Sullivan, BMH, WS, 862.

⁸⁴ James McPherson, *Battle cry of freedom: the civil war era* (Oxford, 1988), p. 786.

their families and often relied upon them for support.⁸⁵ This was unlike other non-regular troops in the other European contemporary irregular conflicts in Poland, Finland or Russia who moved great distances and been totally separated from their communities.

The picture here is inconsistent. On the one hand townspeople were vilified as spineless materialists while on the other hand people of the mountains were castigated for not giving enough support or for being apolitical or that their political energies went in the wrong direction. Indeed, accordingly and perhaps obviously, as the following chapters will show, IRA intimidation of civilians would occur in both rural and urban areas. But also the degree of anger felt by the IRA against civilians is reflected in their actions, as throughout 1919-21 civilians, who were perceived as enemies, were constantly targeted, in various forms. Indeed, in the civil war resentment and ill-will towards civilians reached new levels.

Civil war

In late 1921 the Anglo-Irish Treaty created a split in the republican movement with the majority of IRA volunteers rejecting the Treaty and going on to form the bulk of the anti-Treaty opposition. The Treaty had overwhelming popular support and the IRA's decision to reject the will of the people brings up a whole series of issues connected to how they viewed civilians. De Valera, himself, admitted that the greatest liability to the republican side in the civil war was their lack of popular support. In his diary he went as far as to admit that the fighting itself was futile. 'The people must be won to the cause before any successful fighting can be done'.⁸⁶ At the close of the civil war in May 1923 in his address to the 'Soldiers of the Legion of the rear-guard' de Valera openly accepted their lack of popular support writing: 'If they [the people] have turned away and have not given you [the IRA] the active support which alone could bring you victory in this last year, it is because they are weary and need a rest'.⁸⁷ The civil war, from a republican perspective, can be seen as correlating with the idea that civil wars, create stagnation and prevent progress.⁸⁸ This is seen by the facts that the two new states IRA had set out to destroy, Northern Ireland and the Irish Free State, were operating with popular approval and by 1923 IRA had never been more unpopular with the people they claimed to be fighting for. Considering these factors, this raises more questions about how the IRA actually viewed civilians.

⁸⁵ Eichenberg, 'Soldiers to civilians, civilians to soldiers' in Gerwarth and Horne (eds), *War in peace*, p.197.

⁸⁶ Tim Pat Coogan, *Eamon deValera: the man who was Ireland* (New York, 1993), p.331.

⁸⁷ Hanley, *The IRA: a documentary history*, p.62.

⁸⁸ Kissane, *Nations torn asunder*, p. 50.

The Irish civil war was, of course, a complicated affair that is often presented in too narrow a focus in a divided historical opinion – but, curiously, in each narrative the concept of ‘the will of the people’ is paramount. For some the conflict was between the Free State, that had a popular mandate, and an unbridled unrepresentative republican militarism that wilfully went against the wishes of the people – in what amounted to a proto-fascist military coup. For others the threat of British force invalidated the popular endorsement of the Treaty – ‘the will of the people’ was eroded by threats making the IRA’s campaign a legitimate war against a settlement forcibly imposed by Britain.⁸⁹ Beyond these two historical narratives what the civil war does conform to is the assertion by John Horne and Robert Gerwarth that the paramilitary groups that emerged across Europe after 1918 not only ‘affected the outcome of military conflicts but also as a new source of political authority and state organisation’.⁹⁰ In Ireland this is seen by how the violence of the IRA resulted in the British calling for a truce, but also in the IRA’s rejection of the Treaty being the major cause of the civil war. But, it is also necessary to continue to explore republican thinking and ask how they viewed civilians in the last stages of the revolution. Some of these views were more than a little shocking.

After considerable tension between sections of the Kerry No.1 Brigade over the leadership of Paddy Cahill, Humphry Murphy replaced Cahill as Brigadier. Cahill retreated back into the Dingle peninsula but retained a considerable support base in his native Tralee. Murphy, John Joe Sheehy, and John Joe Rice stayed on as leaders in the county that would see the highest levels of brutality and violence in the civil war. Murphy’s own views on the conflict are startlingly brutal. After the fall of Limerick to National Army troops in July 1922 Murphy addressed a public meeting in Tralee organised by the Kerry Farmers Union in which he proclaimed:

If the provisional government continue to fight with English guns, English bullets and shells, English armoured Cars and the Ex-Soldiers of the English army... I am certain they are going to fail as the Black and Tans failed, because the war did not come properly until it came to Cork and Kerry. We will defend every town to the last. You will have towns in ruins and famine finishing those

⁸⁹ See Tom Garvin, *1922: the birth of Irish democracy* (Dublin, 1996) for the pro-Treaty perspective and John M. Regan, *Myth and the Irish state: historical problems and other essays* (Dublin, 2013) for the anti-treaty perspective.

⁹⁰ Robert Gerwarth and John Horne, ‘Paramilitarism in Europe after the Great War an introduction’ in Robert Gerwarth and John Horne (eds), *War in peace: paramilitary violence in Europe after the Great War* (Oxford, 2012), p.2.

who have escaped the bullet. We will stop at nothing, and we are going to win even if it takes years.⁹¹

Murphy presented an apocalyptic vision of the future in which the Irish people would all have to be shot or starve to death before the IRA would give in. Murphy's rhetoric may seem somewhat overblown but in later years his colleague, in west Cork, Liam Deasy felt the by the time of the Treaty the IRA had come to take the people for granted and were failing to take their concerns into consideration:

It may be that we were expecting too much from the people who had suffered so greatly and who now felt that peace, even without full freedom, was what they really wanted. In the War of Independence the people had suffered the full rigours of a terror campaign and we could not blame them if they now wished for peace. They were also undoubtedly influenced by their economic position. In the absence of markets and fairs they had continued to provide us with food and shelter without any material compensation. They gave their sons to the IRA and their daughters to Cumann na mBan. No people could have been so brave and generous. It may be that we had come to take all this for granted and too many of us were inclined to bask in the sunshine of hero worship.⁹²

Seamus Robinson, IRA leader in south Tipperary, also wrote that 'I had occasion to note that some very good Volunteers thought that the civilian population was at best only a secondary consideration'.⁹³ But such sentiments were not unusual higher up in the IRA. As the civil war dragged on into 1923 Liam Lynch, went as far as to describe the people of Ireland 'merely [as] sheep to be driven anywhere at will'.⁹⁴ It is of course possible that Lynch wrote this in despair or anger at the abject failure of all of his work and dreams. Regardless of this though it reveals a remarkable degree of contempt towards the people he purported to liberate. It is also possible that Lynch's judgement had gone and he was living in a world of absolutes where practical considerations were secondary.

This was certainly the opinion, Cork city short story writer Frank O'Connor, came to have of his anti-Treaty colleagues. O'Connor, a very young man at the time of the revolution, only took a more active role in the civil war. O'Connor described the revolutionary process as being driven by the 'imagination' of its participants. For O'Connor though his revolution ends with

⁹¹ Tom Doyle, *The civil war in Kerry* (Cork, 2009), pp.112-13.

⁹² Liam Deasy, *Brother against brother* (Cork, 1982), pp.43-4.

⁹³ Seamus Robinson, BMH, WS, 1721.

⁹⁴ Garvin, 1922, p.46.

disillusionment as ‘imagination’ is replaced by the need to be grounded in realities and he comes to despise his anti-Treaty comrades’ unbending devotion to martyrdom. In a Free State prison camp O’Connor remembered how one IRA man fell out with the IRA prison O/C. ‘The various officers addressed us on the wickedness of Murphy’s defiance of majority rule. From people who were in prison for refusing to recognise majority rule’.⁹⁵ O’Connor comes to see as absurd the idea that ‘the Irish Republic was still in existence and would remain so, no matter what its citizens might think’.⁹⁶ In his autobiography *Vive moi!* Séan Ó Faoláin remembered that by the end of the civil war he gloried in his status as the righteous and solitary republican fighting against the majority tide:

I was Ireland, the guardian of her faith, the one solitary man who would keep the republican symbol alive, keep the last lamp glowing before the last Ikón even if everybody else denied or forgot the gospel that had inspired us all from 1916 onwards.

Ó Faoláin, like O’Connor, comes to recognise the absurdity and destructive nature of his position:

I firmly believed in the dogma which had by this time [1923] became the last redoubt of the minority’s resistance to the majority, that the people have no Right to do wrong. Like all idealists, I was fast becoming heartless, humourless and pitiless.

His girlfriend, a republican, became deeply disillusioned and came to believe that the actions of Ó Faoláin and his comrades were not inspired by a love for the Irish people but rather ‘a love for your own ruthless selves’.⁹⁷

Charles Townshend has written on the civil war that republicans

bereft of feasible proposals, and offered protracted struggle not so much as a mechanism as an ethical assertion; approaching in effect, an end in itself. Self-validating, autotelic violence became in effect the Republican programme’.⁹⁸

However, the civil war was also seen by many republicans to be a simple continuation of the struggle of 1919-21. For some republicans the civilian supporters of the Treaty were simply the people who had opposed them in 1919-21 or those who were too afraid to previously openly

⁹⁵ Frank O’Connor, *An only child* (New York, 1961), pp.256-7.

⁹⁶ *Ibid*, p.256.

⁹⁷ Ó Faoláin, *Vive moi!*, p.208

⁹⁸ Charles Townshend, *Political violence in Ireland: government and resistance since 1848* (Oxford, 1983), p. 371.

oppose the IRA. Seamus ‘Jimmy the Master’ O’Connor, believed that the IRA had plenty of civilian opponents between 1919-21 but fear kept them in check ‘but when the Treaty raised its head, these lying low British partisans got the opportunity to form hard driving support behind [the Treaty]’.⁹⁹ Billy Mullins, from Tralee, told Ernie O’Malley that ‘when the F[ree]/S[ate] arrived [in Kerry] a good number of the fellows who had laughed at us previously were now officers in the invading force’.¹⁰⁰ Jamie Moynihan, from Muskerry in mid-Cork, similarly felt fear kept a substantial number of pro-British sympathisers in check until the signing of the Treaty. Moynihan wrote:

During the War of Independence the Volunteer movement believed that the public supported them almost 100 per cent. This, however, was a misconception, because when the Treaty became an issue, the hard-core British supporters came out in strength to reinforce and support the anti-Republican stand. These pro-British supporters had been kept quiet during the Tan war by a genuine fear of our intelligence service.¹⁰¹

Seamus O’Connor, however, felt that support for the Treaty in fact showed that a ‘great many’ of the Irish people had never even wanted substantial separation from Britain. O’Connor felt that the influence of Daniel O’Connell, the poverty of rural Ireland, the Catholic and Protestant churches, the failure of physical force had ‘conditioned the people to accept their lot...and in many cases to look on the British with respectful reverence’.¹⁰² O’Connor, like Ó Gaora, recognised that poverty prevented any involvement in the independence movement, while Ó Gaora seems to have recognised and accepted this as a simple fact of life, O’Connor, on the other hand, puts it down to obsequiousness and regarded it as type of surrender.

In some testimony substantial civilian resentment towards the republican campaign in the civil war is openly recognised. Séan Ó Faoláin in particular made no pretences about civilian support for republicans. Ó Faoláin wrote that defeat of the Free State was impossible

since during the Troubles [1919-21] the old IRA had been able to do it [beat the crown forces] thanks only to the loyalty of the men, women and children who sheltered and fed them, guarded them day and night and informed them of the

⁹⁹ O’Connor, *Tomorrow was another day*, p.38.

¹⁰⁰ O’Malley, *The Men will talk to me: Kerry interviews* p. 73.

¹⁰¹ Donal Ó Heallaithe (ed), *Memoirs of an old warrior: Jamie Moynihan’s fight for Irish freedom 1916-1923* (Cork, 2014), p.268.

¹⁰² O’Connor, *Tomorrow was another day* (Dublin, 1970), pp.36-7

slightest British move. Now the people were divided, at best sullen and uncooperative, at worst hard against us.¹⁰³

Florrie O'Donoghue, who took neither side similarly, recalled that 'the majority of the people were no longer with them'.¹⁰⁴ Manus Moynihan the captain of the Rathmore Volunteers in east Kerry recalled that in the winter of 1922-23 'We faced a hard winter, sleeping out most of the time. We had little food and many people were unfriendly. At times we had to commandeer cattle for food'.¹⁰⁵ Ó Faoláin recalled that in the civil war he 'lived like a wandering tramp, gypsy or animal'.¹⁰⁶ Jeremiah Murphy, also of Rathmore, recalled that civilians had a 'bad feeling' towards republicans during the civil war.¹⁰⁷ Maurice 'Mossy' Donegan, an officer in the 3rd West Cork Brigade, felt that during the civil war, most people were fed up and wanted a return to normality. 'The people were fed up with the whole thing. The bridges were down, roads were impassable, the railways were gone and they couldn't see an end to this thing...our friendly people were eaten out of house and home. Their horses and cattle had been taken away'.¹⁰⁸

The question of locality was also an issue, to some extent, in the civil war in regards to how the IRA viewed civilians. Todd Andrews, from Dublin, felt support, for the IRA in the civil war, varied from place to place recalling 'the civilian population of Cork was predominately pro-Treaty' but that in Kerry 'the majority of the people were anti-Treaty'.¹⁰⁹ This feeling is reflected in a report from Liam Deasy, O/C 1st Southern Division, to Liam Lynch in early 1923 that across the counties of Kerry and Cork, 'the civil population in some areas is hostile and friendly in others, but in every district it is evident that plenty of information is supplied to the enemy'.¹¹⁰ The irony being that Deasy would shortly be captured by the Free State army and would call on the IRA to end their campaign – if not actually giving information to the Free State Deasy certainly assisted them.

As in the 1919-21 conflict in the civil war republicans were, in some cases, critical of areas that were seen as particularly non-republican. The adjutant of the Kerry No.1 Brigade held a particular degree of contempt for the people of north Kerry. He believed north Kerry people joined the Free State army 'in large numbers' and that around Ardfert, Lixnaw, Listowel and

¹⁰³ Ó Faoláin, *Vive moi!*, p.197

¹⁰⁴ Townshend, *The republic*, p. 417.

¹⁰⁵ Manus Moynihan, BMH, WS, 1066.

¹⁰⁶ Ó Faoláin, *Vive moi!*, p.205.

¹⁰⁷ Murphy, *When youth was mine*, p.215.

¹⁰⁸ Ernie O'Malley, *The men will talk to me: the west Cork interviews*, p.107.

¹⁰⁹ C.S. Andrews, *Dublin made me* (Dublin, 1979), p.313.

¹¹⁰ Report from O/C 1st Southern Division to C/S (N/D but probably early 1923), UCDA, P69/25.

Ballylongford ‘the people are very materialistic, the farmers are more like those of Limerick than of Kerry’.¹¹¹ Humphry Murphy characterised the Ballylongford Comapny as having turned their back on the republic and that they would later show their rifles off in old age as evidence of their participation in the 1914-1918 war. Similarly, Listowel’s people showed ‘hostility’ to the IRA and that the Free State was popular in the area.¹¹² The hostility towards north Kerry may have a simple explanation. North Kerry was the only area in the county where significant numbers of I.R.A men joined the National Army. The belief that certain towns were more pro-Free State than others was not uncommon. Ted O’Sullivan, of west Cork, believed that due to the fact that Gearóid O’Súileabháin, the second in command of the Free State army, was from Skibbereen resulted in most of the town being anti-republican in the Civil War ‘our friends there were few’.¹¹³ This would again correlate with Kalyvas’ view that in conflicts certain areas become associated early on with certain sides.

In Kerry though, some republicans did believe they had something verging on universal support. John Joe Rice maintained that the republican spirit of the people in the glens of south Kerry persisted into the civil war:

The attitude of the Bishop and others had no effect on our people for the people of the glens and of the hills were very solid. Even in the civil war you could go into F[ree]/S[tate] houses in the country parts and sleep there.¹¹⁴

Shirley Quill, of New York, who wrote a biography of her husband, Kilgarvan IRA man Mike Quill, and later trade union organiser in New York, believed that the Free State army in Kerry ‘were execrated by the people they had betrayed’.¹¹⁵ and they in fact amounted to an ‘army of occupation’.¹¹⁶ Jamie Moynihan also maintained that the people of Kerry saw the Free State army as ‘the second round of Black and Tans’.¹¹⁷

A sense of local pride continued to manifest itself too. Seamus O’Connor felt that his native village of Knocknagoshel supported the IRA, while the rest of country was made up of obsequious cowards. O’Connor wrote:

The Free Staters in Abbeyfeale and Castleisland were bound to hear of our habits and act accordingly, and though they surrounded the village occasionally, we

¹¹¹ Brigade Adjutant Kerry No.2 Brigade to Adjutant 1st Southern Division, 13 Dec. 1922, UCDA, P69/25.

¹¹² O/C Kerry No.1 to Adjutant 1st Southern Division, 2 Dec. 1922, UCDA, P69/25.

¹¹³ O’Malley, *The men will talk to me. The west Cork interviews*, p.130

¹¹⁴ Ibid, p. 306.

¹¹⁵ Shirley Quill, *Mike Quill – Himself. A memoir* (Connecticut, 1985), p. 30.

¹¹⁶ Ibid, p.27.

¹¹⁷ Ó Heallaithe (ed), *Memoirs of an old warrior*, p.236.

managed to escape. We could not have done this without the help of the people. Everybody helped us, even the families of people who thought we were on the wrong side. Most of the boys and girls of our parish were our scouts – self-appointed. No sooner did a Free State soldier appear anywhere when word was sent and some scout was off to where it was thought we might be, or to give word to someone who might know. Through the over-zealousness of our friends we were often roused with ‘the Staters are coming’ when in fact, they weren’t.¹¹⁸

IRA men were less willing to discuss the civil war and it is sadly not as thoroughly discussed as 1919-21. However, in the testimony available it appears that like between 1919-21 in the civil war some civilians were remembered with affection while others were remembered with contempt and loathing.

What is curious is the republican idea that in both the 1919-21 and 1922-23, conflicts active support for the IRA was never universal and there was only a core nucleus of civilians who supported the IRA throughout the period. The point needs to be made that this continued beyond the revolution. The home of Cumann na mBan member, Mai Dálaigh, home which had been described as ‘a centre of republican activity’, was burned in May 1921 but despite this she continued to offer support for the IRA through the civil war.¹¹⁹ Dálaigh also made her farm available for the Provisional IRA as a training grounds fifty years later. One Provisional IRA man turned informer, would write in his memoir Dálaigh ‘was quite used to generations of IRA men passing through her house with their guns’.¹²⁰ Another Provisional recalled being moved from one select safe house to another in the early 1970s, at one in west Mayo his host reminisced ‘about the Tan War, the Civil war, Fianna Fáil and street fights with the Blueshirts’.¹²¹ Seemingly, this man and Mai Dálaigh among others, saw no difference between the two conflicts. This is perhaps an interesting point that, despite being controversial, needs to be made. While the other guerrilla conflicts in Europe that have been mentioned did have lasting legacies, they did not result in an influential paramilitary presence continuing to exist. In Ireland, though, a number of people continued to reject the Free State and the reforms of Fianna Fáil and continued to believe both Irish states were illegitimate. This allowed for subsequent generations of the IRA to have a continued, dedicated but often small, civilian support base over the twentieth century.

¹¹⁸ O’Connor, *Tomorrow was another day*, p.86.

¹¹⁹ O’Malley, *The men will talk to me. The Kerry interviews*, p. 95.

¹²⁰ O’Callaghan, *The informer*, p. 52.

¹²¹ Kieran Conway, *Southside provisional: from freedom fighter to the Four Courts* (Dublin, 2014), p .48.

Conclusion

Charles Townshend has written that, in the civil war period, republicans had a ‘view of public opinion (that) was and remained generally dismissive’.¹²² This is certainly true, but it could be extended to the 1919-21 conflict too. This chapter has demonstrated that beneath the glossy narrative of the IRA believing they had universal backing there is in fact a more unsettling acceptance of their never having anything close to total support from the civilian population. In fact it appears relatives of the IRA men may have been their most active supporters.

Republican contempt for certain civilians ranged from the people of certain towns, the shop keeping class and those associated in some form with the crown forces. There is no coherent narrative though, while some glorified ‘mountainy men’ and the poor of rural Ireland others did not. In fact hostility to agrarian agitation of poor rural labourers was not uncommon. Others seemed to have believed that a republican victory resulted in more people coming over to the republican side. Conversely, as the next chapter will demonstrate, the crown forces believed that their own aggressive policy brought more people over to supporting the British government.

The mentality of so many anti-Treaty IRA reveals a startling contempt for civilians. Humphry Murphy and Liam Lynch seemed to be almost divorced from any feeling of sympathy or concern for the civilian population. What is consistently present is the IRA’s acceptance of their not having anything near total support from 1919-23. From the opposite perspective the crown forces and Free State army believed that only a small minority of people ever actively assisted and supported the IRA.

Notable similarities exist between how IRA veterans felt about civilians in the 1919-21 conflict and the later civil war. Many IRA men believed they had the support of much of the population in both conflicts, many felt their own families and some neighbours were friendly throughout the revolution, while some regarded shopkeepers and the middle classes as being consistent opponents of their movement. But ultimately, no unity of expression exists towards civilians in IRA testimony. And of course regional diversity is a factor. John Grant from Armagh felt that no unionist during this period ‘could be then classified as a civilian’.¹²³ Thomas Hussey from Tuam in Galway emphasised that many people did not join Sinn Féin out of any deeply held nationalist views: ‘I would say that some members joined in the hope of

¹²² Townshend, *The republic*, p. 359.

¹²³ John Grant, BMH, WS, 658.

obtaining land'.¹²⁴ The agrarian and sectarian traditions of Connacht and Ulster respectively seem to have influenced civilians and republicans views on civilians in this period. What is consistent, however, is a recognition by IRA veterans that they were not universally supported.

From Greg Ashe's hatred of the slave minded people of the Gaeltacht on the Dingle peninsula to various republicans' distrust of people in Kilorglin, Listowel, Tarbert, Tralee, Kenmare, Cahirciveen, Cork city, Fermoy, Bandon, Skibbereen, many civilians were perceived as pro-British. In the civil war some republicans believed all the pro-British people came out of the wood work in support of the Treaty. And though some civilians were remembered with great affection in the testimony of IRA veterans many civilians were remembered with equal levels of contempt. Contempt and loathing would also result in action. From 1918 up until the end of the civil war in 1923 the IRA intimidated, boycotted, assaulted and eventually came to murder their civilian opponents. Fearghal McGarry has written that Monaghan's experience of conflict was driven by intimidation and the murder of civilians as much as by raids and ambushes. He writes that, Monaghan's IRA commander, Eoin O'Duffy 'understood that without such violence republicans would have struggled to impose their will on the community, and that the effective suppression of internal dissent was one of the principal distinctions between successful and unsuccessful revolutions'.¹²⁵ It might be necessary to repeat Augusteijn's assessment that 'although many people expressed their misgivings after the Soloheadbeg ambush, the perpetrators were never given away'.¹²⁶ Charles Townshend has written that 'it seems legitimate to conclude that public co-operation [with the IRA] was far from whole hearted'.¹²⁷ Sentiments such as these persisted into the modern era. Gerry Adams has mentioned talking with Cork veterans of the war of independence era about how they discussed finding it difficult to find a place to sleep after an ambush. Adams reflected on similarities with his generation of IRA men as at the height of violence. Whether in the 1920s or 1970s/1980s republicans could not count on much public support. Similarly, founding member of the Provisional IRA, Ruairi Ó Brádaigh, felt that events like the 1916 executions or Bloody Sunday in 1972 could deeply move people, but it was only ever 'a faithful' few who would ever actually assist the IRA at any time in the twentieth century.¹²⁸

¹²⁴ Thomas Hussey, BMH, WS, 1260.

¹²⁵ McGarry, *Eoin O'Duffy*, p. 70.

¹²⁶ Augusteijn, *From public defiance to guerrilla warfare*, p. 270.

¹²⁷ Charles Townshend, 'The Irish republican army and the development of guerilla warfare', *English historical review*, Volume 94, (April 1979).

¹²⁸ Brian Hanley, 'But then they started all this killing': attitudes to the IRA in the Irish Republic since 1969', *Irish Historical Studies*, Volume 38, No 158, (May, 2013), p. 452.

It is to be hoped that this chapter has shown the extent to which the IRA, of the revolutionary period, felt they could not rely on civilians, and, indeed, the contempt in which such people were held. And the IRA certainly had ‘misgivings’ about the civilians around them and targeting suspected civilian opponents became an integral aspect of their campaign. The following chapters, in fact, show that from 1918 to 1921 the campaign of the I.R.A in Kerry was directed as much, if not sometimes more, against perceived civilian opponents as it was against their regular military opponents. However, it would be unfair to characterise IRA – civilian relations as entirely driven by intimidation and violence. The third chapter shows the benevolent aspect of the IRA and their roles as guardians of the community. The following chapter also shows that these benevolent aspects could have sinister undertones.

Chapter two. Perceptions of civilians by the crown forces and Free State Army

Introduction: Historiography, victimhood and resentment.

The Irish revolution presented the crown forces with unprecedented challenges. The crisis that began with the development of Sinn Féin as a mass movement in 1917-1918, was then followed by the RIC's inability to properly police most of the country. Finally the RIC faced a campaign of guerrilla warfare. The RIC, understandably, uncertain of how to respond reacted in a number of ways – most obviously in the form of reprisals. The historical narrative around the crown forces has focused on the suffering, isolation, heavy drinking and pressure the force endured as an explanation for the reprisals that occurred, and while this is vital for an understanding of reprisals, should we now perhaps ask other questions? ¹ Did, for instance, the crown forces feel entirely isolated from the communities they policed? How did they feel about civilians? Did they, like the IRA believe, they had considerable support together with a not insubstantial opposition? This in fact may be the case as, curiously enough, the records of the RIC give a picture not dissimilar to that given by the IRA in the previous chapter.

Throughout 1919-21 the crown forces maintained that Sinn Féin was not representative of the majority of Irish people and, throughout their reports, maintained they retained substantial support. This chapter examines how the crown forces and the Free State army regarded civilians. It examines what level of support the crown forces believed they retained, what type of people supported them and what type of people supported republicanism. It also examines the extent to which the crown forces believed support for the IRA was based on intimidation rather than actual support. Accordingly, though no consistent narrative emerges from records by the crown forces, the views and opinions of the Irish people appear confused, sometimes having a class dimension, often influenced by fear, changing in response to the intensity of the crown forces' response to IRA activity and often informed by economic necessity. Again many issues here mirror those explored in the previous chapter. The concluding section will show that the Free State Army, in fact, shared remarkably similar views on these issues to their predecessors in the crown forces.

The question of location is also examined, however interestingly, the crown forces did not make as much of an issue out of particular towns as the IRA did. Probably, this was due to operating out of larger population centres it would have been harder for the crown forces to

¹ See in particular Leeson, *The Black and Tans*.

make the same level of differentiation between the people in smaller towns or let alone townlands. Republicans, however, tended to operate outside of larger population centres making it more necessary to differentiate the level of support they held in smaller towns, villages and townlands. Also the RIC, British army and later Free State army were not natives of the areas they were policing and accordingly they were not nearly as invested or knowledgeable of the particularities of County Kerry as the Kerry IRA, who were nearly all from the county.

Open hostility to all civilians.

Firstly, it is necessary to show that open hostility to all Irish people as a whole was not uncommon, particularly from the British Army. The 6th Division's report on the conflict, produced after the Truce of July 1921, felt that after the shooting of D.I. Hunt, in Tipperary in the Spring of 1919, 'the callousness of the people may be realised from the fact that they jeered and scoffed at the dying officer'.² Throughout the report civilians are vilified because apparently 'the whole population was combining to shield those who murdered their comrades [in the crown forces]'.³

General Macready, believed that 'a large proportion of the population [were] passively in his [Michael Collins and the IRA] favour from the first but more actively as time went on' and that 'ninety per cent of the population were either hostile or supine to the Government'.⁴ He believed that his views also reflected those of the men under his command. He noted, for instance, that as 1920 went on, and IRA attacks became more common, the average British soldier began to look on most Irish people with hostility.⁵ Macready's views must be taken with a pinch of salt. For instance, he maintained the IRA were responsible for more incidents of arson 'the number of houses destroyed by the military was infinitesimal compared to that for which the rebels were responsible'.⁶ In fact IRA house burning only began in earnest in the civil war period – after Macready had left Ireland.⁷

² The Irish rebellion in the 6th Divisional area, p.17, IWM, Strickland papers, Box P.363

³ Ibid, p.62.

⁴ Nevil Macready, *Annals of an active life: volume II* (London, 1925), p.435.

⁵ Ibid, p.468.

⁶ Ibid, p.524.

⁷ See Clark, *Everyday violence in the Irish civil war*.

Kalyvas has noted that, the most common complaint made by groups fighting against guerrilla insurgency is the inability to differentiate between civilians and potential enemy guerrillas.⁸ In the British Army many seemed unable to make any distinctions and viewed all civilians as opponents. In 1923, the future Field Marshall Montgomery, looking back on his time serving in the British Army in Cork, wrote to Major Percival, of the Essex regiment based in west Cork, that ‘I think I regarded all civilians as ‘shinners’ and I never had any dealings with them’ and that he was not particularly concerned with the people whose houses the crown forces burned – presumably as he thought all civilians were in his words ‘shinners’.⁹ Similarly, in the often quoted conclusion in the British Army’s *Record of the Rebellion* it was written that

Practically all commanders and intelligence officers considered that 90% of the people were Sinn Feiners or sympathisers with Sinn Fein, and that all Sinn Feiners were murderers or sympathised with murderers. Judged by English standards the Irish are a difficult and unsatisfactory people. Their civilization is different and in many ways lower than that of the English...Many were of a degenerate type and their methods of waging war were in most cases barbarous, influenced by hatred and devoid of courage.¹⁰

These sentiments might not have existed for those in the lower ranks of the army and police. For instance General Macready, who believed his men shared his views, also voiced his frustration at not being able to instil in the rank and file soldiers ‘the necessity for regarding every civilian with suspicion as a potential enemy’.¹¹ Similarly, playwright Sean O’Casey remembered that ‘in the absence of an ambush’ he might have a casual ‘chat’ with Black and Tans.¹² And indeed a narrative of total hostility towards all Irish people is not apparent in the records of the crown forces.

Class and youth

The RIC were faced with an unprecedented crisis which in turn created a variety of responses to explain the rise of Sinn Féin and the IRA. From the outset the RIC characterised the Sinn Féin movement and Irish Volunteers, and subsequently the IRA, as unrepresentative of the ‘majority’ and the product of youthful enthusiasm. A clear narrative of contempt and

⁸ Kalyvas, *The logic of violence in civil war*, pp. 89-90.

⁹ Townshend, *The British campaign in Ireland 1919-1921*, p. 205.

¹⁰ Quoted from O’Callaghan, *Revolutionary Limerick*, p. 115.

¹¹ Ibid, p. 158.

¹² Sean O’Casey, *Autobiographies. Volume two* (London, 1963), p.33.

underestimation of the level of popular support for the IRA emerges. This often took the form of underestimating the standing of the IRA and their supporters within Irish society.

Gavin M. Foster has recently written on the Civil war that pro-Treaty vision of anti-Treaty republicans

Although encompassing a seemingly incongruous collection of social elements, the leitmotif of the pro-treaty's camp's discursive picture of the republican opposition was an implicit emphasis on the latter's essential marginality, otherness, and lack of status – whether defined socioeconomically, politically or in terms of cultural markers and (ethno) nationalist credentials. Conversely, the pro-Treaty camp's self-image was the conceptual opposite of all the social vices, deviances, and worthless qualities attributed to the enemy.¹³

Instead Foster writes that the Free State developed the notion of 'the plain people' which 'avoided specific class connotations for a fuzzier image of a popular majority'.¹⁴ Interestingly, this interpretation can be extended to the 1919-21 conflict. The crown forces characterised the republican movement and its civilian supporters as lower down on the social sphere without anything to lose or irresponsible young men out for adventure and loot, and, on the other hand, those who opposed the republican were presented as decent and respectable.

From the very early stages of the revolution a class dimension or status dimension based on age and standing within society emerged in the RIC's interpretation of civilians who supported republicanism. In relation to the Armagh by-election of January 1918 the RIC maintained that 'Persons of stake still hold aloof' from the Sinn Féin movement.¹⁵ In May 1919 the Inspector General reported that 'people of stake in the country with few exceptions hold aloof from Sinn Fein'.¹⁶

In June 1919 the Inspector General again stated 'few persons of stake in the country are prominently associated with it'.¹⁷ In November 1919, the County Inspector for Kerry, believed that supporters of Sinn Féin had 'no stake in the country'.¹⁸ The next month the Inspector General recorded that 'few persons of substance were prominently identified with the Sinn Féin movement'.¹⁹ In early 1921 as killings became more common these sentiments again appeared.

¹³ Foster, *The Irish civil war and society*, p.49.

¹⁴ Idem.

¹⁵ Inspector General's monthly report for Jan. 1918, CO 904/105.

¹⁶ IG, MR, May 1919, TCD BL/CO 904/109.

¹⁷ IG, MR, June 1919, TCD BL/CO 904/109.

¹⁸ County Inspector's confidential monthly report for Nov. 1919, County of Kerry, TCD BL, CO 904/110.

¹⁹ IG, MR, Dec. 1919, TCD BL, CO 904/110.

In February 1921 the ‘responsible element’ of the population of west Galway disapproved of the IRA’s campaign.²⁰ In April 1921 the ‘respectable’ people of south Tipperary disapproved of IRA violence.²¹ Lloyd George himself believed that by late 1920, British policy in Ireland was winning over ‘the decent public’.²²

Alongside this certainty that ‘respectable’ or ‘responsible’ sections of the population disliked the republican movement was a tendency to characterise the IRA activity as the product of youthful foolishness and irresponsibility. In July 1918, according to the County Inspector in Kerry, Sinn Féin had apparently only ‘saturated the minds of the younger generation’.²³ In October 1918 in Kerry ‘a large proportion of the younger generation are...very disloyal’.²⁴ In November 1918, according to the Inspector General, ‘the republican programme holds a powerful attraction for the younger men and a large number of the younger priests’.²⁵ In December 1918 in Kerry it was again reported that ‘a very bitter feeling towards the RIC amongst the youthful members of the community’.²⁶

This theme was not so prevalent in 1919 but made a reappearance in 1920. In January 1920 the Inspector General recorded that ‘the fanatical republican party...includes nearly all the young nationalists’.²⁷ In February 1920 in Kerry ‘practically all the young men of the county are more or less disloyal’.²⁸ In April 1921 the County Inspector for Kerry argued that the IRA in the county were made up of badly off young men out for loot. ‘The young labourers...joined the IRA in the hope of acquiring someone else’s property’.²⁹ Similarly Major Percival, in west Cork, believed the IRA were ‘farmer’s sons and corner boys, who had no stake in the country and preferred earning a living by murder and plunder than by doing an honest day’s work’.³⁰

Winston Churchill felt ‘hostility was not widespread but was being fomented by a small group of fanatical terrorists’ and once defeated ‘the moderate majority could then be expected to return to legal and constitutional behaviour’.³¹ Charles Townshend has characterised the British Government’s response to the crisis in Ireland as ‘the belief that the majority of the Irish

²⁰ IG, MR, Feb. 1921, TCD BL, CO 904/114.

²¹ IG, MR, Apr. 1921, TCD BL, CO 904/115.

²² Ó Ruairc, *Truce*, p.33.

²³ IG, MR, Jul. 1918, TCD BL, CO 904/106.

²⁴ CI, MR, Oct. 1918, County of Kerry, TCD BL, CO 904/107.

²⁵ IG, MR, Nov. 1918, TCD BL, CO 904/107.

²⁶ IG, MR, Dec. 1918, TCD BL, CO 904/107.

²⁷ IG, MR, Jan. 1920, TCD BL, CO 904/111.

²⁸ CI, MR, Feb. 1920, TCD BL, County of Kerry, CO 904/111.

²⁹ CI, MR, Apr. 1920, County of Kerry, TCD BL/CO 904/115.

³⁰ William Sheehan, *British voices from the Irish war of independence 1918-1921: the words of British servicemen who were there* (Cork, 2005), p. 100.

³¹ Townshend, *Political violence in Ireland*, p. 349.

people were not hostile but were terrorised by a small group of fanatics'.³² In June 1918 in reaction to the arrest of Sinn Féin leaders in connection with the 'German plot' (a scheme concocted by the British Government to make untrue or exaggerated claims about links between Sinn Féin and Imperial Germany) the Inspector General noted that 'It is believed that some of the older nationalists and some of the young ones approve of the deportation of the Sinn Féin leaders'.³³ In August 1918 the Inspector General wrote 'the proclamation of Sinn Féin as a dangerous association has had a reassuring effect on all moderate people'.³⁴ In August 1919 'a large body of irresponsible and dangerous republicans...have succeeded in terrorising the majority of the people'.³⁵ The next month the Inspector General argued that 'the moderate nationalists who probably constitute the majority of the people were inactive' in the face of intimidation from republicans.³⁶ In November 1919 when Sinn Féin, the Irish Volunteers and the Gaelic League were declared illegal the Inspector General felt it was 'viewed with approval by loyal people and probably also by moderate nationalists'.³⁷ In December 1919 the Inspector General wrote 'the moderate party and business men and others with property would welcome a settlement which would restore peace in the country'.³⁸

In Kerry in November 1920 'moderate opinion is gaining strength'.³⁹ *The Record of the Rebellion* stated that the martial law policy 'caused satisfaction to the law abiding people'.⁴⁰ This leads on to how the crown forces actually explained the support that existed for Sinn Féin and the IRA. According to the records left by the crown forces it appears many people had no interest in Sinn Féin and the IRA but fear of interference drove them to support or at least not speak out against them.

Support based on intimidation.

The RIC believed that the IRA were engaged in wholesale intimidation and that any support for the IRA or Sinn Féin was due to fear rather than actual support, a view that was shared by Seamus O'Connor. According to *The Record of the Rebellion* 'every effort was made to terrorise local people into silence regarding outrages committed in their districts'.⁴¹ And that

³² Townshend, *The British campaign in Ireland 1919-1921*, p. 203.

³³ IG, MR, Jun. 1918, TCD BL, CO 904/106.

³⁴ IG, MR, Aug. 1918, TCD BL, CO 904/106.

³⁵ IG, MR, Aug. 1919, TCD BL, CO 904/109.

³⁶ IG, MR, Sept. 1919, TCD BL, CO 904/110.

³⁷ IG, MR, Nov. 1919, TCD BL, CO 904/110.

³⁸ IG, MR, Dec. 1919, TCD BL, CO 904/110.

³⁹ CI, MR, Nov. 1920, County of Kerry, TCD BL/CO 904/113.

⁴⁰ W.H. Kautt (ed), *Ground truths: British army operations in the Irish war of independence* (Dublin, 2014), p.109.

⁴¹ Kautt (ed), *Ground truths*, p.21.

the IRA were 'able to intimidate them [the people] acquiescence in a political demand for which they had no particular wish, and even into open and armed hostility to the forces of law and order'.⁴² In the report from the 6th Divisional area it was felt the civilian population were 'intimidated into silence' and that people who were well disposed to the crown forces would not come forward for fear of their very lives.⁴³

In February 1918, in relation to Sinn Féin collecting signatures for a plebiscite for Irish representation at the peace conference to take place at the end of the War, the Inspector General recorded that 'undoubtedly a good many persons have signed the petition through fear of the consequences of their refusal'.⁴⁴ On 14 June after the attack in Tralee on Sergeant Boyle and Constable Fallon for their testifying against the attackers on Gortalea barracks the previous April the County Inspector noted that 'People who saw the crime committed and can identify the criminal have through fear declined to do so'.⁴⁵ The next month the County Inspector noted that it was almost impossible to get information from the public except 'in the most trivial cases'.⁴⁶

In December 1919 the Inspector General wrote of the republican movement that 'through intimidation the general public will neither inform against nor denounce them'.⁴⁷ In February 1920 due to intimidation in Kerry 'even loyal people are slow in being seen speaking' to the police.⁴⁸ In the spring and summer of 1920 according to *The Record of the rebellion* 'information [from civilians] again began to be scarce, and witnesses could not be persuaded to give evidence which would secure convictions' and that 'civilians opposed to Sinn Fein were systematically subjected to more dastardly outrages'.⁴⁹ *The Record of the Rebellion* also stated that

civilians were made to bring their cases to these [Sinn Féin] courts by means of intimidation and the 'offences' dealt with were frequently not offences known to the law, but, merely lack of disloyalty.⁵⁰

⁴² Ibid, p.47.

⁴³ *The Irish rebellion in the 6th Divisional area*, p.19.

⁴⁴ IG, MR, Feb. 1918, TCD BL/CO 904/105.

⁴⁵ CI, MR, Jul. 1918, County of Kerry, TCD BL,CO 904/106.

⁴⁶ CI, MR, Aug. 1918, County of Kerry, TCD BL,CO 904/106.

⁴⁷ IG, MR, Dec. 1919, TCD BL, CO 904/110.

⁴⁸ CI, MR, Feb. 1920, County Kerry, TCD BL, CO 904/111.

⁴⁹ Kautt (ed), *Ground truths*, pp.56-8.

⁵⁰ Ibid, p.68.

In the 6th Divisional area it was felt that by the summer of 1920 with the upsurge in IRA activity created a 'growing reluctance of the friendly disposed section of the population to risk their own lives by assisting the forces of the crown'.⁵¹

The same month in Kerry it was reported that the decrease in crimes from the previous month 'indicated no improvement in the state of the area but rather pointed to the fact that Sinn Fein was so generally acknowledged that it was unnecessary to resort to outrage.' In June, at the summer assizes in the district, the Judge for County Kerry reflected 'He was perfectly satisfied that in the majority of cases where assistance was not given [to the crown forces after an instance of IRA violence], it was not because the people sympathies with the crime, but they were intimidated from assisting the police in detecting the crime'.⁵²

Interestingly, these sentiments that the IRA drew support via intimidation existed amongst the most senior members of the government and even was tied to unrest in the rest of the world. In February 1921 Hamar Greenwood described the IRA's actions as part of a Soviet conspiracy to undermine civilian government itself and not just the people of Ireland but the British people, telling the House of Commons that the IRA hoped to 'terrorise into submission the British people and British government'.⁵³ By the Spring of 1921 General Macready had a report produced to get the view of his senior officers. The report stated that 'the vast majority of the inhabitants are tired of the Sinn Fein movement, but partly from a mistaken idea of loyalty to their kith and kin, and still more from terror to their own lives, will not voice their opinions'.⁵⁴

Seemingly, a 'moderate' and respectable majority existed in the middle who disapproved of what the IRA were doing and were sympathetic with the forces of law and order but who were all terrified of the IRA. It is important to note that for all their talk of a 'moderate majority', and support for the IRA being based on intimidation, the crown forces also believed that their reprisals and indeed fear of reprisals drove people away from supporting Sinn Féin and the IRA. Reprisals would result in suffering for all sections of the population, not just republicans or the families of republicans, presumably including this 'moderate' or 'decent' majority. The reports looked at are a fascinating insight into the mentality of the crown forces but they should be treated in the context of the violence the crown forces implemented against civilians. In this context their sincerity or concern for the safety of the apparent 'moderate' majority can be best described as dubious.

⁵¹ *The Irish rebellion in the 6th Divisional area*, p.41.

⁵² *The Kerryman*, 17 Jul. 1920.

⁵³ Leeson, *The Black and Tans*, p. 221.

⁵⁴ Macready, *Annals of an active life: volume II*, p.556.

Reprisals and 1921

The previous chapter concluded by arguing that republicans consistently recognised that they faced considerable civilian opposition and, accordingly, their energies were directed against people seen as posing a threat to them. The crown forces, however, seemed to have believed they retained considerable civilian support but this did not reflect how some chose to actually treat civilians – as the following chapters will show their reprisals were often indiscriminate.

Across the south and west from late 1920 into 1921 the population at large were described as generally becoming friendlier towards the police. However, this must be regarded in relation to the growing number of reprisals that occurred during these months. Augusteijn, for instance, writes that the desire to avoid incurring the wrath of the crown forces led people to adopt a more co-operative attitude towards the crown forces.⁵⁵ This is reflected in the records of the crown forces. John M. Regan, an RIC man serving in Cork and Limerick who wrote a memoir, remembered two events when such was the case but gave rather scant details:

I have even heard that on an IRA leader and his men arriving in an area with a view to operations the populace got on their knees and beseeched them to go elsewhere and not draw the wroth of Crown forces down on them.⁵⁶

And that on another occasion ‘I have heard of a farmer going to the police and giving the names of all the men in an ambush near his house so that his property would not become the subject of reprisals’.⁵⁷ Hamar Greenwood wrote to Andrew Bonar Law on 25 September that thanks to the new recruits, in the Black and Tans and Auxiliaries, ‘the mass of Irishmen are losing faith in the victory of Sinn Fein’.⁵⁸

The crown forces tended to be reluctant to openly admit the existence and scale of unofficial reprisals. David Fitzpatrick noted in 1977 that ‘local police reports are remarkable for what they failed to say about reprisals’, this is certainly the case in Kerry.⁵⁹ On occasion County Inspectors wrote in coded language that the ‘stern’ measures being taken were successfully discouraging people from supporting the IRA.

⁵⁵ Augusteijn, *From public defiance to guerrilla warfare*, p. 274.

⁵⁶ Joost Augusteijn (ed), *The memoirs of John M. Regan: a Catholic officer in the RIC and R.U.C., 1909-1948* (Dublin, 2007), p.172.

⁵⁷ Idem.

⁵⁸ Townshend, *The British campaign in Ireland*, p.113.

⁵⁹ Fitzpatrick, *Politics and Irish life*, pp.30-31.

November 1920 saw the most extensive and brutal reprisals by the crown forces in Kerry with the ‘siege’ of Tralee and a number of other reprisals across the county, that are examined in detail in chapter six. The County Inspector announced:

As a result of the...action taken, following on the murders on 31st October...an improvement has been affected in the attitude of the general body of the people and the number of those willing to engage in outrage has reduced.⁶⁰

This was a common sentiment among the RIC. The next month it was reported from west Galway that ‘firm manner in which the crown forces are performing their duties has subdued the disloyal spirit of the people’.⁶¹ In the same month in Mayo ‘the dread of reprisals...[was creating] a very salutary effect’. In Roscommon ‘the firmness and resolution of the crown forces is commanding the respect even of the IRA’.⁶²

In the 6th Divisional Area it was felt the introduction of Martial Law, which coincided with the biggest reprisals in Munster, ‘undoubtedly frightened, a large number of civilians and made them more willing to give information to the crown forces’.⁶³ Macready felt the change in attitude thanks to reprisals was not in any way reflective of sympathy with the government. On 28th September he wrote ‘where reprisals have taken place, the whole atmosphere of the surrounding district has changed from one of hostility to one of cringing submission’.⁶⁴

According to the *Record of the Rebellion* the reprisal policy was very effective in that ‘loyal people, thinking that a strong line was taken with rebellion and outrage, began to take heart, and information concerning outrages began to come in more freely’.⁶⁵ Brigadier General Prescott-Decie maintained that in the Martial law area of north Munster ‘Reprisals in my division were done under my direction, not because I liked it but because it was the only way. They had the desired effect’.⁶⁶

Interestingly this type of sentiment that ‘stern’ measures had the desired effect existed earlier on – particularly in June 1918 with the ‘German Plot’ and the resulting arrest of a number of prominent republicans. In June 1918 the Inspector General recorded ‘on the whole, however,

⁶⁰ CI, MR, Nov.1920, County of Kerry, TCD BL, CO 904/113.

⁶¹ IG, MR, Dec. 1920, TCD BL, CO 904/113.

⁶² Idem.

⁶³ *The Irish rebellion in the 6th Divisional area*, p.41.

⁶⁴ Townshend, *The British campaign in Ireland*, p.120.

⁶⁵ Kautt (ed), *Ground truths*, p.37.

⁶⁶ O’Callaghan, *Revolutionary Limerick*, p. 114.

after the deportation of the Sinn Fein leaders and the adoption of firmer measures in dealing with lawlessness, some abatement of the hostility towards police was noticeable'.⁶⁷

Similarly, in July 1918, the County Inspector for Kerry noted that after the declaration of Tralee as a special Military Area members of Sinn Féin 'are beginning to realise that the government is determined to enforce the law and that the Sinn Fein cause is hopeless and many are waiting for opportunities to get out of Sinn Feinism with as much grace as possible'.⁶⁸ The next month when the order was suspended 'the inconvenience suffered by the townspeople while it was in force is believed to have taught them [the people] a salutary lesson'.⁶⁹

It does appear that people reacted to aggressive shows of strength and in some cases came out for the side who appeared to be in the better position at a given time. The County Inspector for Kerry believed that Kerry people were fickle: 'they can easily be carried away by anyone who shows that they are top dog and shows the administration is weak and cannot punish them'.⁷⁰ Stathis Kalyvas has noted that 'gaining control over an area brings collaboration, and losing control of an area brings much of that collaboration to an end'.⁷¹ This can equate with the, seeming, increase in support after the reprisal based offensive of the summer and autumn of 1920 that prevented the IRA from continuing to operate openly and resulted in the crown forces regaining control of certain areas. There was, however, seemingly a pendulum aspect to this, as the previous chapter showed the IRA believed, in some cases, civilians would come over to their side after a particularly successful IRA operation. However, Kalyvas has also noted that the majority of people tend to just want peace, and it is not uncommon for some people to identify with the group who appear to be winning – and after the intensive November reprisals it was logical for people to think the IRA were losing.⁷²

Friendliness towards the authorities and simple desire for peace

On the arrival of Black and Tans and Auxiliaries and the beginning of reprisals in the summer of 1920 according to the RIC the perspective of civilians' changed and a noticeable increase in civilian support for the police occurred. Initially, in the summer and autumn of 1920 the police

⁶⁷ IG, MR, Jun.1918, TCD BL/CO 904/106.

⁶⁸ CI, MR, Jul. 1918, County of Kerry, TCD BL, CO 904/106.

⁶⁹ CI, MR, Aug. 1918, County of Kerry, TCD BL, CO 904/106.

⁷⁰ CI, MR, Mar. 1919, County of Kerry, TCD BL, CO 904/107.

⁷¹ Kalyvas, *The logic of violence in civil war*, p.119.

⁷² Ibid, p.126.

reported that many were still supportive of them and wanted a return to normal conditions but dared not show it. In July the County Inspector for Kerry wrote:

The relations between the police and the people have not improved and boycotting of the police increases daily, as a result of terrorism...many people are in sympathy with the police and would like to see the defeat of Sinn Fein but they will only express such opinions anonymously.⁷³

According to the *Record of the Rebellion* this sentiment existed before the policy of reprisals began going back to May 1920:

There was still a considerable portion of the community, notably the farmers and tradesmen, who only desired peace and who looked upon the I.R.A rather than the crown forces as being the obstacle to peace.⁷⁴

Indeed, in 1921 class elements again emerged. It appears the one group who were particularly put out by the IRA's campaign, in the records of the crown forces, were the farmers. In Kerry the County Inspector felt the IRA's decision to start blocking roads was 'likely to alienate the sympathy of the farming class', but also that 'there were some indications that the community at large was becoming very tired of the general insecurity of life and property'.⁷⁵ *The Record of the Rebellion* maintained that the banning of markets and fairs 'had a very marked effect in setting farmers against the rebel extremists'.⁷⁶ In December the farmers of west Cork were 'anxious that law and order may be restored'.⁷⁷ *The Record of the Rebellion* also noted the unpopular effect the I.R.A's campaign of road blocking had: 'the greatest factor in reducing road destruction was the unpopularity in which such action was held by local farmers, who were unable to get their goods to market'.⁷⁸

Kerry was described as 'unsatisfactory' in December but 'public confidence is being restored. People who up to recently were afraid to be seen talking to the police or military are now not afraid to have dealings with the crown forces'.⁷⁹ In Kerry in January 'People are now more friendly to the police, and more inclined to seek remedies for their grievances in lawfully constituted courts'.⁸⁰ In Kerry the next month 'the people are now more friendly towards the

⁷³ CI, MR, Jul. 1920, County of Kerry, TCD BL, CO 904/112.

⁷⁴ Kautt (ed), *Ground truths*, p.47.

⁷⁵ IG, MR, Nov. 1920, TCD BL, CO 904/113.

⁷⁶ Kautt (ed), *Ground truths*, p.115.

⁷⁷ IG, MR, Dec.1920, TCD BL, CO 904/113.

⁷⁸ Kautt (ed), *Ground truths*, p.142.

⁷⁹ CI, MR, Dec. 1921, County of Kerry, TCD BL, CO 904/113.

⁸⁰ IG, MR, Jan. 1921, CO 904/114.

police... [and] are more disposed to have open trade transactions with the police'.⁸¹ In early 1921, according to *The Record of the Rebellion*, a new feeling of co-operation emerged with the introduction of martial law 'there had been a marked difference in the attitude of the population, and letters began to come in freely giving information and urging the military authorities to hunt down the murderers'.⁸²

However, as the IRA's campaign became more aggressive in the spring of 1921 according to the RIC the people's attitudes began to change again and become fearful of the IRA In Kerry, in April, it was reported that sympathy for the crown forces still existed but IRA intimidation was again on the rise.

The people in the country + town[s] are friendly to our men, and in places gave timely warnings of danger. I believe them [the people] to be heartily sick of the IRA – at least those who have any property in the country. I may say that any person merely suspected of giving information is promptly murdered by the IRA. Were it not for the terror of the revolver information would be freely given...Many people who take no part in politics are seriously thinking of leaving the country. Some are Protestants others are R.C. + Nationalists. The latter are the bitter enemies of the IRA but are afraid to openly denounce them.⁸³

The next month in Kerry it was reported that a distinction existed between how the young and the old felt about the IRA

The older people are weary of interference with their ordinary associations, and would welcome any change that would give them peace. They are not allowed have any mind of their own but are terrorised and bullied by the IRA The rebels have been the cause of the prohibition of fairs, imposition of curfews in towns, the closing of creameries and the closing of railways. These latter orders severely affected the farmers and traders but are absolutely necessary to restore public order.⁸⁴

⁸¹ CI, MR, Jan. 1921, County of Kerry, TCD BL, CO 904/114.

⁸² Kautt (ed), *Ground truths*, p.134.

⁸³ CI, MR, Apr. 1921, County of Kerry, TCD BL, CO 904/115.

⁸⁴ IG, MR, May 1921, TCD BL, CO 904/115.

However, intimidation was, apparently the one factor that allowed the IRA's campaign to continue. *The Record of the Rebellion* also noted that the Flying Columns 'were becoming unpopular with inhabitants who were compelled to billet and feed them without payment'.⁸⁵

This sentiment continued in the records of the crown forces up to the Truce. In Kerry in June

The country farmers and village shopkeepers are heartily sick of the IRA but dare not openly complain: the former are often turned out of bed to allow IRA men rest the latters [sic] shops are visited and their goods commandeered in the name of the IRA, clothing as well as provisions being taken.

And 'No boycotting is necessary; people not falling into line with the IRA are either shot or threatened with death. Intimidation is rampant'.⁸⁶

From 1918 up to the Truce of July 1921, if the records of the crown forces are to be believed, republicans never had anything close to consistent support, which republicans did, as the last chapter has shown, also recognise. But curiously despite this the crown forces believed 'firm' or 'stern' measures drove more people towards supporting them, and seemingly that the moderates supported or approved of reprisals and that fear of reprisals drove Sinn Féin supporters into switching sides, despite innocent non-republicans suffering because of reprisals. However, a pendulum-like aspect is apparent as in the spring of 1921 with I.R.A. violence on the rise many people, seemingly, regressed to a position of fear of the IRA and unwillingness to deal with the crown forces. The records here, therefore, correlate with the historical narrative of the conflict and Kalyvas' idea of popular support fluctuating according to which side appearing to be winning. But the evasive nature of how they deal with reprisals, together with the approval for the often indiscriminate reprisals makes their concern for non-combatants questionable.

The Truce

In July 1921 the British Government concluded that attempts at negotiation with Sinn Féin could be more conducive to a successful outcome than continuing violence and agreed to a Truce. During the Truce, according to a captured British Army intelligence report the same concerns, outlined in previous sections, are evident. 'The merchant, farmer and shopkeeper class are all for peace... However, should negotiations fail, there is no doubt that they are such "rabbits" that they would assist the IRA as hitherto through intimidation' on the other hand the

⁸⁵ Kautt (ed), *Ground truths* p.144.

⁸⁶ CI, MR, Jun. 1921, County of Kerry, TCD BL, CO 904/115.

‘labouring class, including the rank and file of IRA are not keen on fighting but if ordered have not sufficient character to refuse’. Loyalists, however, ‘will only live on the sufferance of the IRA and will be bled by collectors for various funds weekly. They will only be allowed to live in the country as long as it pays the local inhabitants to keep them’.⁸⁷

However, certain documentation produced during the Truce again calls into question whether the crown forces’ high command had any real regard for the ‘moderate majority’. Perhaps the most striking aspect of how the crown forces viewed the civilian population is in their plans in regard to treating the civil population if the truce broke down. In a document written by Under Secretary Andy Cope for General Strickland, which came into the hands of the chief intelligence officers of the IRA’s 1st Southern Division, the following scenario was envisaged:

Concentration camps for women and children and loyal members of male sex to be established at various centres near coastal ports and railway centres such as Mallow. Loyal citizens to be given the opportunity to reside in England or in a camp. All males who elect to remain outside the camps in Ireland to be treated as hostile. Women and children to be removed compulsorily to camp if necessary before the commencement of hostilities. Such operations expected to result in victory in a month.⁸⁸

Britain had, famously, used a system of concentration camps for white South Africans at the start of the twentieth century. The South African precedent had, in fact, long played a part in the minds of British authorities as a possible method of dealing with the situation in Ireland. Tom Jones, Lloyd George’s secretary, noted, in December 1920, in the case of the breakdown of a negotiated peace that

The (British) Government had come to the conclusion that it was better to see the thing through as was done in the American [Civil] and South African wars unless meanwhile the Sinn Feiners surrender their arms and publicly announce the abandonment of violent measures.⁸⁹

In fact, shortly before the Truce was declared Macready was asked for a new assessment of the necessary measures to militarily crush the IRA. In it Macready suggested that all members of the Dáil, the IRB and the IRA be liable for execution and that anyone caught with firearms be also liable to be executed. He also recommended the seizure of all privately owned motorcycles

⁸⁷ Captured British Army intelligence report on the Truce, N/D, UCDA, PA/7/23.

⁸⁸ Director of Intelligence to C/S. 24 Oct. 1921, UCDA, PA/7/26.

⁸⁹ Ó Ruairc, *Truce*, p.37.

and cars, the closure of all ports, and the introduction of compulsory identification cards.⁹⁰ The British Government was, seemingly, prepared to use drastic measures that would affect the entire population.

Curiously, though if this policy went ahead it would make it difficult to continue to maintain that what was going on in Ireland was a type of civil war within the United Kingdom of nations. By locking the entire nationalist population up it would put the Irish on a similar footing, not just with the Boers, but also with the German treatment of west African tribes, or British treatment of the Mau Mau population in the 1950s – almost putting the catholic Irish on the same level as, what at the time would have been seen as ‘barbarians’.

In December 1921 a Treaty was agreed that resulted in a British military withdrawal from southern Ireland. The Treaty ensured that none of the drastic measures the British military envisaged, if the Truce broke down, having to occur. The Treaty did, however, create a whole series of new problems. By and large the IRA refused to accept the Treaty, overwhelmingly so in County Kerry, this resulted in the new Free State having to, like the crown forces had done, fight the guerrillas in the IRA. The final section will address how the issues addressed so far played out in the civil war.

The Civil war

The Civil War had three distinct phases. Initially the conflict was confined solely to Dublin where the Free State successfully dislodged the IRA garrisons in the Four Courts and O’Connell Street after under a week of fighting. With Dublin secure the Free State launched an offensive against the republican strongholds in the south and west. Tralee fell quickly to Free State troops who landed at Fenit and the rest of the major towns in the county were quickly secured – together with Cork, Limerick, Waterford and all of Connacht.

In Kerry the Free State Army unit was called the Kerry Command and was drawn from Dublin and northern IRA members who supported the Treaty and local Kerry men. The Kerry Command quickly established command centres in Tralee, Castleisland, Kenmare, Cahirciveen, Killarney and Listowel.

By September 1922 the republicans no longer held any major town across Ireland and Chief of Staff Liam Lynch ordered a return to the guerrilla policies of 1919-21, earnestly believing in an inevitable republican victory. The third phase of guerrilla warfare lasted from the late summer of 1922 to the spring of 1923. After Lynch’s death, on the Knockmealdown hills, in

⁹⁰ Ibid, pp. 56-7.

April 1923 more pragmatic voices in the anti- Treaty movement prevailed and a ceasefire was called. These pragmatic voices would then go on to have immense influence on Irish life into the 1970s.

To return to Kerry it was only in the autumn that Kerry Command began to produce reports on the situation in the County. Initially, they were of a markedly pessimistic nature – claiming their opponents had greater capabilities and that the majority of people supported the IRA. In October the Kerry Command reported that ‘we are fighting against very superior forces, in a mainly hostile country’ but that ‘we can gradually get support but only by showing ourselves as “top dog” – a curious repeat of the old RIC County Inspector’s terminology.’⁹¹ By the end of the month ‘the population through cowardice and sympathy help the Irregulars... The people really think that the die-hards are going to win’.⁹² Sentiments such as these were not to prevail and the Kerry Command’s reports began to read a lot like those of their predecessors in the RIC

Gavin Foster has recently skilfully shown the complexity of Free State attitudes towards their opponents in the IRA. Free State propaganda, and indeed many politicians and soldiers in private correspondence, viewed ‘the irregulars’ as juvenile delinquents, youths misled by the political leaders of the republican movement, the poorest elements of society from the most remote parts of the country and usually people with ‘no stake’ in the country.⁹³ Senior Free State Minister, Kevin O’Higgins, in particular, viewed the ‘irregular’ campaign as largely driven by wilful criminality and the desire to seize someone else’s property.⁹⁴ In many respects all this would seem to reflect how their predecessors in the crown forces viewed the IRA and its supporters. Interestingly, the Free State commentary on levels of civilian support and opposition bear a remarkable similarity in tone and content to the RIC reports of 1919-1921. According to Free State sources most people did not support the IRA and much of the support or acquiescence was due to intimidation, and those who did actively support them were people of a low social standing.

In late November 1922 it was reported that ‘The people of Killarney are very hostile to the Irregulars but, possibly through fear of the consequences, the people in the country districts seem to be favourable to them’.⁹⁵ This sentiment would be repeated often. In March 1923 it was reported that ‘The army has not been receiving all the active support it should from the

⁹¹ Field General Headquarters, Kerry Command, Tralee 1 Oct.1922 to the Commander-in-Chief, MAI, CW/OPS/08/01.

⁹² Kerry Command, Daily report communications, 30 Oct. 1922, MAI, CW/OPS/08/01.

⁹³ Foster, *The Irish civil war and society*, pp.22-51.

⁹⁴ Townshend, *The republic*, p. 450.

⁹⁵ KC, GWR, 31 Oct.1922, MAI,CW/OPS/08/14.

people in general here. This can in some cases be attributed to fear of Irregular reprisals in others to sympathy with Irregulars'.⁹⁶ In March Kerry Command recorded three types of civilians:

The attitude of the people can be described in the following categories:

(1) Loyal and open support

(2) Diffidence and apathy born of fear [of] Irregulars, and a desire for peace. [These people are pro Treaty, but who have no the backbone to assert, and hold up their views, and help the army to make the benefits of the Treaty secure.]

(3) Open hostility. Open hostility is mostly displayed by the female.⁹⁷

Also in Kerry, the people seemed to have welcomed the new police force, the Civic Guard, but fear of the IRA prevented people from engaging with them:

the Civic guard is now established in seven stations, widely separated and Supt. reports that the people are friendly with the Civic Guard, and well-disposed to the Government, but like the populace in many other places they are inarticulate, and the noisy and cowardly section rule the many because of the torch and the gun.⁹⁸

Interestingly, by March 1923 anti-Treaty IRA activity occurred most frequently in the Kenmare area despite according to the National Army, the people Kenmare being 'overwhelmingly in favour of the government'.⁹⁹ In another Army report from March 1923 it was reported that 'on coming into actual contact with them [the people of Kerry] the impression of hostility immediately evaporates... people seemed glad to have troops in their locality and treated them without reserve or suspicion'. The report also noted, like nearly all produced in this era, that any support for the IRA was based on fear: 'People had been living in complete isolation for months – their connection with the outside world had been cut off and their feelings of isolation had accentuated their fear of the irregulars'.¹⁰⁰ In May 1923

There are signs that the people residing in areas recently liberated from Irregular bondage – are welcoming the change, and showing more friendliness towards the troops. Their previous attitude of neutrality sometimes misconstrued as one

⁹⁶ KC, GWR, 14 Mar. 1923, MAI, CW/OPS/08.

⁹⁷ *Idem.*

⁹⁸ Monthly report as to the state of the country, 23 Feb. 1923, NAI, Jus/H99/125.

⁹⁹ KC, GWR, 28 Mar. 1923, MAI, CW/OPS/08.

¹⁰⁰ Bill Kissane, *Explaining Irish democracy* (Dublin, 2002), p. 154.

of hostility is attributed to fear of Irregular reprisals. Now that they are assured of the protection of the army, their real attitude is becoming apparent. There are still, however, a large number of people who are working tooth and nail for the Irregulars.¹⁰¹

The next week it was reported that as between 1919 and 1921 most people wanted peace but few would actually give information on IRA activities: ‘the people are tired of the whole trouble and would welcome peace. We are receiving little or no information regarding irregular movements’.¹⁰²

By late May, as the IRA’s campaign was coming to a confused and uncoordinated end the remaining support for the IRA was, apparently, quickly ebbing away. This seems to have been because the IRA were no longer in a position to intimidate.

The last month has seen a remarkable change in the general attitude of the people. They have begun at last to make an open profession of their opinions; and are unbosoming themselves more to the troops. The fear of Irregular reprisals which predominated so much seem to have faded into the background; and at the moment a more cordial welcome than was ever expected at any time is being extended in areas which were either hostile or attitude of what was wrongly termed “strict neutrality”¹⁰³

Despite hostilities ceasing in May 1923 the Kerry Command continued to make detailed reports on the situation in Kerry – and it is interesting to observe their observations relating to the civilians in the conflict’s immediate aftermath. In fact it appears that despite the end of hostilities the IRA were still in a position to inspire fear and considerable resentment towards the Free State continued in some quarters.

In early June it was reported that ‘we have gained a considerable amount of sympathy and support recently...Diplomatic raids and the avoidance of undue inconvenience of the civilian population irrespective of whether they have been hostile or kindly disposed towards us in the past should be the order of the day’.¹⁰⁴ The tone changed the next week though as apparently the people

¹⁰¹ KC, GWR, 1 May 1923, MAI, CW/OPS/08.

¹⁰² KC, GWR, 7 May 1923, MAI, CW/OPS/08.

¹⁰³ KC, GWR, 29 May 1923, MAI, CW/OPS/08.

¹⁰⁴ KC, GWR, 5 Jun. 1923, MAI, CW/OPS/08.

who though sympathetic towards the army have never had the backbone to show it till lately and who would be weak willed enough to accept from the other side the assurance that they had lain down arms- for the sake of the people, and so give support to Irregulars at elections. This danger exists.¹⁰⁵

By early July it was reported that ‘we are retaining the people’s sympathy’.¹⁰⁶ Also that

The commercial and farming elements favour the Army by a great majority, but notwithstanding, the farmers do not like to give expression to their preference, owing to their natural fear of irregulars. It is undoubted proof of the people’s affection for the army, however, that the inhabitants of the areas from which Military Posts have been withdrawn invariably complain of the possibility of being again beset by the Irregulars.¹⁰⁷

By the time of the summer election of August 1923 Kerry Command was reporting that despite the ending of hostilities intimidation still continued and related primarily to preventing people from voting for the government party – Cumann naGaedheal.

It has transpired that people in many quarters are being intimidated against voting for Cumann naGaedheal candidates. This is a continuation of the terrorism which the Irregulars have always taken care to exercise over the people... It is evident that intimidation is somewhat effective, for instance in a large area surrounding Castleisland, Cumann na Gaedheal find it most difficult to secure personating agents, even by applying to person whose sympathies in favour of the Government are well known.¹⁰⁸

But on the whole the ‘relations between the people and the army are in the main cordial. Open antagonism is being displayed in some places, but it is generally the work of women’.¹⁰⁹

By September 1923 young ‘hot bloods’ were described as being behind ‘irregularism’ but according to Kerry Command most people supported the Government, and the recent victories for the anti-Treaty Sinn Féin party was not actually representative of the people of the County.

The recent election whereby “Republicans” secured four members against the Cumann naGaedheal three are no criterion of our popularity: it must be

¹⁰⁵ KC, GWR, 12 Jun. 1923, MAI, CW/OPS/08.

¹⁰⁶ KC, GWR, 6 Jul. 1923, MAI, CW/OPS/08.

¹⁰⁷ KC, GWR, 13 Jul. 1923, MAI, CW/OPS/08.

¹⁰⁸ KC, GWR, 23 Aug. 1923, MAI, CW/OPS/08.

¹⁰⁹ KC, GS, 23 Aug. 1923, MAI, CW/OPS/08.

remembered that the ‘Republican’ election organisation was perfect in comparison to that of Cuman naGaedheal and that ardent supporters of ours were afraid, not alone to give our side active support at the working of the election machinery, but even to go up to register their votes.¹¹⁰

By the Autumn, a year since the first reports appeared, the Kerry Command still seemed to face substantial problems. In October 1923 ‘The majority of the people are favourable to the army, but quite a large number do not possess sufficient moral courage to avow their tendencies in that respect fear of the Irregulars is responsible for this’ and that ‘intimidation on a large scale was practised; particularly in the rural districts, and a considerable number of sympathisers abstained from voting on that account’.¹¹¹

Curiously in this last report a number of issues are present that had been making appearances since 1918 – most notably that the people supported the government but were afraid to show it. In a strange state of affairs, if we believe the security forces of the Irish revolution, things had either come full circle or perhaps never changed.

Conclusion.

The reports of the RIC and of the Free State army correlate with a broader understanding of civil war – the term is used as both the 1919-21 conflict and 1922-23 conflicts were types of civil war. Indeed, as said, Lloyd George considered the conflict to have been a type of civil war in which he cast himself in the role of Lincoln – saving the union. In civil wars the concept of illegitimacy frequently emerges to discredit opponents – the Union did not recognise the Confederacy. Confederates were instead relegated to the role of illegitimate rebels. Similarly, Bill Kissane has noted that classical thinkers, from Plato to Marcus Aurelius, considered ‘factional’ strife against the state from within as the worst type of conflict as it assaulted the essential unity of the Roman state or Greek social order –unity being necessary for both to flourish. Accordingly, civil strife was characterised as illegitimate and barbaric as a means to discourage factionalism – despite the Greek states and Ancient Rome all having frequent civil wars.¹¹² This was in order to deny opponents any political credibility or even political rational through a process of ‘othering’. This is a noticeable factor in this chapter, and bears a relation to the role of the civilian – the only people, apparently, who really supported the IRA, whether in 1920 or 1923, were those on the margins of society or the young and irresponsible –

¹¹⁰ KC, GS, 20 Sept. 1923, MAI, CW/OPS/08.

¹¹¹ KC GS, 5th Oct. 1923, MAI, CW/OPS/08.

¹¹² Kissane, *Nations torn asunder*, pp. 10-11.

essentially denying them political credibility. In a sense this process of ‘othering’ meant it was easier for state actors to justify extreme violence against their opponents as they were not fighting regular armies but people categorized as rebels and criminals. And, subsequently, violence against civilians connected to these rebels was easier to justify or to be expected, as they were relegated to position of worthlessness. The end result hopefully being an end to factionalism and greater state cohesion, this is certainly the ideal Lloyd George would have been hoping for.

On one level what is highlighted is that the security forces in the Irish revolution seemed to have consistently recognised, as their republican opponents also had, that they never had universal support. Some in the British military, early on, seemed to have recognised that most people did support Sinn Féin and some type of accommodation with Irish national demands was the only sensible policy. Others, including the head of British troops in Ireland, seemed to have little regard for nearly all Irish people and were primarily concerned with the rapid destruction of the republican movement at any cost. The chilling vision of concentration camps in Ireland, shows a remarkable ruthlessness on the part of, some, within the British establishment, and strange way of treating way one member of the supposedly equal United Kingdom of nations. Others held a paternalistic view that the Irish people were a simple people who reacted to shows of strength. This is shown in how many believed the ‘firm’ response of the authorities, another word for reprisals, brought many over to their side.

The RIC County Inspectors, on the other hand, probably the force most in touch with conditions in Ireland, seemed to have honestly considered Sinn Féin an aberration. The Irish revolution was, according to them, carried out by younger irresponsible people without ‘a stake’ in society, much of the sympathy was based on intimidation rather than conviction and most people simply wanted peace. The Free State Army and Gardaí, who were both composed of Irish nationalists, had remarkably similar views – and, seemingly, more adamant that the support for the ‘Irregulars’ was at best from those on the social margins. Both the crown forces and the Free State army considered that farmers disliked the IRA and that support for the IRA came from those without a ‘stake’ in the country or the young and innocent.

In relation to the views of the RIC other factors may be in play here, such as delusion, and, perhaps, on the RIC’s part, an inability to recognise that their world was falling apart. They were reticent to discuss reprisals but did admit they seemed to make people less likely to support Sinn Féin. Indeed it can be said that this view of the supporters of Sinn Féin being somehow ‘low’ can be partially seen as a justification for reprisals. Similarly Tom Barry characterised the female friends of members of the crown forces as ‘unfortunates’, meaning prostitutes and

those civilians supplying information to the British as hopeless drunks,¹¹³ thus, justifying republican attacks on these people. Both claims, and indeed anything any side wrote relating to civilians, were inspired by self-justification and belief in the rightness of their cause. In all cases it was also convenient to maintain that they had popular support. The crown forces never seem to have considered whether people were getting tired of their reprisals. John M. Regan did reflect that ‘there was a sigh of relief from the public at large who were weary of being intimidated by both sides’.¹¹⁴ But he is unique in this regard – in that most members of the crown forces were reluctant to admit they were engaging in intimidation.

The IRA remembered the civilians who did not support them with a noticeable loathing – the crown forces and the Free State Army did not write of their civilians opponents with a similar vitriol. In fact it appears to have been more dismissive than vitriolic in attitude. But, ironically, as the following chapters will show, the crown forces were more likely to interfere with civilians – of all hues – than the IRA ever were.

It is interesting to note that if these records are in fact true and a considerable number of people were opposed to the IRA’s campaign – vehemently but without being active –then, purely from the IRA’s perspective, their intimidation of civilians made military sense to prevent civilian co-operation. However, surely the answer is somewhere decidedly in the middle. It was quite possible to support Sinn Féin but dislike IRA violence; Arthur Griffith is a noticeable example. On the other hand many people who would still support the Home Rule, and even southern unionists, were probably horrified by reprisals. In any case, the next chapters show that the campaign against civilians was almost as intrinsic a part of the revolutionary violence as regular intra-combatant violence. From the spring/summer of 1920 the crown forces also initiated a campaign that affected civilians more than it did the IRA.

¹¹³ Barry, *Guerilla days in Ireland*, p.209 and pp.107-9.

¹¹⁴ Augusteijn (ed), *The memoirs of John M. Regan*, p.172.

Chapter three. Republican policing in 1920.

Introduction

In early 1920 under increasing pressure to effectively police rural areas thanks to increasing IRA violence and intimidation the RIC decided to abandon their more isolated stations – this reduction in barracks numbers could be quite drastic. In County Tipperary between January 1920 and January 1921 the number of barracks dropped from 61 to 43, in Mayo it dropped from 47 to 23 in the same period.¹ At Easter Week 1920, in a massively well-co-ordinated operation, the IRA succeed in burning over 300 government buildings that had been abandoned – ten of the burnings occurred in Kerry, another six were burned before the end of 1920.²

The following table shows how this process broke down in County Kerry.

Table four, dates and locations of the burning by the IRA of RIC huts and barracks in Kerry

5 th April	Recently vacated Headford RIC hut burned
5 th April	Recently vacated Beauford RIC hut burned.
5 th April	Recently vacated Mulgrave RIC hut burned.
5 th April	Recently vacated Annascaul barracks burned
6 th April	Ballyheigue barracks, recently vacated, reported burned
6 th April	Ardfert barracks, recently vacated, reported burned.
6 th April	Recently vacated Ballinaskelligs RIC hut burned.
6 th April	Recently vacated Templenoe RIC hut burned.
6 th April	Recently vacated Ardea RIC hut burned
6 th April	Recently vacated Lauragh RIC hut burned.
11 th April	Recently vacated Duagh RIC hut burned.
11 th May	Recently vacated Cahirdaniel RIC barracks burned.
17 th May	Recently vacated Liselton RIC barracks burned.

¹ Townshend, *The republic*, p. 115.

² See figure provided.

11 th June	Newtownsandies RIC barracks vacated
18 th September	Ballyferriter RIC barracks, recently vacated burned.
19 th October	Recently vacated RIC Ahabeg hut burned.

The table reveals that in some of the more isolated parts of the county – the Ivereagh and Dingle Peninsulas – the destruction of abandoned barracks was common, seemingly, leaving much of west and south Kerry unpoliced. A similar picture appears in north Kerry where the IRA were also particularly active in this regard – whereas Killarney and east Kerry were not. Again this reflects other elements of the conflict as it was only in 1921 that the east Kerry IRA began to seriously engage in the conflict, whereas the north and west Kerry IRA had long since been engaging in the conflict as much as possible. However, despite the impression of the county being swept clear of the crown forces, the crown forces still maintained strong military and police bases and were in a position to continue, through the use of lorries, to operate anywhere in the county. They still, for instance, held the towns of Cahirciveen and Dingle allowing for a base of operations in even the most isolated parts of the county. However, they no longer had the same freedom of movement and had to operate in more militarised columns often supported by the army and their energies were almost entirely devoted to dealing with the IRA

Due to the Dingle peninsula being particularly isolated and difficult to access the crown forces found it the most difficult part of the county to police. By the summer of 1920 their only significant outpost was in Dingle town itself, and from the tone of the police reports it almost appears as if the Peninsula was abandoned. In July the County Inspector wrote: ‘the Dingle district continues to be the most disturbed area in the county. The Sinn Fein organisation there is so strong that it has boasted that all outward signs of British authority is being cleared and the limited numbers of roads makes it difficult to police without a very strong force which is not now available’.³ James Fitzgerald, recalled ‘with the trenching of the roads we had few visits from the Tans [in west Kerry] except on rare occasions. They were kept confined to Dingle town’.⁴ Similarly, Patrick Houlihan, from Annascaul, recalled ‘the British had no garrison nearer than Dingle to the west or Tralee to the east, and they did not trouble us much after the Lispole attack’.⁵ Patrick O’Neill, recalled that across the Peninsula ‘the garrisons were being boycotted by the local people and traders had been warned not to supply them’.⁶ By

³ CI, MR, Jul. 1920, County of Kerry, TCD BL, CO 904/112.

⁴ James Fitzgerald, BMH, WS, 999.

⁵ Patrick Houlihan, BMH, WS, 959.

⁶ Patrick O’Neill, BMH, WS, 1049.

October the RIC felt they were like an ‘invading column’ while trying to operate on the Dingle Peninsula.⁷ Patrick O’Shea recalled that the IRA in fact found the situation frustrating as they could rarely organise attacks as the crown forces rarely risked leaving Dingle town.⁸ The District Inspector for the RIC in Dingle town, Bernard O’Connor, was also passing on information to IRA intelligence officer, Tadhg Kennedy.⁹

Issues like these were common for the more remote parts of the county once the RIC decamped. Michael Teehan, from Sneem, on the Ivereagh Peninsula, recalled that ‘The only reason why there was no fighting in the Sneem area is that we had no one to fight when the RIC cleared out and we were too weak to attack the convoys which passed through’.¹⁰

This would in fact create problems and opportunities for the IRA. In fact, the semi – breakdown of the RIC, as a regular police force, would lead to one of the most intriguing aspects of combatant – civilian relations, in the Irish revolution, in the form of IRA policing – which was, by definition, an instance of combatants being solely involved with civilians.

This chapter examines how in reaction to the partial collapse of the RIC there was an increase in agrarian crime and how a republican police developed spontaneously to deal with this problem. This chapter then examines how the republican police moved on to engage in entirely laudable activities such as patrolling towns at night, the protection of private property and returning stolen goods. The chapter does, however, also examine how the republican police also became involved in activities more akin to attempts at the social control of the civilian population such as the imposition of prudent licensing hours, the restriction of the movements of Irish travellers and the prevention of emigration.

Halting agrarian agitation

In reaction to ostracising of the police and their decline in influence in early 1920 an opportunistic rise in agrarian agitation took place across much of the south and west of Ireland but it was particularly aggressive in County Kerry. This mainly took place in the more prosperous north and east of the county. The agitation took the form of farm labourers

⁷ IG, MR, Oct. 1920, CO 904/113.

⁸ Patrick O’Shea, BMH, WS, 1144.

⁹ Tadhg Kennedy, BMH, WS, 1413.

¹⁰ Michael Teehan, BMH, WS, 961.

demanding an increase in wages from their employers and for the larger farms to be divided up amongst small holders and the landless. In January 1920, the County Inspector for Kerry, reported ‘the labourers have been going to the farmers and in large bodies and asking them to give 1 acre to each labourer...in some cases farmers promised to comply and in many cases refused but now intimidation [by the agrarian agitators] is used’. The County Inspector was in fact delighted thinking it would weaken the republican movement. He wrote ‘there is considerable friction now between farmers and labourers and it may be all for the general good and will be to the disadvantage of Sinn Féin’.¹¹

The next month he wrote ‘the agitation of labourers in north Kerry [calling] for an extra acre of land is causing a good deal of friction and lawlessness. In Listowel district a Farmers Union has been formed and the sons of the farmers now in several cases have fired into labourers houses as acts of reprisal for previous outrages committed by the labourers’.¹² By late April similar style agitation by labourers had spread to south Kerry with labourers around Glenbeigh and Kilorglin forcibly demanding an extra acre.¹³ In the same months similar occurrences were reported around Tralee, Brosna, Milltown and Beaufort districts.

The agrarian agitators did not, in fact, have many supporters. Angry residents were writing to the *Irish Independent* with sentiments such as ‘It is the obvious duty of every good Sinn Féiner to set his face against such [agrarian] tyranny, and it is the obvious duty of Sinn Féin to put down such abuses with the hand of a lion’.¹⁴ Art O’Connor, TD, in a report made for Dáil Éireann, on what was going on in north Kerry wrote that

the feeling rapidly grew so bitter that both sides resorted to boycotting, the sending of threatening letters, the burning of houses and crops and other forms of lawlessness. The commotion showed all the symptoms of taking the form of a civil war which would undoubtedly spread to the calmer parts of the country’.¹⁵

Agrarian agitation was believed, by many within the republican movement, to be a distraction from the all-important national struggle. Historian Michael Laffan, in his history of the Sinn Féin party, has written that republicans feared commitment to social issues would create internal tension within the movement and decided ‘it was wiser to keep quiet and, and nothing

¹¹ CI, MR, Jan.1920, County of Kerry, TCD BL, CO 904/111.

¹² CI, MR, Feb.1920, Kerry, TCD BL/CO 904/111.

¹³ Thomas Nelian Crean, ‘The labour movement in Kerry and Limerick, 1914-1921’ (Unpublished PhD thesis, Trinity College Dublin, 1995), p.353.

¹⁴ *The Kerryman*, 24 Apr. 1920.

¹⁵ A brief survey of the work of the Department of Agriculture from April 1919 to August 1921, NAI/DE/2/64/

would be changed until Britain had been driven out'.¹⁶ This assessment is not quite fair as, in fact, the republican movement tended to side with the landowners, making a very clear decision. Art O'Connor, for instance, described land seizures 'as a grave menace to the Republic' and 'the mind of the people was being diverted from the struggle for freedom by a class war'.¹⁷

These warnings and calls for assistance, by the victims of agrarian agitation and concerned citizens, were taken very seriously by Sinn Féin and the IRA. On 18 April a reputed 300 members of the IRA from north Kerry mobilised and marched to the church at Ballyheigue, before Mass, and proceeded to post up a number of notices calling for a stop to the current agrarian and, importantly, the counter agrarian action too. The notices warned 'the people that none of these claims [of right to land ownership] would be tolerated or anything allowed to crop up to divide the National forces "until the common ideal of an Irish Republic is realised". Labourers were 'warned' to return to work.

According to *The Kerryman* 'the demonstration created a profound impression and is certain to put an end for the present to the unrest prevailing over land disputes'.¹⁸ The following week the four Sinn Féin TDs for the Kerry constituencies produced a manifesto, sanctioned by Dáil Éireann, against agrarian agitation. The manifesto maintained some of the disputes warranted 'equitable consideration' but that a great many were 'of a frivolous nature'. Again the land or class issues were dismissed as nowhere near as important as the national question as 'the Irish people are locked in a life or death struggle for freedom with their traditional enemy- [it] is ill chosen for the stirring up of strife amongst our fellow countrymen'. The TDs advised those 'with just right to property' to apply to the Sinn Féin courts. However, the manifesto also concluded on the sinister note that anyone who continued to push forward agrarianism that 'the forces of the Republic will be used to protect the citizens against the adoption of high handed methods'.¹⁹ Three days later Gearoid Ó Súilleabháin, the Adjutant General of the IRA, wrote to Paddy Cahill that he was now obliged to enforce the manifesto. Ó Súilleabháin wrote that any Volunteer who participated in an agrarian outrage should be court-martialled. Volunteers were to report any agrarian outrage to their superior and that the Volunteers should be actively involved in both preventing incursions onto private property and to dislodge any persons who had taken over property not belonging to them. Cahill was also given the right to decide which

¹⁶ Laffan, *The resurrection of Ireland*, p.258.

¹⁷ Paul Bew, 'Sinn Féin, agrarian radicalism and the war of independence, 1919-1921' in D.G Boyce, *The revolution in Ireland* (Dublin, 1988), pp. 232-3.

¹⁸ *The Kerryman*, 24 Apr. 1920. Though the number of 300 volunteers must be an exaggeration.

¹⁹ Manifesto against agrarian outrages by Kerry Teachtaí, 26 Apr. 1920, NLI, MS, 17, 085.

cases he believed warranted interference on the part of the Volunteers.²⁰ This response to agrarian agitation has been described by Charles Townshend as reflecting the republican movement's desire to 'retain the sympathy of landowners and head off the possibility of an agrarian war'.²¹

Labour historian, Thomas Nelian Crean, who produced a PhD on the labour movement in Kerry and Limerick during the revolutionary years, has noted that after the procession in Ballyheigue a marked decrease in agrarian agitation took place across the county. Crean writes 'the pressure from Republican and religious leaders may have had an effect as reports of agrarian violence decreased markedly' in the following weeks and months. Crean also writes that the aggressive counter-resistance of the larger farmers not to hand over any of their property also played a considerable role in preventing any further agitation.²² It is certainly true that from the spring of 1920 onwards there was a noticeable decrease in reported instances of agrarian agitation. This extended to outside north Kerry too. In south Kerry the IRA also put down any agrarian agitation. South Kerry Brigade organiser, Tómais O'Dalaigh, wrote that 'we have taken the matter in hand' and all cases of land agitation had been 'supressed'.²³ Art O'Connor believed the establishment of the courts to deal with land matters and the manifesto by the Kerry TDSs 'finally calmed the trouble, and thus a danger to the state was fortunately removed'.²⁴

Curiously, and perhaps counter intuitively, the IRA were generally not on the side of the landless and small farmers – and this extended to outside of County Kerry. The IRA commander in south Mayo Thomas Maguire, and later supporter of the Provisional IRA and Continuity IRA, was particularly critical of people involved in agrarianism. Maguire told Uinsean MacEoin:

There was some agrarian trouble here too. People would clear land and that would involve us. There was a farm quite close to here that they cleared, there was another one east of here, and one back the Ballinrobe direction at a place called Milehill. The people involved were no help to the volunteers. They were just greedy and selfish, taking advantage of a situation.²⁵

²⁰ Adjutant General to Commandant (presumably O/C Kerry No.1), 29 Apr. 1920, NLI, Ms, 17,085.

²¹ Charles Townshend, 'The Irish Republican Army and the development of guerrilla warfare, 1916 -1921', in *The English historical review*, Vol. 94, No.371 (Spring, 1979), p.323.

²² Crean, 'The labour movement in Kerry and Limerick, 1914-1921', p.355.

²³ Tómais O'Dalaigh, Brigade Organiser Kerry No.2 to Adjutant General GHQ, MAI, CP /0495/V.

²⁴ A brief survey of the work of the Department of Agriculture from April 1919 to August 1921, NAI, DE/2/64.

²⁵ MacEoin, *Survivors*, p.360.

During the Milehill case Maguire objected to the agitators using the republican flag and insisted that it be removed as he considered its use ‘insulting’.²⁶ John Joe Sheehy, of Tralee, as seen in chapter one, had little sympathy for agrarian agitation.²⁷ In Cork, Séan Moylan was also critical of those engaged in agitation describing them as ‘selfish’.²⁸ Historian and political scientist Paul Bew, has written that the relatively conservative policy adopted by Sinn Féin and the Volunteers at this time reflected the ‘socially conservative instincts of the moderate Sinn Fein leadership’ and also that Sinn Féin’s decision to not focus on the land question resulted in Connacht, that had been the previous cockpit of agrarian agitation, largely staying out of the 1919-21 conflict.²⁹ The sources available to scholars of the Irish revolution has increased since Paul Bew was writing in 1988 and the large scale operations of the IRA in Mayo at Kilmeena Carrowkennedy and Tourmakeady and Galway at Screebe and Scramogue in Roscommon, all in 1921, show an IRA in Connacht that was willing to make a significant participation to the conflict, albeit, at a late stage. Kerry, in 1920, also saw high levels of agrarian agitation together with its suppression by the republican movement, but it was also a county that made a significant contribution to the 1919-21 conflict. Bew’s analysis, therefore cannot be treated as definitive.

Regular police work

However, what is important is that the decision of the IRA in north Kerry to intervene in disturbances set a precedent and the IRA, by the summer of 1920, were intervening in cases of ordinary crime. And for much of 1920 it can be said that the IRA were largely involved in vindicating the rights and property of civilians rather than fighting the crown forces. This chapter explores republican policing in how it developed as a benevolent attempt to protect people but also had more unpleasant aspect in attempts to create a type of cultural and moral uniformity.

The actions of the IRA in north Kerry can be seen as a reaction to local concerns and pressure. This reaction to local concerns came to define republican policing in the county. Through 1918 up to the spring of 1920 the campaign of intimidation and boycotting of the RIC left the force demoralised and unable to perform regular policing functions as the majority of the people were unwilling to co-operate with them out of nationalist conviction or fear. In counties like Kerry which despite the fact that by the spring of 1920 had still experienced little direct conflict between the RIC and the IRA, the RIC, had as said, abandoned more isolated police posts

²⁶ Idem.

²⁷ Ibid, p. 358.

²⁸ Bew, ‘Sinn Féin, agrarian radicalism and the war of independence’ in Boyce, *The revolution in Ireland*, p.232.

²⁹ Ibid, pp. 232-3.

leaving most of the county without a regular police force. But even in the larger towns the police were unwilling to perform regular duties such as patrolling. By mid-May *An t-Óglác* was reporting that in ‘parts of the country which enemy forces have been compelled to abandon, Volunteers have accepted the responsibility of maintaining peace and order, and have done so most effectively’ and that in counties Clare, Galway, Kerry and Cork the Volunteers had been used to enforce the decrees of the Dáil Courts.³⁰

The need for some kind of republican police force was made evident by a bank robbery in Millstreet, north Cork, in February 1920. Liam Lynch, then O/C of the Cork No.2 Brigade, ordered that an investigation be set up to find the culprits. The guilty parties were quickly found, by the IRA, but Lynch wrote to GHQ. that he was unsure how to proceed. He wrote ‘Will we arrest them or hand them over in some way to our enemy the RIC Will we take all the money we can find and hand it back to the bank?’ Lynch jokingly also suggested ‘an order from you to put the money with Brigade arms fund would be received with pleasure, but don’t take this order too seriously’.³¹ Mulcahy replied that as the Volunteers had not the abilities to detain the bank robbers the money and the robbers should be handed over to the bank to be dealt with as the bank officials saw fit.³²

The Millstreet case, together with the agrarian agitation in Kerry, highlighted the need for a republican police. Interestingly, like so many other aspects, of the 1919-21 conflict the republican police force developed spontaneously and without explicit orders from Headquarters in Dublin. Instead it was very much a case of the IRA reacting to local pressures and concerns. In Kerry the republican police developed, and became regularised, out of the need for police patrols to prevent crime in Tralee in the absence of the RIC going on regular patrol.

On 21 April it was reported that the IRA ‘patrols at Tralee temporarily assume the functions of peace officers, the local [RIC] police having refused to perform ordinary police duties’.³³ The following month Volunteer patrolling was regularised when the Tralee Urban Council wrote to the commandant of the ‘Tralee Brigade’ to ‘make the application for the services of the Irish Volunteers to protect the citizens of Tralee and their property during the night in future, and to request that you will be good enough to have the necessary arrangements made for the purpose’.³⁴ By 19 June it was reported that ‘the Volunteers...take up the duty of patrolling the town each night’ and that ‘much to the relief of the inhabitants who realise that their patrol work

³⁰ *An t-Óglác*, 15 May 1920.

³¹ O/C Cork No.2 to Adjutant General GHQ. 2 Feb. 1920, MAI, CP/A/0499/XV.

³² C/S to O/C Cork No.2., 8 Apr.1920, MAI, CP/A/0499/XX.

³³ *The Freeman's Journal*, 4 Jun. 1920.

³⁴ *The Kerryman*, 8 May 1920.

has put an end to the state of affairs which was becoming intolerable. The window breakers and the burglars have disappeared and the town was happy and secure free from any disturbing elements'.³⁵ Such patrols were not always free of incident at it was reported that on 10 May a Volunteer patrol in the town had an altercation with the RIC but that it was not of a serious nature.³⁶

The phenomenon spread. By early July *The Kerryman* was reporting that in Killarney 'for the past few days Killarney Volunteers have assumed duties of preserving law and order in the town and district. So far their efforts have met with considerable success, as undesirables have been forced to leave the town'.³⁷ Similarly, in early July when the barracks at Cahirciveen was reduced it was reported, by *The Kerryman*, that 'The Volunteers are at present keeping order in the town'.³⁸ This would also extend to fairs. At two fairs held on 27 and 28 of September in Kenmare 'volunteers patrolled the streets and the greatest credit is due to them for the order they kept on both days'.³⁹ Patrolling was not without a precedent. Peter Browne, captain of the Scartaglin company, recalled that in 1918 'In Tralee, for example, the Volunteers were policing the streets for the Corpus Christi procession that year'.⁴⁰

The IRA were, however, committed to more than simply patrolling country towns at night as through the spring and summer of 1920 the IRA became increasingly committed to maintaining order and the protection of private property, the protection of private property from land agitators seemingly setting a type of precedent. In early June *An t-Óglác* announced that 'it will be necessary for the Irish Volunteers to take steps to protect the rights and liberties of the individual. In those parts of the country evacuated by the enemy, freedom, order, justice and equality of rights for all must be maintained by the armed might of the Volunteers'.⁴¹ This was by no means taken lightly. In an undated GHQ document on the organisation and structure of the republican police the duties of the police were 'to preserve and maintain order against the civilian population and to see that the laws of the republic are observed' and enforce the decrees of Dáil Éireann courts.⁴² However, the IRA leadership believed in endowing the police with considerable authority, such as the right to use capital punishment. Richard Mulcahy, as Chief of Staff, believed in giving the police substantial powers, and while he felt flogging 'has a more

³⁵ Ibid, 19 Jun. 1920.

³⁶ Ibid, 22 May 1920.

³⁷ Ibid, 3 Jul. 1920.

³⁸ Idem.

³⁹ Ibid, 2 Oct. 1920.

⁴⁰ Peter Browne, BMH, WS, 1110.

⁴¹ *An t-Óglác*, 1 Jun. 1920.

⁴² IRA Police (N/D), NLI, Ms 33, 913 (3).

degrading effect upon the person or the authority administering it than the person to whom it is administered', he did believe persons found guilty by the police of 'highway robbery' during conflict should be 'punishable by death'.⁴³

In one of the first instances the IRA pursued people posing as Sinn Féin. On the evening of Sunday 25 April three armed and masked men visited 'several' houses in the Parish of Furies and demanded money 'in the name of the Irish Republic' and threatened to kill one farmer if he did not hand over money. The local Sinn Féin organisation denied involvement and according to the *Kerry News* 'the local Sinn Féiners... seized [those responsible] compelled them to return to each house previously visited, return the money they had got and in each case made them go down on their knees and crave pardon'.⁴⁴ Protecting citizens and their property became the primary concern for republicans as the following examples show. On the evening of 4 May after a harness had been stolen, from a farm at Currow near Castleisland, and an attempt had been made to break into the Tabernacle at the local Catholic Church the local Volunteers arrested two ex-soldiers in Castleisland who 'had taken lodgings in the town' who were charged with both crimes.⁴⁵

The account of a republican court in Dingle in early May, again, reflects the IRA's concern for the protection of private property and concern with preventing ordinary crime. On Sunday 9 May a 'Sinn Féin and Volunteer' court was held at midnight at Carnegie Hall in Dingle in which three men were found guilty of the robbery of £10 worth of tobacco and sweets from the premises of Mr Michael O'Halloran in the town, 'a good deal of the property was recovered'. Though the court was held after midnight 'the street in front of the Carnegie Hall was thronged with people. The crowd included half a dozen dumbfounded policemen'. The following Monday the same court charged four men with the robbery of 'a considerable sum of the old age pensions money from the Ventry post office'. These four, who had been arrested by the Volunteers, agreed to hand the stolen money over to the court. According to *The Kerryman* these activities were greatly welcomed by the local people. It was reported that 'we are told very great satisfaction is felt locally that at this latest phase of Sinn Féin activity. For a long time there has been no security for the property of citizens, and evil disposed persons were inclined to think they had a free hand'.⁴⁶

⁴³ Untitled memo by C/S, 2 Jul. 1921, UCDA, P7/A/21.

⁴⁴ *Cork Examiner*, 27 Apr. 1920.

⁴⁵ *The Kerryman*, 8 May 1920.

⁴⁶ Idem.

On 14 May the *Cork Examiner* reported that, some days previous, Killarney Volunteers arrested an unnamed man in Gneeveguilla for being connected with the larceny of cattle from a pensioner. Private property and goods were not the sole concern of the Volunteers as the same Volunteers also arrested another man in the same district for assaulting a woman. Both were taken to an unknown destination.⁴⁷ On the evening of Saturday 16 May Volunteers in Listowel raided the homes of six men in the town suspected of raiding the vacant home of Mr Edgar, Excise Officer, and stealing many of his household goods. All the goods were found together with bacon that had been stolen from the Railway Goods store the night before. The six all confessed. According to the *Cork Examiner* the people of north Kerry, like the people of Dingle, were very grateful to the IRA. The paper wrote that 'the Volunteers deserve well of the citizens of Listowel as a useful citizen guard. For their action has restored confidence and safety of life and property which for a considerable time has been an unknown quantity'.⁴⁸

Preoccupation with issues connected to land continued as well. On the 22 May three young men were arrested by Volunteers at Bannermore five miles outside of Listowel after having knocked down fences on land belonging to Mrs J. Lamb. Mrs Lamb had previously refused to take part in a redistribution of her land for the aid of the local labourers and holders of unviable plots. Mrs Lamb was described as 'a very popular and deservedly popular lady, and public opinion is manifestly strong in her favour'. The Volunteers also helped repair the fences and reputedly left the offenders on an island 'some 50 miles remote from Ballybunion'.⁴⁹ The IRA pursuing agrarian agitators seems to have been a common occurrence in north Kerry. Stephen Fuller, from Kilflynn in north Kerry, recalled that his duties during this period included arresting men who had been knocking down fences in north Kerry.⁵⁰

This also extended to south Kerry. A 'Lady' farmer living some ten miles outside of Killarney found that the boundary wall of her land had been torn down, gates removed, growing trees felled and her cattle stolen. She informed the RIC of the outrage but was informed that they were patrolling the district and her land should be safe. In reaction she informed the local Volunteers who decided to keep watch on her property. Her lands were not interfered with in the future. The *Cork Examiner* wrote of this case that 'so is the fair and just administration of the law made easy when it has behind it the moral force and sanction of the people'.⁵¹

⁴⁷ *Cork Examiner*, 14 May 1920.

⁴⁸ *Ibid*, 21 May 1920.

⁴⁹ *Ibid*, 29 May 1920.

⁵⁰ Stephen Fuller, MSP, 34, REF 6759.

⁵¹ *The Cork Examiner*, 23 Jun. 1920.

On 27 May four young men were arrested in the village of Ardfer by Volunteers and tried at a Volunteer court-martial. Two were charged with stealing a bicycle and the other two of being accomplices in the crime. The four promised to abide by the law in future, revealed the whereabouts of the bicycles and agreed to ‘make good’ any damage done to the bicycles.⁵² Young men stealing bicycles seems to have been a fairly common problem. In mid-July a Sinn Féin court in Tralee sentenced two ‘young boys’ to two months imprisonment for stealing bicycles.⁵³ It is not stated what the nature of the ‘imprisonment’ was though.

Pursuing confidence tricksters posing as Sinn Féin or IRA members was also very common. On the evening of 1 June two men were arrested from houses on the banks of lake Caragh by Volunteers and ‘in the name of the Irish Republic, they were charged with having some five weeks earlier stolen a sum of money from an old age pensioner’. The two men confessed and professed guilt but at a court and made pay a fine equal to the amount taken.⁵⁴ Such occurrences were common. In early June a man was confronted by Volunteers in the Cromane district, between Glenbeigh and Kilorglin, and accused of collecting money during the conscription crisis and putting it to his own use rather than return it to the subscribers or to Sinn Féin headquarters in Dublin. Apparently ‘£9 of the money was handed over with a promise of the remainder very soon’.⁵⁵ At a Sinn Féin court held at the end of June the Volunteers brought before the court a man charged with falsely raising money on behalf of Sinn Féin.⁵⁶

In north Kerry it appears that people of a unionist persuasion were willing to deal with the new republican justice system. At a Sinn Féin court held in early June at Listowel it was recorded that ‘even those who differ in both religion and politics and who have had experience of the decisions of the tribunals have nothing but the highest encomiums for their deliberations’.⁵⁷ The same court dealt with cases that ‘ranged from assaults, abusive language, throwing down fences and trespass to cases of land and fishery involving the highest ideals of fair play and equity’.⁵⁸ Again, the new dispensation dealt with a variety of issues. At another Sinn Féin court, held in north Kerry, some parents were brought before the court and threatened with jail time if they did not start bringing their children to school.⁵⁹ Again, what the nature of the ‘jail time’ was is not stated.

⁵² *The Kerryman*, 29 May 1920.

⁵³ *Ibid*, 24 Jul. 1920.

⁵⁴ *Ibid*, 5 Jun. 1920.

⁵⁵ *Ibid*, 12 Jun. 1920.

⁵⁶ *Cork Examiner*, 30 Jun. 1920.

⁵⁷ *The Kerryman*, 12. Jun. 1920.

⁵⁸ *Idem*.

⁵⁹ *Ibid*, 31 Jul. 1920.

Some instances do also have a rather innocent quality. In Kenmare a young man was arrested and forced to restore a bottle of wine he had stolen from a shop in the town, surprisingly the wine does not seem to have been drunk.⁶⁰ On 31 July in Tralee the Volunteers went looking for a donkey and trap that had been reported missing to them by its owner. After a ‘diligent search’ the Volunteers found both and returned them to the owner.⁶¹

It was not uncommon for the Volunteers to also make searches for missing people. In late July Mr Con Kerins, of the Tralee workhouse, reported to the Volunteers that a ‘semi-demented man’ had escaped from the workhouse hospital’. The Volunteers found the man and returned him to the hospital.⁶² In early August Kilorglin Volunteers returned a young man from the Killarney Asylum from where he had escaped.⁶³

Going after rather low scale thievery was common. On the evening of 27 June a group of men were involved in stealing turf from a wagon belonging to the Great Southern and Western Railway at Tralee were ‘dispersed’ by Volunteers.⁶⁴ On 31 July in Tralee the Volunteers returned a quantity of fresh meat that had been stolen from a young boy from Ardfert. ‘Boy scouts’, presumably a reference to the Fianna, saw the boy crying and reported the matter to the Volunteers. Within an hour the Volunteers had arrested two ex-soldiers who admitted to stealing and selling the meat at a house on Rock Street. The meat was returned and the two men were let off with a caution.⁶⁵ Preventing or intervening in rather low scale crimes such as street fights also took place. In mid-September Tralee Volunteers arrested a women named Roche for seriously assaulting another women called O’Leary. Tralee Volunteers also arrested a women named Hanlon for smashing the plate glass window of Messrs Barrett’s drapery establishment in the Mall.⁶⁶

The Volunteers could also be involved in going after quite large-scale crimes. On the evening of the 18 May two brothers named Fitzgerald and another man named Sullivan, all of Walpole’s Lane Tralee, were removed by Volunteers from the audience while attending the theatre at the County Hall in the town. The three were accused of having robbed Mr Browne’s store on Castle Street and having stolen two motor cars from Benner’s Garage, also on Castle Street.⁶⁷ Similarly, on the evening of 6 July two cases of butter weighing 56lbs each and four cases

⁶⁰ Ibid, 5 Jun. 1920.

⁶¹ Ibid, 7 Aug. 1920.

⁶² Ibid, 31 Jul. 1920.

⁶³ *Cork Examiner*, 9 Sept. 1920.

⁶⁴ Ibid, 3 Jul. 1920.

⁶⁵ *The Kerryman*, 7 Aug. 1920.

⁶⁶ *Cork Examiner*, 13 Sept. 1920.

⁶⁷ *The Kerryman*, 22 May 1920.

weighing 28lbs each were stolen from the co-operative store on Pembroke Street, Tralee. The Manager Mr J.J. McCarthy informed the local Volunteers and ‘no effort were spared by them until they ran down the perpetrators...and returned the butter intact to the owners. The ringleader of the band has been arrested while two of his comrades are well known to Volunteer police’. Mr McCarthy speaking to *The Kerryman* ‘wanted to convey his appreciation at the ability and alertness with which the culprits were rounded up’.⁶⁸ Some events seemed to be extreme crimes but were not extensively reported on, for instance, the Volunteers in north Kerry arrested a number of men and brought them before a Sinn Féin court for attempting to poison the river Feale.⁶⁹

In early August a Tralee cattle dealer informed a Sinn Féin court that he had been robbed of a large sum of money. ‘After inquiries two persons were arrested...by the Volunteers and conveyed to an unknown destination’.⁷⁰ In late August Volunteers arrested two young men who had stolen between £80 and £120 from the Mastergeehy Post Office, some of which belonged to the postmaster. The two made a confession though another two men believed to be connected with the robbery were not detected.⁷¹ In late August/early September the Volunteers in Glenbeigh were investigating the robbery of a salmon fishing net valued at £20 belonging to Messrs J. and B. Sweeney of Curiheen. It was with the net that the brothers fished the Caragh River and how ‘they earned a livelihood’.⁷²

By the Autumn of 1920 with the aggressive counter – insurgency campaign by the crown forces underway the IRA were no longer able to operate openly and had to give up policing. However, as late as October, in Tralee, it was being reported that Volunteers still ‘continue to do goodwork in the detection of petty pilferings in the town’.⁷³

All of these examples appear to be largely apolitical and reflect a keen desire on the part of the IRA to maintain an orderly society and ultimately protect civilians and vindicate their rights and property, showing that the welfare of civilians was high priority. However, this also coincided with interfering with how civilians decided to live too.

Regulation of the licencing laws

⁶⁸ Ibid, 10 Jul. 1920.

⁶⁹ Idem.

⁷⁰ *Cork Examiner*, 13 Aug. 1920.

⁷¹ *The Kerryman*, 28 Aug. 1920.

⁷² Ibid, 4 Sept. 1920.

⁷³ Idem.

Another substantive aspect to republican policing was the rigorous enforcement of prurient licencing laws for public houses. This was part of a larger campaign against alcohol. Joost Augusteijn has written that this reflected the IRA's belief that they considered themselves to be 'guardians of morality'.⁷⁴ The Kerry No.2 Brigade wrote to GHQ, that in south Kerry public houses 'open until unreasonable hours are the cause of much disturbances especially in the country districts'.⁷⁵ This was a concern for the Volunteers outside of Kerry. In late May Volunteer patrols at Adare, County Limerick, 'were busy supressing the illicit manufacture of alcohol'.⁷⁶ In late June Volunteers from Murroe County Limerick closed down a Shebeen in the Clare glens.⁷⁷

On 22nd May the Adjutant of the Tralee Battalion wrote in indignation to the Tralee Urban District Council that 'a few public houses in Bridge St, Russell St and Rock St are being kept open until a very late hour in the morning and the only people seen to enter or leave the premises are the RIC'.⁷⁸ In late June Volunteers in Castletown, north Kerry, 'cleared a public house that had persons on the premises a couple of hours after the usual closing time'.⁷⁹ This early closure of pubs became a regular feature across Munster. Not surprisingly many resented this. A number of Castletownbere men, in west Cork, who 'went to Eyerries last Sunday were told by the proprietor that the Volunteer police had just left and warned him not to supply any person with more than two drinks. "They were harder than the RIC" he added".⁸⁰

Strict adherence or temperance was not uncommon within the IRA in this period. During the Truce Liam Lynch, writing to Mulcahy, believed if hostilities were resumed with the British the IRA should close all 'pubs'.⁸¹ In mid-September, in Herbertstown, east Limerick, a reputed six hundred Volunteers took the pledge against drinking. According to the *Cork Examiner* 'the whole scene was reminiscent of Fr Mathew's day'.⁸²

The Brigade Adjutant of the Cork No.2 Brigade wrote to Gearoid Ó Súilleabháin in late June that he considered it the duty of republican police to intervene with 'cases of public houses which do not close at proper hours, in fact which remain open all night. This would apply especially to localities from, which the enemy 'police' have withdrawn or forced to withdraw'.⁸³

⁷⁴ Augusteijn, *From public defiance to guerrilla warfare*, p. 310.

⁷⁵ O/C Kerry No.2 to GHQ, N/D, MAI/CP/AO/495/II.

⁷⁶ *The Freeman's Journal*, 4 Jun. 1920.

⁷⁷ O'Callaghan, *Revolutionary Limerick*, p.86.

⁷⁸ *The Kerryman*, 22 May 1920.

⁷⁹ *Ibid*, 3 Jul.1920.

⁸⁰ *Idem*.

⁸¹ O/C 1st Southern to C/S, 2 Nov. 1921, UCDA, P7/A/28.

⁸² *Cork Examiner*, 14 Sept. 1920.

⁸³ Brigade Adjutant Cork No.2 to Adjutant General, GHQ, 24 Jun. 1920. MAI, CP/A/0499/XVI

Ó Súilleabháin replied that ‘if public houses by being kept open at improper hours, are a source of disorder in the district, they must be dealt with but we must avoid as much as possible being drawn into such matters.’⁸⁴ Despite Ó Súilleabháin’s desire for the IRA not to be drawn too far into this matter, it did become a major issue for the IRA in Kerry.

In early July a group of Volunteers patrolled the streets of Cahirciveen ‘every night and any fellows found drunk or disorderly have either been placed under arrest or sent to their homes’.⁸⁵ The editorial for *The Kerryman* on July 17 stated that ‘By all accounts the Volunteers in the rural districts of the county are giving a good deal of attention to the strict observance of the licensing laws, and as a consequence the prohibited hours clause is being rigidly enforced’.⁸⁶

In late July the north Kerry Sinn Féin executive charged two publicans with serving drinks after hours. Irish Volunteers had made investigations and found both pubs open at 10.30. The two were fined 2s 6d.⁸⁷ This was going on elsewhere too, in July Volunteers in Youghal, east Cork, had successfully ensured the closure of all pubs in the town by 11 o’clock.⁸⁸ In the Tralee Parish Sinn Féin court held in early August ‘A Volunteer Officer made an application as to the closing hours of publicans. He had received complaints from mothers of young men and wives in connection with some houses which remained opened until 2 o’clock in the morning’. He suggested that opening hours be restricted to ten in the evenings on weekdays and Saturdays and all day closure for Sundays. The court granted the application.⁸⁹ At a Killarney Sinn Féin court held in mid-August ‘55 cases were disposed of. Small fines were imposed for breaches of the closing order, regarding licenced premises’.⁹⁰

After a sports meeting held at Kilgarvan in mid-October ‘the Volunteers insisted on people leaving at an early hour’.⁹¹ By late October *The Kerryman* reported that

An order has been served on the publicans of Tralee by the Republican authorities ordering the closure of all licenced premises at ten o’clock on week nights and prohibiting the sale of drink on Sundays to any but *bone fide* travellers. The publicans consider the restriction of their nightly closing by one hour too drastic and it is understood that they are to call a meeting and make

⁸⁴ Adjutant General to O/C Cork No.2, 25 Jun. 1920. MAI, CP/A/0495/XXI

⁸⁵ *The Kerryman*, 3 Jul.1920.

⁸⁶ *Ibid*, 17 Jul. 1920.

⁸⁷ *Ibid*, 31 Jul. 1920.

⁸⁸ *Cork Examiner*, 8 Jul.1920.

⁸⁹ *The Kerryman*, 7 Aug. 1920.

⁹⁰ *Ibid*, 21 Aug. 1920.

⁹¹ *Ibid*, 16 Oct. 1920.

representations requesting that eleven o'clock closing time be allowed to continue.⁹²

This policy was resented and occasionally fought against by the crown forces. In late October around Boherbee, near Tralee 'publichouses were visited [by the crown forces] and the owners, under threat were compelled to keep them open until the usual hour the allegation being made that they were complying with the recent Volunteer order to close down at 10 o'clock'.⁹³

Like other aspects of republican policing during and after the aggressive crown forces reprisal campaign it became impossible for the IRA to enforce their decrees. But during the Truce the policy was revived. In November 1921 the policy of restricting opening hours was regularised. The Chief of Republican Police instructed all police officers to ensure that on weekdays all public houses, across the country be opened on weekdays from 8 a.m. to 10 p.m. and from 8.a.m. to 9.30 p.m. on Saturdays and to be closed on Sundays except to bone fide commercial travellers. Police officers were instructed to 'serve notice on all licenced traders [Publicans] in your area instructing them to conform to the regulations governing hours at which premises may be open for the consumption of liquor'. Police officers were also to take 'immediate steps to prohibit the manufacture or sale of poitin in your area. Raid suspected localities, seize and destroy all stills and spirits which may be located.'⁹⁴ By the time of the Truce, however, some members of the IRA in Kerry were less keen to maintain the rigid opening hours. In late August 1921 the Chief of Police wrote to Mulcahy that in the Kerry No.2 Brigade area 'members of the army are the chief offenders in frequenting public houses after hours, and generally guilty of acts which are offences against the civil code'.⁹⁵ In Newcastle - west, county Limerick, 'the Brigade police officer has given permits without any authority, for the sale of intoxicating drink at dances, sports etc'.⁹⁶

Policy in regard to Irish Travellers

Another element to republican policing is the attitude adopted towards people described as 'tramps' or 'tinkers'. Peter Hart writes that 'bands or "tribes" of tinkers were considered particularly unruly or dangerous, and their presence in Munster towns was almost always resented'.⁹⁷ One Friday night in mid-June a fight broke out in Tralee. *The Kerryman* reported:

⁹² Ibid, 30 Oct. 1920.

⁹³ Idem.

⁹⁴ Chief of Irish Republican Police to each Brigade Police officer, Regulations of licenced trade, 1 Nov. 1921, UCDA, P7/A/27.

⁹⁵ Chief of Irish Republican Police to C/S, 25 Aug. 1921, UCDA, P7/A/23.

⁹⁶ C/S to Minister for Defence, 14 Nov. 1921, UCDA, P7/A/28.

⁹⁷ Hart, *The IRA & its enemies*, p.150.

‘The warring parties, from their appearance belong to the Tinker tribe and by all accounts are natives of Tralee. They are a people amongst whom many disagreements occur from time to time’.⁹⁸

In some parts of the county the IRA would no longer accept the presence of these people. On Wednesday 23 June

a fair day in Kenmare the usual number of tramps that patronise fairs were in evidence. Late in the afternoon, when some of the party were under the influence of drink, they were anxious to fight one another. Shortly after some members of the Irish Volunteers arrived, and promptly cleared them out of the town. At the time of the occurrence no members of the RIC were on duty.⁹⁹

The Brigade Adjutant of Cork No.2 asked Headquarters for permission for ‘clearing towns of tramps who take advantage of the non-interference of the enemy police’.¹⁰⁰ Headquarters was sceptical of this policy speculating that the neighbouring Brigades would hardly be that welcoming of the displaced people asking ‘how do you propose dealing with the Cork. No.1 Brigade when they deport doz tramps across the border to you’.¹⁰¹ Nonetheless the policy of displacement of ‘tramps’ continued. Peter Hart writes that this policy was taken up ‘zealously’ by the IRA and occurred also in Clare, Tipperary and Kilkenny.¹⁰²

In early July when Volunteers took up police duties in Killarney it was reported that as a result ‘undesirables have been forced to leave the town’.¹⁰³ In Abbeyfeale on the Kerry-Limerick border at a fair held in early July ‘A number of arrests were made by the Abbeyfeale Volunteers at the recent fair, and those apprehended were taken to some undisclosed venue for trial on charges of affecting the peace of the district. Tramps and undesirables were obliged to retire early from the fair’.¹⁰⁴ Likewise in Middleton, it was reported that thanks to volunteer patrolling the town was free of the ‘tramp nuisance’. Persons showing ‘offensive conduct’ were rounded up and made leave.¹⁰⁵

On 4 August in Kenmare

⁹⁸ *The Kerryman*, 19 Jun. 1920.

⁹⁹ *Ibid*, 26 Jun. 1920.

¹⁰⁰ Brigade Adjutant Cork No.2 to Adjutant General, GHQ, 24 Jun. 1920, MAI, CP/A/0499/XVI.

¹⁰¹ Adjutant General to O/C Cork No.2, 25 Jun. 1920, MAI, CP/A/0495/XXI

¹⁰² Hart, *The IRA & its enemies*, p.150.

¹⁰³ *The Kerryman*, 3 Jul. 1920.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid*, 10 Jul. 1920.

¹⁰⁵ *Cork Examiner*, 13 Jul. 1920.

some tramps who were under the influence of drink were cleared out of the town by a number of Volunteers. One of them who stole a number of articles was left off with a caution after the stolen articles were returned to the owners. At the time of the occurrence no RIC were on duty, and some Volunteers patrolled for some hours after.¹⁰⁶

Thomas Lavin, from Ballyfarnon in north Roscommon, believed ‘tramps and tinkers’ lived in fear of the IRA

We were fortunate in our area that the people were so law abiding and even members of the Tramp or Tinker class who often gave a bit of trouble, also became very quiet. They knew what to expect when arrested by the RIC but what happened when arrested by the IRA was an unexplored region to them and they were not taking any chances.¹⁰⁷

Clearing ‘tramp’ and ‘tinkers’ out of towns and even counties in some cases became official policy. Ernie O’Malley, as O/C of the 2nd Southern division Tipperary, Kilkenny and east Limerick, wrote to Richard Mulcahy that ‘Tramps, tinkers, etc., are rather a nuisance and a source of information to the enemy. They are now prohibited in the area; a general order might help other areas’.¹⁰⁸ According to Michael Collins, as Director of Information, IRA policy for some time had been to monitor travelling people ‘it is a long time ago (I think as far back as last November) that I sent a general instruction to the I.O.’s [Intelligence Officers] that all strangers were to be regarded as suspect. The objectionable persons named (tramps and tinker) would come under this head’.¹⁰⁹

Preventing emigration.

It was emigration though that was the most heinous crime in the view of republicans at this time outweighing concerns over drink and travellers. In late March *The Kerryman* reported that five young men from ‘rural districts’ travelling to Liverpool and then on to the United States were arrested in Dublin by republicans. But it was not just republicans who were opposed to emigration. In an editorial *The Kerryman* reflected that

¹⁰⁶ *The Kerryman*, 7 Aug.1920.

¹⁰⁷ Thomas Lavin, BMH, WS, 1001.

¹⁰⁸ Communication from O/C 2nd Southern to C/S quoted in C/S to D/I, 12 Jul. 1921, UCDA, P7/A/21.

¹⁰⁹ D/I to C/S, 26 Jul. 1921, UCDA, P7/A/21.

Those misguided young men and women too who contemplate deserting their country which, with all its drawbacks is not such a bad place to live at the present time, are looked upon as traitors to their native land...The country was never more prosperous, employment and good wages were never better, and we cannot understand how any self-respecting young men and women should now forsake their Motherland. Those young people have no conception of the difficulties of getting on in the States. They look upon it as a country that a man can quickly be a millionaire. No doubt it is a fine country, but we hear more of the comparatively few successes than of the many tragic failures. Those who have influence with the youth of Ireland should at once warn them of the evils of emigration.¹¹⁰

An t-Óglác was more strident on the issue announcing in May that

The young [Irish] man who joins the enemy forces for ‘police’ or ‘military’ service at the present juncture is a traitor who deserves the sternest punishment; but the young man who at this juncture deserts his country by emigration is hardly less culpable. Every form of pressure may be lawfully applied to prevent Irishmen joining the service of the enemy, pressure may and should also be employed to prevent Irishmen leaving their country at the present juncture. From the military point of view no more menacing move has been made against us by the enemy forces than to deplete our man power by emigration. It has been the declared policy of the heads of the enemy army to weaken the Republican Army of its forces by depleting Ireland of its vigorous manhood. The attempt will be met and defeated. It is the duty of the soldiers and officers of the Irish Republican Army to bring the position home to all whom it may concern.¹¹¹

The next month *An t-Óglác* wrote that

Every effort should be made to discourage emigration. We are glad to find that the alarmist stories of a big boom in Irish emigration are unfounded. It is for another department of the Irish Republic to deal with the economic problems concerned with emigration; but the officers and men of the Irish Volunteers can

¹¹⁰ *The Kerryman*, 27 Mar. 1920.

¹¹¹ *An t-Óglác*, 1 May. 1920.

at least help by their personal influence to create a healthy public opinion on the point.¹¹²

In mid-June *The Kerryman* was reporting that ‘hundreds of young people’ had left west Kerry in the previous two months ‘for the States’. But the *Dingle doings* reporter reflected ‘Let us hope that the dawn is at hand and that Ireland will shortly control her own natural resources and keep the people employed at home’.¹¹³ This was becoming a concern for the IRA. The Cork No.2 Adjutant asked headquarters: ‘have we the power...to prevent emigration of men of military age even though not Volunteers’.¹¹⁴ Headquarters responded:

We have no power to prevent the emigration of men of military age, even though not Volunteers. This would require an act of An Dáil, and it is better that coercion not be enforced. Your suggestion re public meetings and such is a very good one. It is necessary to instruct people in this matter. A great deal of emigration is the result of ignorance and the real significance of emigration.¹¹⁵

By the start of August *An t-Óglác* announced that by a decree of Dáil Éireann no citizens were allowed to emigrate without ‘the permission of the Irish Republican authorities’ but celebrated the fact that ‘comparatively few men of military age have left Ireland, but there should be none at all. Every man is wanted’.¹¹⁶

In an announcement by Sinn Féin, in early May, potential emigrants were warned of ‘threatening measures’ if they attempted to leave.¹¹⁷ Incidents of Republicans actually forcibly preventing emigration are hard to ascertain as they were not frequently reported on in the press. In mid-July, however, the author of *Glenbeigh notes* in *The Kerryman* reported that a number of young men ‘from the surrounding districts’ were travelling to Queenstown and then on the America. However, when the train reached the Mallow station ‘a number of Volunteers...entered the carriage in which those intended emigrants were seated and dragged them off the train and outside the railway station where they were strictly cautioned to return home or otherwise would be sent to some unknown destination’. The men subsequently found work at a Tralee hiring fair but the *Glenbeigh doings* author also recorded ‘of course these young men whom I have above referred are not the only intending emigrants who were

¹¹² Ibid, 1 Jun. 1920.

¹¹³ *The Kerryman*, 12 Jun. 1920.

¹¹⁴ Brigade Adjutant Cork No.2 to Adjutant General, GHQ, 24 Jun. 1920, MAI, CP/A/0499/XVI.

¹¹⁵ Adjutant General to O/C Cork No.2, 25 Jun. 1920, MAI, CP/A/0495/XXI.

¹¹⁶ *An t-Óglác*, 15 Aug. 1920.

¹¹⁷ *Cork Examiner*, 12 May. 1920.

reluctantly compelled to return home by the representations of the Volunteers within the past few weeks'.¹¹⁸ This would seem to suggest that it was a fairly common occurrence.

The following, however, are the only recorded instances of the IRA forcibly preventing emigration in Kerry. In early September *The Kerryman* noted that 'For some time past there is a considerable number of people, principally young girls, emigrating from Cahirciveen and the surrounding districts to the United States. It is understood that one emigrant was forcibly ejected from the train at Cahirciveen station last week en route for the U.S.'. ¹¹⁹ In early October two men from Keel, in the Castlemaine district, 'en route to leave the country were held up here (in Castlemaine)...by Volunteers and turned home'.¹²⁰ James Fitzgerald, of Lispole on the Dingle Peninsula, also recalled that

An order came from GHQ that all men of military age were to be prevented from emigrating and men in our area who attempted to emigrate were removed from cars and trains. I took it on myself to send warnings to each of the three shipping agents in Dingle against sending out advertisements or taking any money from men of military age and this had the desired effect. I learned from some of the men we stopped that the shipping agents were promising them a safe getaway, but the agents stopped after my warning.¹²¹

Fitzgerald's testimony highlights the degree of intimidation and ruthlessness that could accompany the administration of republican justice.

The prevention of emigration was not as pressing a concern as the conflict's intensity increased. However, it still reportedly occurred into 1921. In early April 1921 *The Kerryman* reported that 'large numbers of emigrants (mainly women) have left for the United States, at Kells railway station about 5 miles from Cahirciveen, a train conveying emigrants was held up by a party of masked men who ordered the passengers out to the platform and closely scrutinised their Tickets, Passports etc, they were then allowed to proceed'.¹²²

Conclusion

As a result of the aggressive counter-insurgency conducted by the crown forces the IRA were no longer to operate openly in Kerry and though republican justice still occurred it was nowhere

¹¹⁸ *The Kerryman*, 17 Jul. 1920.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid*, 11 Sept. 1920.

¹²⁰ *Ibid*, 9 Oct., 1920.

¹²¹ James Fitzgerald, BMH, WS, 999.

¹²² *Ibid*, 2 Apr. 1921.

near as widespread as in the spring and summer of 1920 and only occurred in the countryside. A GHQ report on the Kerry No.1 Brigade noted in late June 1921 that 'police cannot act in countryside but OK in county'.¹²³ The British army also noted that 'Sinn Fein courts are still held at Castlegregory, Annascaul, Sneem and other places too remote or too difficult of access to RIC to make surprise visits'.¹²⁴

By the Autumn of 1920 the dynamics of the conflict had changed drastically and military concerns began to outweigh policing ones. In essence republican policing developed out of sheer necessity. An acid test for the new fledgling republican government would be whether or not it could maintain law and order as the traditional British system was no longer fully functioning. In this respect up until the autumn of 1920 the IRA in Kerry are worthy of commendation and shows an entirely laudable side to their relationship with civilians.

The latter stages of this chapter do highlight some deeper questions or issues in relation to Irish society. Gavin Foster has written that early twentieth century Ireland was partially defined by the idea of 'status' within society. He has written that the pro-Treaty rhetoric that developed was overwhelmingly concerned with self-representation as decent and respectable.¹²⁵ This reading can, however, extend to the pre-Truce IRA. Peter Hart has written of the Cork IRA that they considered themselves to be 'the hard working and respectable heart of the nation'.¹²⁶ This desire for respectability and decency can be seen most clearly in relation to opening hours for pubs and their treatment of Irish travellers. By restricting opening hours they were in essence trying to prevent people from over indulging and indeed, most likely, trying to ensure no one was hungover for mass let alone missed mass on account of a sore head. The clearing of travelling people can be regarded as an attempt to create a type of cultural uniformity and a very real attempt to prevent people deemed not respectable from engaging with the rest of society. The prevention of emigration can be regarded as having a definite military aspect as the IRA needed a pool of younger recruits to draw from and this could not be haemorrhaged by emigration. The first section of this chapter showed a noble effort on the part of the IRA to essentially fill the breach they had created by undermining the RIC and protect the rights and property of those under threat. However, the forcible closure of pubs, removal of Irish Travellers and prevention of emigration seems to show an IRA trying to remodel society in their image and impose social or moral control. In essence this is linked to their characterisation of the RIC as immoral and civilians who assisted the crown forces as being complicit with that

¹²³ Copy report H.Q. developing officers Kerry No.1 Brigade, 23 Jun. 1921, UCDA, P7/A/20.

¹²⁴ Kautt (ed), *Ground truths*, p.144.

¹²⁵ Foster, *The Irish civil war and society*, p.50.

¹²⁶ Hart, *The IRA & its enemies*, p.142.

immorality which is examined in the following chapters. The next chapter though specifically examines women who were targeted by the both sides of the conflict, connecting with issues around morality and homogeneity that were explored in this chapter.

Chapter four. Violence against women

Introduction

The role of women in the Irish revolution is becoming an increasingly discussed and researched topic. However, a tendency does exist to focus primarily on the role of Cumann na mBan, the female auxiliary movement in the republican movement, and individual republican women, these studies focus on the role of republican women in the bohemian and radical circles that existed before the 1916 rising leaving post-1916 republican women's groups under researched.¹ The activities, motivations and role of Cumann na mBan between 1919-1923 are clearly, also, worthy of further academic analysis. However, Cumann na mBan volunteers were not the only women who experienced the Irish revolution.

During the revolutionary period civilian women also became victims of the combatants. This chapter explores the nature of the intimidation and violence that specifically targeted women in these years. Initially, the chapter deals with how the issue of violence against women has been dealt with in the historiography, then examines the various examples and forms of violence against women in the south and west of Ireland, followed by an exploration of the motivations behind the attacks together with how these attacks compared to violence against women in continental Europe.

The issue of violence against women, in the revolutionary period, has received a certain degree of attention in the historiography. In 2000 Louise Ryan explored violence against women in her essay "Drunken Tans": representations of sex and violence in the Anglo-Irish war'. Ryan examined a number of cases of violence against women conducted by the crown forces and the IRA between 1919-1921, but the piece is mainly concerned with perceptions of masculinity, femininity and violence.² Gemma Clarke, recently, in *Everyday violence in the Irish civil war*, has shown the prevalence of republican/agrarian incidents of violence against women and some cases of sexual violence in the civil war. However, Clark does not explore the precedents set for these forms of intimidation and violence in 1919-21 by both the crown forces and the IRA.³

Clark writes:

¹ See for instance Senia Pasetta, *Irish nationalist women, 1900-1918* (Cambridge, 2013), R.F. Foster, *Vivid faces. the revolutionary generation in Ireland 1890-1923* (London, 2014) and Sinead McCooile, *Easter widows: seven women who lived in the shadow of the 1916 rising* (Dublin, 2014).

² Louise Ryan, "Drunken Tans": representations of sex and violence in the Anglo-Irish war (1919-21)', *Feminist review*, No.66, autumn 2000, p.80.

³ See Clark, *Everyday violence in the Irish civil war*.

Social norms and expectations certainly are challenged during conflict. Civil war enables the invasion by males of the usually female denominated domestic arena. House burning, for example, a viciously destructive yet common tactic, employed throughout 1919-23, affected directly these groups who would have otherwise avoided serious violence.⁴

Arson, along with the actual killing of civilians, was certainly one of the most extreme forms of violence against civilians in this period, but importantly the ‘female dominated domestic sphere’ was consistently intruded upon between 1919-23 in the form of raids on private houses and assaults. Clark identifies a small number of cases but concludes that sexual violence against women was not widespread and in fact ‘sexual assault has never been made a wartime tactic in Ireland’.⁵ T.K Wilson has identified eight cases of sexual assault by loyalists in 1921-22 in County Londonderry, south Armagh and Kilkeel.⁶ Recently Marie Coleman in her essay ‘Violence against women during the Irish war of independence 1919-21’ concludes

Violence against women was certainly a feature of the war of independence yet the evidence available indicates that it was limited in nature and scope, especially by contemporary European standards. The targeted killing of females was very rare. Most of the violence carried out against women by both the Crown Forces and the IRA can be categorised as physical, gendered and psychological. Sexual violence took place but was very rare. Rape was not employed by either side as a weapon of war.⁷

My own research indicates that women were consistently targeted through 1919-21, primarily in the form of forced hair cutting. Coleman recognises the existence of this form of violence against women highlighting an example, in Galway city in September 1920, when five members of Cumann na mBan had their hair cut off, by Black and Tans after the IRA had cut the hair off a young woman who gave evidence against the IRA in court. Coleman writes this was a form of non-sexual gendered violence ‘displayed as a method of disciplining women’.⁸ Coleman recognises that both republicans and the security forces used this tactic but does not

⁴ Ibid, p.190.

⁵ Ibid, p.193.

⁶ T.K. Wilson, *Frontiers of violence: conflict and identity in Ulster and Upper Silesia, 1918-1922* (Oxford, 2010), p.76.

⁷ Marie Coleman, ‘Violence against women during the Irish war of Independence’ in Diarmaid Ferriter and Susannah Riordan (eds) *Years of turbulence: the Irish revolution and its aftermath. In honour of Michael Laffan* (Dublin, 2015), p.154.

⁸ Ibid, p.141.

give any other examples instead preferring to deal with the absence of widespread sexual violence and the reasons for this absence.

Though few women were ever killed in the Irish revolution, consistent patterns and forms of gendered intimidation and violence emerge. Women, while not the victims of ‘serious violence’ were threatened, humiliated, boycotted, had goods or property stolen, were beaten and had their hair cut by combatants. Like other forms of violence and intimidation directed against civilians in this period violence against women was largely inspired by association with the enemy. However, the violence that emerged was gender specific in that women were attacked for fulfilling typical gender roles - namely young women who had relationships with members of the crown forces. The violence of the crown forces tended to not be quite as gender specific in that they would usually target whole families and communities at a time, however, they also adopted gender specific violence by cutting off the hair of young women whom they believed were connected to the IRA.

Hair cutting

The most common form of violence against women was forced hair cutting. The issue remains, strangely, under researched in the, now extensive, historiography of the period. John O’Callaghan’s 2010 work *Revolutionary Limerick: the campaign for independence in Limerick 1913-1921*, addresses the issue but presents it as being connected to the IRA’s campaign against spies and informers. O’Callaghan claims women ‘were more likely to have their hair cut off than to be executed’.⁹ But these women were never described as spies or informers. All the women targeted were described as being ‘friendly’ or for having associated with the crown forces rather than for giving information to the crown forces. Interestingly, in 1998 Peter Hart also wrongly confused the two issues describing the victims of forced hair cutting as ‘suspected female informers’.¹⁰

In early 1920 a young women from Ballybunion, in north Kerry, was attacked. At 2 a.m. on 17 March 1920, Mary Brandon was attacked for the second time in two months. The police reported that ‘twelve masked men cut off Mary Brandon’s hair at Ballybunion because she was intimate with a policeman. On 24.2.20 portion of her hair was cut off and tar thrown on her clothes’.¹¹ A week earlier *The Kerryman* reported that on 2 March 1920 in nearby Ballylongford ‘a young girl named Ciss Brandon was attacked by masked men who cut her

⁹ O’Callaghan, *Revolutionary Limerick*, p. 173.

¹⁰ Hart, *The IRA & its enemies*, p. 310.

¹¹ Weekly Summary, Week ending 29 Mar. – 11 Apr. 1920, TCD BL, CO 904/148.

hair and smeared her head and face with tar'. And 'that from information available she was proceeding home about 10 o'clock when passing an untenanted house, she was rushed upon by six masked men wearing raincoats. Some seized and held her while others cut the hair and administered the tar'. The report concluded that 'on the following day the police investigated the matter and questioned several young men as to their movements on the previous night, but so far there are no results. This is the second case of a similar nature reported in the district within the last six months'.¹²

In Tralee, in May 1920, the IRA put up posters that according to the police 'warned girls against keeping company, or walking with soldiers. The girls are reminded that in 1916 England's soldiers shot down their brothers. Soldiers are warned that if they are found with girls, they will be shot'.¹³ In Kerry the IRA, were not slow to act if these warnings went unheeded. On 27 June 'three masked men entered a house in Cahirciveen District, and beat and cut the hair off two young girls named Julia and Margaret McCarthy. The girls are friendly with the police'.¹⁴ According to *The Kerryman* the attack occurred in broad daylight.¹⁵ Margaret was 25 in 1920 while her younger sister Julia was only 16. Both girls lived with their other brothers and sisters and father Sylvester who was a widower. They also lived with their grandmother Hanora who could not speak English.¹⁶ In a joint statement by members of the Cahirciveen battalion, Denis Daly, Pdraig O' Conchubhair, and Micheál Breathnach, recalled:

There were not many military in the area; about half a Company of some Artillery Unit was stationed in the Barracks at Cahirciveen. They were not much in evidence and took no part in raids or other activity against the IRA They only displayed annoyance when their girlfriends had their hair bobbed.¹⁷

On 1 July in Annagh, outside Tralee, Norah Walsh was taken from her family home by armed and masked men 'out to the road, where they cut off her hair and tarred her head. The injury was inflicted because she did not induce her brothers to resign from the RIC. One brother is serving in Clare, and the other is a recruit training at the Depot'.¹⁸ According to the *Record of the Rebellion* the operation was conducted by 15 men and Norah was 17 years old.¹⁹ The claim

¹² *The Kerryman*, 6 Mar. 1920.

¹³ Weekly Summary, Week ending 16 May. - 23 May. 1920, TCD BL, CO 904/148.

¹⁴ Weekly Summary, Week ending 27 Jun. - 4 Jul. 1920, TCD BL, CO 904/184.

¹⁵ *The Kerryman*, 3 Jul. 1920.

¹⁶ Family Schedule, Census of Ireland, DED, Rath, Banawn, County Kerry. Accessed at www.census.nationalarchives.ie on 26 Aug. 2014.

¹⁷ Denis Daly, Pdraig O' Conchubhair, Micheal Breathnach, BMH, WS, 786.

¹⁸ Weekly Summary, Week ending 27 Jun. - 4 Jul. 1920, TCD BL, CO 904/184.

¹⁹ Kautt (ed), *Ground truths*.p.77.

about her age is consistent with Census records which have Norah recorded as 7 in 1911.²⁰ The *Cork Examiner* reported that on Sunday evening, 4 July, two unnamed sisters were taken from a dance at Cahirciveen and had their hair cut for 'keeping company with soldiers'.²¹

In early August 1920 *The Kerryman* reported that a young woman had her hair cut off just outside Kenmare 'it is rumoured that she got several cautions previously against keeping certain company'.²² On 12 August in Abbeydorney, north of Tralee, while Catherine Fitzgerald was walking home 'she was accosted by a masked man who caught her by the arm and took her into a laneway, where four other masked men were. They blindfolded her, cut off her hair, and tarred her blouse and skirt. The girl was friendly with the police, and often went on errands for them, hence the motive'.²³

Family connections to the police as well as romantic attachments could also sometimes result in the IRA deciding to cut a girl's hair. The police reported that on the 24 October

a number of armed and disguised men visited the house of Jeremiah Sullivan, farmer, Listowel district. They beat his two sons Patrick and Daniel, cut the hair of his daughter's head, and burned a rick of corn. Miss Sullivan is friendly to the police, and her brother Daniel was examined for the police about two years ago, and it was thought he would again present himself.²⁴

In September 1920 an unnamed domestic servant, in Cahirciveen, was set upon whilst walking with a soldier in the town and had tar thrown over her hair by a group of masked men. According to *The Kerryman* another woman was present and about to receive the same treatment but managed to escape.²⁵ In October a group of RIC men raided the Sinn Féin hall in Kilorglin where they caused considerable damage 'as a reprisal for the bobbing of the hair of two girls who had been keeping company with the RIC'.²⁶ However, no available documentation about women having their hair cut off in the Kilorglin district in the Autumn of 1920 is available.

In late 1920 and early 1921 as the crown forces vigorously pursued their policy of shootings and reprisals IRA activity against civilians connected to the crown forces became more murderous and a notable decrease in hair cuttings is evident from police reports. *The*

²⁰ Family Schedule, Census of Ireland, DED, Annagh, Blennerville, County Kerry. Accessed at www.census.nationalarchives.ie on 26 Aug.2014.

²¹ *Cork Examiner*, 6 Jul.1920.

²² *The Kerryman*, 7 Aug. 1920.

²³ Weekly summary, Week ending 15 Aug. -22 Aug. 1920, TCD BL, CO 904/149.

²⁴ Weekly summary, Week ending 24 -31 Oct. 1920, TCD BL, CO 904/149.

²⁵ *The Kerryman*, 18 Sept. 1920.

²⁶ *Ibid*, 2 Oct. 1920.

Manchester Guardian did, however, state that on 23 April, an unnamed, woman's hair was cut off in Kilgarvan, County Kerry, by the IRA.²⁷

The following is a breakdown of IRA haircutting in Connacht and Munster together with a breakdown within Kerry.

Table five. Name, date and location of all women who had their hair forcibly removed by the IRA in Munster and Connacht in 1919-1920.

Name	Date	Location
Norah Williams	11 th September 1919	Lisdoonvarna, Clare ²⁸
Ciss Brandon	2 nd March 1920	Ballylongford, Kerry ²⁹
Unnamed	16 th March 1920	Hollycross, Tipperary ³⁰
Mary Brandon	17 th March 1920 also 24 th March	Ballybunion, Kerry ³¹
Bridget Keagan	5 th May 1920	Tuam, Galway ³²
Annie Devine	17 th May 1920	Tuam, Galway ³³
Unnamed	June 1920	Sligo ³⁴
Unnamed	June 1920	Sligo ³⁵
Kathleen Meade	17 th June 1920	Clonakilty, Cork ³⁶
Kate Sullivan	18 th June 1920	Kilrush, Clare ³⁷
Unnamed	18 th June 1920	Castletownroche, Cork ³⁸
Unnamed	18 th June 1920	Castletownroche, Cork ³⁹
Julia McCarthy	27 th June 1920	Cahirciveen, Kerry ⁴⁰
Margaret McCarthy	27 th June 1920	Cahirciveen, Kerry ⁴¹

²⁷ *The Manchester Guardian*, 30 Apr. 1921.

²⁸ IG, MR, Sept. 1919, TCD BL, CO 904/110.

²⁹ *The Kerryman*, 6 Mar., 1920.

³⁰ *Cork Examiner*, 16 Mar. 1920.

³¹ Weekly summary, Week ending 29 Mar. – 11 Apr. 1920, TCD BL, CO 904/148.

³² *Cork Examiner*, 11 May. 1920.

³³ Weekly Summary, Week ending 16 May. -23 May. 1920, TCD BL, CO 904/148.

³⁴ IG, MR, Jun. 1921, CO 904/115.

³⁵ Idem.

³⁶ Weekly Summary, Week ending 20 – 27 Jun. 1920 TCD BL, CO 904/148 see also Kautt (ed), *Ground truth*, p.77.

³⁷ Idem.

³⁸ *Cork Examiner*, 18 Jun. 1920.

³⁹ Idem.

⁴⁰ Weekly Summary, Week ending 27 Jun. – 4 Jul. 1920, TCD BL, CO 904/184; *The Kerryman*, 3 Jul. 1920.

⁴¹ Idem.

Unnamed	Late June 1920	Clonakilty, Cork ⁴²
Norah Walsh	1 st July 1920	Tralee, Kerry ⁴³
Unnamed	4 th July 1920	Cahirciveen, Kerry ⁴⁴
Unnamed	4 th July 1920	Cahirciveen, Kerry ⁴⁵
Unnamed	5 th July 1920	Youghal, Cork ⁴⁶
Mary Ellen Deedy	7 th July 1920	Mallow, Cork ⁴⁷
Nellie Fitzgerald	23 rd July 1920	Newpallas, Limerick ⁴⁸
Annie Fitzgerald	23 rd July 1920	Newpallas, Limerick ⁴⁹
Unnamed	23 rd July 1920	Nenagh, Tipperary ⁵⁰
Unnamed	23 rd July 1920	Nenagh, Tipperary ⁵¹
Unnamed	26 th July 1920	Newport, Tipperary ⁵²
Unnamed	Early August	Kenmare, Kerry ⁵³
Kathleen Loughnane	10 th August 1920	Roscommon, Roscommon ⁵⁴
Catherine Fitzgerald	12 th August 1920	Abbeydorney, Kerry ⁵⁵
Unnamed	Late August 1920	Tubbercurry, Sligo ⁵⁶
Unnamed	Late August 1920	Tubbercurry, Sligo ⁵⁷
Unnamed	September 1920	Cahirciveen, Kerry ⁵⁸
Ms Greany	September 1920	Limerick city, Limerick ⁵⁹
Ms Baker	8 th September 1920	Galway city, Galway ⁶⁰
Ms Sullivan	24 th October 1920	Listowel, Kerry ⁶¹
Mary Connolly	14 th November 1920	Limerick city, Limerick ⁶²

⁴² *Cork Examiner*, 22 Jun. 1920.

⁴³ Weekly Summary, Week ending 27 Jun. – 4 Jul. 1920, TCD BL, CO 904/184.

⁴⁴ *Cork Examiner*, 6 Jul. 1920.

⁴⁵ *Idem*.

⁴⁶ *Idem*.

⁴⁷ Weekly summary, Week ending 4 -11 Jul. 1920, TCD BL, CO 904/148.

⁴⁸ *Idem*.

⁴⁹ *Idem*.

⁵⁰ *Cork Examiner*, 26 Jul. 1920.

⁵¹ *Idem*.

⁵² *Ibid*, 27 Jul. 1920.

⁵³ *The Kerryman*, 7 Aug. 1920.

⁵⁴ Weekly summary, Week ending 29 Aug. – 5 Sept. 1920, TCD BL, CO 904/149.

⁵⁵ Weekly summary, Week ending 15 Aug. - 22 Aug. 1920, TCD BL, CO 904/149.

⁵⁶ *Cork Examiner*, 26 Aug. 1920.

⁵⁷ Michael Farry, *Sligo 1914-1921: a chronicle of conflict* (Meath, 1992), p.196.

⁵⁸ *The Kerryman*, 18 Sept. 1920.

⁵⁹ *Cork Examiner*, 25 Sept. 1920.

⁶⁰ Leeson, *The Black and Tans*, p.45.

⁶¹ Weekly summary, Week ending 24. -31 Oct. 1920, TCD BL, CO 904/149.

⁶² Weekly summary, Week ending 14 Nov. – 21 Nov. 1920, TCD BL, CO 904/149.

Unnamed	Late November 1920	Quilty, Clare ⁶³
Unnamed	Late November 1920	Quilty, Clare ⁶⁴
Unnamed	Late November 1920	Quilty, Clare ⁶⁵
Unnamed	Late November 1920	Quilty, Clare ⁶⁶
Margaret Nash	1 st December 1920	Kildysart, Clare ⁶⁷
Minnie Keane	Mid December 1920	Kilrush, Clare ⁶⁸
Annie O'Shea	Mid December 1920	Kilrush, Clare ⁶⁹
Nina Wright	12 th December 1920	Lismore, Waterford ⁷⁰
Unnamed	23 rd April 1921	Kilgarvan, Kerry ⁷¹
	Total	44

Table six. Breakdown of instances of forcible hair cutting by the IRA per Munster and Connacht counties.

County	Number of Instances
Kerry	12
Clare	9
Cork	6
Limerick	4
Tipperary	4
Sligo	4
Galway	3
Waterford	1
Roscommon	1
Mayo	0
Leitrim	0

⁶³ *Cork Examiner*, 22 Nov. 1920.

⁶⁴ *Idem*.

⁶⁵ *Idem*.

⁶⁶ *Idem*.

⁶⁷ Weekly Summary, Week ending 12 – 19 Dec. 1920, TCD BL, CO 904/149.

⁶⁸ *Idem*.

⁶⁹ *Idem*.

⁷⁰ *Idem*.

⁷¹ *The Manchester Guardian*, 30 Apr. 1921.

Curiously these attacks also seem to conform to certain national standards. Most of the attacks occurred in the counties where the IRA were particularly aggressive anyway. Notably Cork, Kerry, Limerick, Tipperary and Clare. In Connacht, Roscommon, Sligo and Galway are the counties that keep coming up. Importantly the Roscommon, Galway and Sligo IRA units were the most aggressive within the province of Connacht, revealing that the IRA in certain parts of the country were willing to engage in as many acts of violence as possible.

However, Kerry is notably ahead with twelve, Clare being the next highest with nine. Curiously within Kerry it occurred most often in an area where the IRA were not particularly active. Within Kerry, the most aggressive IRA units were based in Ballymacelligott and Tralee, and curiously haircutting was frequent in and around Tralee but not around Ballymacelligott or east Kerry. Also Cahirciveen and the Ivereagh Peninsula was the one part of the county that saw the least violence and also where the IRA's organisation was particularly weak. But haircutting occurred most frequently. This shows a non-homogenous approach to motivation. In Cahirciveen the IRA were reluctant to engage in regular combat but were willing to frequently cut hair. Instead they probably concluded that hair cutting could be used as a means to undermine their opponents morale whilst simultaneously acting as a warning to others not to associate with the crown forces.

Also, like a number of aspects of the IRA's campaign between 1919-1921, hair cutting was a spontaneous reaction by local units to local conditions. Unlike say IRA policing, that also developed in reaction to local conditions but was regularised by GHQ hair cutting was never regularised. In fact, I have never come across a contemporary document at Battalion, Brigade, Divisional or GHQ level that even references the practice. Why this was the case cannot be ascertained. Perhaps some IRA commanders may have been uncomfortable with the practice, others maybe wanted to ignore it and others might have been content for it to happen without any interference from higher ups.

But such assaults on women were by no means one sided.

The crown forces and forced hair cutting

The tactics of both sides in many respects came to mirror each other. As 1920 progressed and the IRA continued to punish women associated with the crown forces, the crown forces retaliated by punishing women associated with the IRA.

In mid-October 1920 the crown forces around north Kerry began attacking civilians to break the power and influence of the IRA. On 18 October Black and Tans from Listowel came to the

home of the Sullivan's two miles outside the town, beat two brothers living there and cut the hair off two girls.⁷² It is not clear whether the Sullivan's were connected to the IRA but it seems more than likely. The party of Black and Tans then drove to Lixnaw village and the home of IRA member Steve O'Grady. Steve escaped in his nightshirt across the fields but his sister Bridget was caught and had her hair cut off. Hugh Martin, an English journalist reporting on the situation in Kerry, later interviewed Bridget who said 'one of the men said "we are doing this because your brother had something to do with cutting the girl's hair in the village" they also threatened to murder Steve.'⁷³ The Black and Tans then proceeded to burn the Lixnaw creamery. The Creamery Manager, Mr O'Donnell, at an appeal for compensation at Listowel Court Sessions believed the burning occurred as a reprisal for the IRA's recent hair cutting.⁷⁴ They then visited the home of John Lovatt, whose son Maurice was in the IRA. Maurice was beaten with rifles and kicked while on the ground. His sister Mary was then taken outside in her night clothes and had her hair cut off. Mary was told 'this is on account of our lady friend whose hair was bobbed for being friendly with us'.⁷⁵

The raiders then visited the McElligott household. John and Tom McElligott, both volunteers, were accused of shooting policemen and cutting off a girl's hair. The two brothers were made stand against a wall in the pouring rain wearing only their shirts and were then beaten up. Their sisters aged 15 and 18 were then made come outside, the elder got away but the younger had her hair cut off. The raiders again maintained it was on account of a girl who had her hair cut off for being friendly with the crown forces.⁷⁶ Presumably, this in reference to the unnamed daughter of Jeremiah Sullivan, of Listowel, who had her hair cut off by the IRA on 24 October.

In much of the rest of the county the crown forces remained relatively quiet. On one occasion the crown forces in Kilorglin, who tended to behave in a relatively well-behaved way, overreacted, over the issue of hair cutting. On Wednesday 22 September in Kilorglin, 'local' RIC raided the Sinn Féin hall in the town and proceeded to tear the pictures down from the wall and broke the glass in a bookcase together with damaging some furniture. The people of the town 'were in a state of suspense and excitement, as aware of what was being done in other places they did not know what might happen, especially as this was the first outburst of any

⁷² *The Manchester Guardian*, 30 Oct. 1920.

⁷³ Hugh Martin, *Ireland in insurrection: an Englishman's record of fact by Hugh Martin with a preface by Sir Philip Gibbs, K.B.E.* (London, 1921), p.124.

⁷⁴ *The Kerryman*, 5 Feb. 1921.

⁷⁵ Martin, *Ireland in insurrection*. p.124-25.

⁷⁶ *The Manchester Guardian*, 30 Oct. 1920.

kind.’ The raid was apparently a reprisal for the cutting of two girls’ hair the previous night, for being friendly with the police. The next morning a notice appeared in the town announcing that ‘For the next girl whose hair is bobbed reprisals will not be on pictures, but six will be shot. Anti-Sinn Fein’.⁷⁷

Later in the month Ms Babe Hogan of Cumann na mBan in Milltown Mallbay, County Clare, was attacked by masked men who came to the house of her father at 1 a.m. Babe tried to escape but was caught and brought back inside where the raiders managed to cut off some of her hair. Babe, however, managed to escape her attackers before much damage was done and reached an adjacent yard where she spent the rest of the night.⁷⁸ In Galway city, in reaction to the death of Constable Krumm, Black and Tans attacked the house of Sean Broderick who was the O/C of the 4th Galway Battalion.⁷⁹ Sean’s sister Peg Broderick of Cumann na mBan, had her hair cut off. Peg’s statement to the Bureau of Military History is the only first-hand account of what the experience was like. Peg recalled:

In the autumn of 1920 an attempt was made by RIC Black and Tans to burn our house, which was saved by our neighbours although the Tans were firing shots all over the place. My brother, Jimmy, was arrested and we had a very anxious time until we were informed he was safe. I would like to mention that the Tans saturated every door in the house with petrol, also the ground floor, evidently to burn us all in our rooms, closing every door carefully after examining the occupants instead of ordering everyone downstairs as was usual. Sometime afterwards another raid took place when they asked if I was in. I called down from the top of the stairs and said: ‘Surely I am allowed to dress myself’. They replied: ‘No, come down as you are’. I went down and snatched a coat from the hall-stand. My mother shouted after me: ‘Be brave, Peg’: I thought at first they were going to shoot me, but they took me out and closed the door, then grabbed my hair, saying ‘What wonderful curls you’ve got’ and then proceeded to cut off all my hair to the scalp with a very blunt scissors. I might say they did not handle me too roughly, which is strange to say. There was no further comment until they finished, when they pushed me towards the door and said, ‘Goodnight’. All

⁷⁷ *Cork Examiner*, 27 Sept. 1920.

⁷⁸ *The Kerryman*, 30 Oct. 1920.

⁷⁹ Sean Broderick, BMH, WS, 1677.

spoke with English accents. I had to have my head shaved by a barber next day in order to have the hair grow properly.⁸⁰

The cutting of a girl's hair by the crown forces could also be one incident in a series of attacks against a republican family. Thomas Mannion, of Dunmore in north county Galway, recalled that:

During the last three months of 1920, and the full period of 1921 up to the 11th July, the RIC were very active in my company area. They raided my house regularly every week at least once, and sometimes three times weekly. In January 1921, they burned a rick of hay and five or six stacks of oats. Several nights they threatened my father and fired shots over his head to try and get him to reveal my whereabouts and that of my brother Martin, then adjutant of the battalion (Glenamaddy). One night, they had a big scissors with them. A Black and Tan grabbed my sister Nora by the hands. She said: "what are you going to do?" One of them, a Black and Tan also, said: "We're going to cut your locks, lass". They cut her hair right to the scalp.⁸¹

Violence against women, conducted by the crown forces, was not simply restricted to hair cutting though. On 22 March 1921 the IRA conducted a semi successful ambush against the crown forces at Lispole, between Dingle and Annascaul, on the Dingle peninsula in county Kerry. James Fitzgerald, from Lispole, who was involved in the ambush recalled:

The only reprisal carried out after the Lispole ambush was carried out in my home...Tans and RIC entered my home. They bound my mother's and sister's hands with rope, forced them into a room and tied the door. They told them they were setting fire to the whole house unless told where the two sons were. My mother and sister refused to tell and the Tans brought some tins of petrol outside the window where my mother could see them. They returned later and released my mother and sister. When the Tans retired, some fresh eggs, money and other articles were missing.⁸²

Hair cutting was also not strictly confined to the IRA or crown forces alone, in some cases it occurred in the context of personal grievances. On 21 January 1920 the police recorded that ten armed and disguised men forced their way into the home of Timothy Mangan, near Kilorglin,

⁸⁰ Margaret Broderick Nicholson, BMH, WS, 1682.

⁸¹ Thomas Mannion, BMH, WS, 1408.

⁸² James Fitzgerald, BMH, WS, 999.

cut off his two ears ‘twisted his wife’s arm and cut off her hair...Mangan has issued proceedings for trespass’.⁸³ Mangan maintained in his appeal for compensation that he and his wife were targeted on account of loyalty to Britain and that he had assisted the RIC in finding IRA arms dumps, however, Mangan was also a plaintiff in law suit at Killarney quarter sessions over an agrarian dispute.⁸⁴ In light of this it is most likely that the attack was purely agrarian, rather than political in motive, and Mangan probably exaggerated his ‘loyalty’ hoping that it might make him seem more worthy of compensation.

Motivations and context

Members of the crown forces rarely left written testimonies on their experiences in Ireland. Other than the claim by Black and Tans in Lixnaw that they were taking revenge their own views and motives for cutting a women’s hair are hard to discern. John M. Regan the County Inspector for Limerick described encountering the experience as very upsetting:

We had not a real hatred for those who fought us fairly as circumstances allowed. At the other end of the scale from them, however, were the savages who attacked women. I loathed them. A very attractive looking girl was shown into my office one day and at once she burst into tears. She removed a covering from her head, and I nearly wept in sympathy. She had been keeping company with one of my men, when a coward had charged with it and cut her hair right to the scalp, leaving long strands here and there. She was a pitiable sight, and wanted to know from me what on earth she was to do. She was a waitress in a restaurant and could not possibly carry on with her work. I did not know what to say to the poor girl, and could do nothing for her. As she was leaving I said to her ‘I am sorry, my girl, that I cannot give you back your hair, but if we get the man that did it, he will be sorry he was ever born’. We got him but had no evidence that could be produced in a court. He was maltreated and I made no effort to stop it. He was not going to be allowed go scott free and do the same to another girl, and I am quite certain he never attempted anything of that kind again. I suppose we were put down as sadists in respects of cases of this kind, but the law of the jungle was the only law that suited a man who seemed to be worse than a wild beast.⁸⁵

⁸³ IG, MR, Jan. 1920, TCD BL, CO 904/111.

⁸⁴ Timothy Mangan, Co Kerry, TNA, CO 762/166/2.

⁸⁵ Augusteijn (ed), *The memoirs of John M. Regan*, pp.161-2.

Similarly, the commander of the Auxiliaries General Hugh Tudor, seemed to have been particularly horrified by forced hair cutting, suggesting that it, specifically, warranted flogging.⁸⁶ Douglas Duff, who was serving with the Black and Tans in Galway city, recalled the issue of hair cutting in a rather unsettling way in his memoir *Sword for hire*. Duff believed it was so common an occurrence, conducted by both sides, in County Galway that ‘it seemed likely that half the Galway girls would be bald’.⁸⁷ Strangely Duff did not consider hair-cutting to be serious assault and was rather like the acts of ‘mischievous children’ rather than the work of professional soldiers. Duff also believed there was never a single case on either side of ‘violence or insult to womenfolk’ or at least not in Connacht.⁸⁸ Regan seems to have been more compassionate in his reading of how such attacks affected women.

Occasionally an IRA veteran would discuss the issue in later years. Dan Keating felt the cutting of girls’ hair in Tralee was successful in that it scared other girls into not fraternising with the crown forces. ‘Their hair was cut and they were warned off.’⁸⁹ James Moloney, from Bruff county Limerick, recalled:

Some young girls created a problem. The British uniform was an attraction for them, as indeed would any uniform. They could be a real danger to the movement and gave a bad example by consorting with the enemy. They were warned repeatedly and stronger measures had to be resorted to. No Volunteer liked the job, but on occasions these girls' hair had to be cut. Years later Dame Fashion was to dictate bobbed hair but at this period, of revolution it was deemed shameful.⁹⁰

Leo Buckley, from the Cork No.1 Brigade recalled that ‘I remember at the time, young girls from Cork going out to Ballincollig to meet the British soldiers. We curbed this by bobbing the hair of persistent offenders. Short hair was completely out of fashion at the period, and the appearance of a girl with "bobbed" hair clearly denoted her way of life’.⁹¹ Michael Higgins, from Tuam, was involved in the cutting of a girl’s hair recalled that ‘she was a very beautiful girl before her hair was sheared and I pitied her although I knew I should not in the circumstances’.⁹² Geraldine Dillon, the sister of Joseph Plunkett, who was in Galway during

⁸⁶ Leeson, *The Black and Tans*, p. 33.

⁸⁷ Douglas Duff, *Sword for hire: the saga of a modern free companion* (London, 1934), p.76.

⁸⁸ *Idem*.

⁸⁹ Dan Keating and Diarmaid Fleming, ‘Dan Keating: Last man standing’, in *History Ireland*, Vol 16. No.3 (May-June 2008), p.39.

⁹⁰ James Moloney, BMH, WS, 1525.

⁹¹ Leo Buckley, BMH, WS, 1714.

⁹² Michael Higgins, BMH, WS, 1247.

this period simply recalled that the cutting of a girl's hair was 'more of tragedy than it would be now'.⁹³ Patrick Michael Ahern, a Volunteer from Abbeyfeale, west Limerick, recalled that in early 1920 the Volunteers were involved in breaking the windows of people giving information to the RIC 'some of whom were young girls, some of them gave in an undertaking [to desist informing] others would not and they had been warned on several occasions. Orders by a superior officer was not to shoot them but to cut off their hair which we did and made a good job of it and it was good for them as they got well paid for it'.⁹⁴

Some of these last comments tell us perhaps more than anything else. It was not until the mid-1920s that in some circles short hair on women was considered fashionable but still, for most people, highly unusual. In rural Ireland long hair would have been a defining feature for most women. Having it forcibly removed would, as Leo Buckley observed, 'denoted' some type of transgression for the world to see. By cutting off a women's hair combatants were taking away a women's sense of normality, right to pride in her appearance and exposing her to ridicule and mistrust. More than this these women were displayed as traitors to Ireland. Standards had been set and these women had failed to uphold them and were publicly shamed as a consequence. Like many other examples of IRA violence and intimidation these attacks seem carefully planned and considered. IRA volunteers would have watched young women who they felt they could not trust, gathering proof of misconduct before deciding to make the attack.

On the other hand the hair-cutting by the crown forces seems more spontaneous. Usually acting out of anger and frustration, and often drunk, the crown forces attacked swiftly striking at any known Sinn Féin supporter. The Black and Tans, like their opponents cut hair as a means of sending a message or statement that this was punishment for IRA violence. However, though female victims of the crown forces were publicly shamed it does not appear they were attacked on account of their supposed lack of morality. It was a case of rough spontaneous vengeance against the 'Shinner's' women rather than because of activities the women had engaged in.

The IRA, however, attacked these women for what were considered to have been their morally reprehensible decisions. Interestingly the blanket term used in police and press reports is that these women were 'friendly' or sometimes as 'intimate' with the police or military. This could, of course, mean almost anything. However, the clear implication is that these women developed romantic relationships with members of the crown forces or perhaps even simply went on a few dates together. This was what constituted the morally reprehensible action. These

⁹³ Geraldine Plunkett, BMH, WS, 424.

⁹⁴ Patrick Michael Ahern, MSP, 34 REF 652.

women were attacked, seemingly, for lacking a moral code and what would have been seen as sexual misconduct. It is probable that these women would have been regarded by the IRA and their supporters as ‘sluts’ or ‘whores’ and were punished accordingly. Tom Barry characterised the type of women who would have went out with a member of the crown forces as ‘unfortunates’ presumably referring to prostitutes.⁹⁵ The IRA were often critical and derogatory towards people they considered below themselves. Patrick Ahern, from Fermoy County Cork, characterised the wives of British soldiers as belligerent and violent.⁹⁶

The clear international comparison to make is the liberation of France from 1944-5 when women considered to be collaborators with the Germans had their hair forcibly removed. France, in these years, does present as many differences as it does similarities. Not least in terms of scale, across France, it has been estimated that between 10,000 and 30,000 women experienced forced hair cutting. In Ireland, the number appears to be well under 100. Also in France the hair cuttings occurred in public, the women in question were dragged through the streets and large numbers of spectators came to watch. The shavings were seen as having an almost medieval ‘carnival’ like feeling. In Ireland, the attacks happened within the home of the victim and often at night. But the similarities included the fact that the attacks in France, tended to be carried out by the Resistance, like the IRA an idealistic guerrilla force that faced far superior opponents. Historian Julian Jackson has described the process as being motivated by the idea that ‘before “resurrection” [of France] and “renewal”, could occur, France had to “cleanse” herself cutting out those “gangrenous” elements’. According to the attackers these women would have been regarded as having been ‘defiled’.⁹⁷ In terms of the language used and ideology behind these attacks, the French resistance bear a remarkable similarity to the IRA with the appearance of concepts such as national honour and betrayal.

It does, however, need to be asked, in cases by both the Black and Tans and the IRA, if there is some sexual aspect to their actions. Images of women, as young as 13, being dragged into alleys, tied up, beaten and thrown to the ground give some sense of how traumatic and brutal the experience must have been. James Moloney believed that ‘no volunteer liked the job’, however, such conduct is also suggestive of deliberate cruelty, misogyny and possible sexual violence on the part of the IRA volunteers and security forces involved. T.K. Wilson, for instance, addresses the issue writing ‘the issue of haircutting might be seen as a sexualised punishment in that it deliberately targeted the femininity of (usually Catholic) women who were

⁹⁵ Barry, *Guerrilla days in Ireland*, p.209.

⁹⁶ Patrick Ahern, BMH., WS, 1003.

⁹⁷ Julian Jackson, *France: the dark years 1940-1944* (Oxford, 2001), pp. 577-83.

held to have betrayed their national responsibilities'.⁹⁸ However, I would argue that for the IRA these attacks were motivated by desire to punish sexual misconduct rather than for the purpose of sexual arousal. In fact members of Cumann na mBan, sometimes seem to have been involved, Kathleen O'Connor, from Milltown County Kerry, in her pension application claimed to have been involved in the cutting of a girl's hair.⁹⁹

Beyond actual sexual assault another important aspect to consider is the fear of sexual assault that would have been generated in these attacks. James Fitzgerald describes his mother and sister as having been tied up while British troops looted their home, these women must have felt themselves vulnerable to rape. In any of the cases of hair cutting, by the IRA or crown forces, the victims also would have feared the attacks escalating into rape. All these attacks involved women being overpowered and in the power of men and accordingly, the fear of rape existed, regardless of the varied motives and aims of the attackers.

It is also more than possible that some elements of these incidents were deliberately not written down. Charles Townshend has recently written that incidents of rape probably did occur during this period but would have been 'hushed up' by the family.¹⁰⁰ This is, of course, a common problem. In 1914 as the German army advanced into France and Belgium, rape became a widespread occurrence but French and Belgian women were unwilling to discuss what had happened to them. One woman raped by a German soldier in Audun-le-Roman later told a police commissioner that she had never went to report it to the German authorities 'due to fear and shame'.¹⁰¹ Perhaps the European comparison can be considered further in relation to violence against women as perpetrated by the crown forces. John Horne and Alan Kramer write in *German atrocities 1914: a history of denial* that

Rape demonstrated in the starkest possible way that the relationship between the invader and invaded was also one of gender. If male civilians were more likely to be shot, only girls and women (as far as we know) were raped, so that the invader's absolute power to violate the body was expressed in different gendered ways.¹⁰²

Surely this can extend to hair cutting. The crown forces, acting out of anger at IRA violence, wanted to give out an aggressive message that they were in charge and any challenge to this

⁹⁸ Wilson, *Frontiers of violence*, p.120.

⁹⁹ Kathleen O'Connor, MSP, 34 REF 14007.

¹⁰⁰ Townshend, *The republic*, p.171.

¹⁰¹ John Horne and Alan Kramer, *German atrocities 1914: a history of denial* (Yale, 2001), p.196.

¹⁰² Ibid, p.199.

authority would result in severe punishments. Hair cutting is the clearest example of gendered punishment. Horne and Kramer also write that ‘the readiness of German soldiers to think of their antagonist as a dehumanised *franc-tireur* (French/Belgian civilians attacking the Germans behind their lines) lowered their inhibitions against committing inhuman acts’.¹⁰³ And that German actions need to be understood in the context soldiers ‘driven by a fear of civilians’. This can clearly equate to the actions of the Black and Tans and Auxiliaries. The most complaint or frustration expressed by members of the crown forces in Ireland was that they could not see their enemy, they did not wear uniforms making them indistinguishable from regular civilians, and would only use guerrilla tactics rather than the open style of warfare they were familiar with.¹⁰⁴ Montgomery, as we have seen, saw all civilians as ‘Shinners’.¹⁰⁵ Hair cutting by the security forces should be seen as a product of this belief in all civilians being possible opponents but also as part of desire to appear to be in control of a difficult situation and having a right to control revealing the ‘invader’s absolute power’.

The moral aspect can be considered further – these women were punished for their actions and for who they were associated with, but actual reported instances of rape were rare. This is not uncommon. The conflict between pro and anti-union militias in Kansas and Missouri in the American Civil war has been described as being a form of brutal conflict ‘exceeding anything else in the war’, and mainly effected civilians. However, like in Ireland in 1919-21 instances of rape rarely occurred, despite the Kansas - Missouri conflict being on a both a greater scale and displaying much fiercer brutality than the Irish conflict.¹⁰⁶ But oddly enough British officers and troops were accused of raping Russian women in the Crimean war.¹⁰⁷ Presumably the British soldiers felt that so far from home they would not be held responsible, while the guerrillas in Missouri may have been subject to communal retribution. This may have been the case in Ireland as the British born members of the crown forces were still technically operating within the United Kingdom and with English speaking people. On the other hand the rape, notably, of black South African women during the second Anglo-Boer war by British soldiers was reported.¹⁰⁸ This would suggest the further troops were from home or more ‘foreign’ the surroundings, made them more likely to engage in series transgressions.

¹⁰³ Ibid, p. 197.

¹⁰⁴ See Leeson, *The Black and Tans*.

¹⁰⁵ Ó Ruairc, *Truce*, p.45.

¹⁰⁶ James McPherson, *The battle cry of freedom: the civil war era* (Oxford, 1988), p.784.

¹⁰⁷ Orlando Figes, *Crimea. The last crusade* (Oxford, 2010), p. 345.

¹⁰⁸ Tabitha Jackson, *The Boer war* (London, 1999), p. 168.

The issue of hair cutting has not been analysed in the ever increasing historiography of this period. Charles Townshend, T.K. Wilson, John O'Callaghan, D.M. Leeson and Peter Hart have referred to the existence of the practice, as conducted by all sides, but cite it in passing as an example of tactics used and do not take the issue further.¹⁰⁹ The subject has also been conveniently overlooked in the now numerous recently published pro-republican histories of the period. Oddly enough, despite the issue not being written about extensively, it has entered the popular memory of the revolution.

In Ken Loach's 2006 *The wind that shakes the barley* Orla Fitzgerald's character Sinead Sullivan, a Cumann na mBan volunteer, having previously watched her brother being tortured and killed by the Black and Tans for refusing to say his name in English, has her cut off by Black and Tans after a successful IRA ambush. The Tans are shown as vicious thugs who beat and taunt Sinead whilst tearing her hair out and burning her home. Later on Sinead's lover, Damien, is executed by Free State troops for refusing to give up information about his fellow IRA men. Sinead goes through tremendous physical and emotional suffering throughout the film for her loyalty and her friends and family's loyalty to the Republic. Despite this suffering Sinead does not give up her principles and remains a proud Irish republican. Sinead and the people around her can be seen as almost the living embodiment of the Republic and representative of the suffering of all those who defended it.

On the other hand in 1972 in David Lean's *Ryan's Daughter*, set in the west coast of Ireland during the Irish war of independence, Sarah Miles' character, Rosy Ryan, also has her hair cut off. Rosy, a publican's daughter, is a beautiful, adventurous yet innocent young woman eager to escape the closed minded and rustic environment in which she lives. Disappointed with her intellectual yet rather aloof husband Charles Shaughnessy, played by Robert Mitchum, Rosy begins a passionate affair with a handsome young British officer. The cruel and vicious townspeople find out and round on Rosy tearing off her clothes and cutting off her hair. Rosy's vanity and cruelty towards some people around her make her hard to like as character. However, her decision to have an affair is presented as the product of boredom and the desire of any person for romance and intimacy rather than a type of rejection or treason to Ireland. The townspeople do not see it that way and come off as cruel and narrow minded. In my own view both Loach and Lean present equally valid interpretations of the issue.

¹⁰⁹ Townshend, *The republic*, p.170; Wilson, *Frontiers of violence*, p.76; O'Callaghan, *Revolutionary Limerick*, p. 173; Hart, *The IRA & its enemies*, p. 310.

The attacks against women highlighted here should not be looked at in isolation but rather as a part of a broader pattern of violence and intimidation in the Irish revolution. In 1919-20 the IRA put up notices, across Ireland, warning people of the consequences of dealing with the RIC or British army. The IRA would also put up notices naming business people who did not heed their warnings. In late 1920 and 1921 the IRA began to label their civilian victims with placards proclaiming 'Spies and informers beware'. These tactics were designed to ensure others would not inform. Very real examples were presented of what happened to those who did not come into line with their revolution. Likewise, the crown forces by burning and stealing the property of republicans and their families and often simply members of the broad nationalist population were giving a clear message to republicans and their supporters of the consequences of their actions. Women with bruised faces and a few remaining tufts of hair were likewise intended to be a message to other women of either the very real dangers of associating with the RIC and on the other side of the very real dangers of being in any way connected to the IRA. It is necessary to recognise the shame and humiliation that must have been felt by the victims of these attacks, however. It is just as necessary to recognise the fear and horror these attacks must have created in the minds of dozens if not hundreds of other women across Ireland.

Chapter five. IRA interactions with civilians in 1920.

Kerry 1918-1919, initial escalation of violence and the role of civilian opponents

The thesis, to this point, has been largely thematic: exploring issues around the conceptualisation of civilians and combatant-civilian interactions in the form of policing and violence against women, it is now to consider civilian-combatant interactions in the context of the actual conflict. This chapter looks at the development of the IRA's military campaign over the year 1920, assessing aspects such as the slow implementation of guerrilla tactics, how the level of implementation varied from place to place most likely due to personalities involved and the choice of targets. This is followed by a similar analysis of the IRA's interactions/interference over the same period, similarly, looking at how the interference/intimidation was implemented and how it differed from area to area. The chapter concludes with a quantitative analysis, drawn from available contemporaneous documentation, to reveal the fluctuations and discrepancies between the two strands of the IRA's campaign.

The IRA's military campaign that developed in Kerry reflected a pattern that occurred in the other counties with proactive IRA units, notably Cork and Tipperary, specifically - the sporadic development of violence in 1919 and 1920, resulting in IRA activists becoming known to the authorities. The activists then had to go on the run and form flying columns creating the rapid escalation of IRA violence in 1921. This regular military or guerrilla campaign was accompanied by an almost consistent campaign against those civilians who were, perceived as, opponents. This campaign ranged from threats and assaults in 1920 to the use of lethal violence in 1921. This chapter examines this process in relation to the year 1920 in Kerry.

The starting point for the IRA's campaign is usually given to be 1919 and the Soloheadbeg ambush in south Tipperary. It might surprise some to learn that it was, in fact, Kerry IRA units in 1918 that set a model for escalation that would be followed by much of the country in 1919 and 1920. Richard Mulcahy was sceptical of the shooting of policemen in 1918-1919 fearing it would alienate the people, hoping instead they could be 'led gently into open war'.¹ In opposition to this a number of radicals in the IRA decided to push the pace forward. They were based in south Tipperary, around Fermoy, west Cork and Kerry.

In Kerry some Volunteers were anxious to initiate a conflict regardless of official instructions. In January 1918 a group of Volunteers from the north Kerry Ballylongford,

¹ Maryann Gialanella Valiulis, *Portrait of a revolutionary: General Richard Mulcahy and the founding of the Irish state* (Dublin, 1992), p.39.

Moyvane and Ballydonoghue Companies led by Brian O’Grady and Eddie Carmody, ‘raided farmhouses in the area and collected a number of shotguns’; according to Brian O’Grady twenty five shot guns were collected.² The incident had no authorisation but showed particular resolve, and its leader Brian O’Grady together with Eddie Carmody would go on to take an active role in the subsequent conflict. These raids seem to have been followed up as in April 1918 it was reported that there were a ‘great number of raids for arms’ in the Listowel district.³

Raiding for arms would become relatively common, across much of the country, but the dynamics altered entirely in April. On 13 April 1918 Gortalea RIC barracks, near the town of Ballymacelligott east of Tralee, was attacked by local Volunteers Tom McEllistirm and John Cronin. The barracks was defended by two constables. The volunteers almost managed to capture the barracks but two RIC men returned to the barracks from patrol and drove the attackers off. One constable was wounded while two Volunteers were killed.⁴ The two Volunteers were John Brown and Richard Laide.⁵ McEllistirm would later maintain that the raid was for the purpose of collecting arms and they had no desire to kill anyone.⁶ McEllistirm makes an interesting point here. Dan Breen, on the other hand, would maintain that the main intention of the Soloheadbeg ambush was to kill the RIC men rather than capture the gelignite they were guarding.⁷ The gelignite was an added bonus. Even if McEllistirm never intended to kill anyone at Gortalea he and his colleagues, presumably, wanted to eventually use the weapons they intended to capture – perhaps McEllistirm wanted to demonise the RIC men who had killed his fellow Volunteers. Whatever the case it resulted in more killings, making McEllistirm’s comment a moot point.

The incident had a direct sequel. On 14 June 1918, two of the defenders of the barracks, Sergeants Fallon and Boyle were present at the coroner’s inquest, in Tralee, into the deaths at Gortalea. After the inquest the two were fired upon by McEllistirm and Cronin. Boyle and Fallon escaped without being injured.⁸

Cronin and McEllistirm were both reprimanded by GHQ for their actions.⁹ But events like the Gortalea and the subsequent shootings in Tralee reflect Peter Hart’s view that ‘the will to

² Brian O’Grady, BMH, WS, 1390.

³ CI, MR, Apr. 1918, County of Kerry, TCD BL, CO 904/105.

⁴ IG, MR, Apr, 1918, CO 904/105.

⁵ Tim Horgan, *Dying for the cause: Kerry’s republican dead* (Cork, 2015), pp.244-46.

⁶ Thomas McEllistirm, BMH, WS, 882.

⁷ Paul Bew, ‘Moderate nationalism and the Irish revolution 1916-1923’, *The Historical Journal*, Volume 42, No. 3 (September, 1999), p. 737.

⁸ CI, MR, Jun. 1918, County of Kerry, TCD BL, CO 904/106; Horgan, *Dying for the cause*, p. 246.

⁹ Peter Browne, BMH, WS, 1110.

act was the first main escalatory mechanism', the first act would be followed by the IRA seeking out further targets, becoming known to the authorities and having to become full time activists to avoid arrest.¹⁰ Joost Augusteijn came to a similar conclusion writing 'a few violent actions with the crown forces resulted in a chain of violent event'.¹¹ This pattern matches McEllistrim and Cronin's career. Gortalea was essentially unfinished business and left both McEllistrim and Cronin seeking out revenge for their fallen comrades. Through this they became known to the authorities and then eventually having to go on the run and form a flying column. McEllistrim felt after a certain period they no longer had a choice: 'we had to be active' to avoid arrest,¹² ultimately resulting in becoming full time guerrillas. David Fitzpatrick has described the Flying Columns that emerged as 'an agglomeration of expedients by men intent on evading capture and securing arms'.¹³ McEllistrim and Cronin would go on to be involved in most of the major attacks on the crown forces in the County. But it all began with a willingness to act that started with the attack at Gortalea.

McEllistrim and Cronin's story mirrors, almost exactly, the careers of their more famous comrades Séamus Robinson, Séan Treacy, Dan Breen and Séan Hogan after the Soloheadbeg attack, almost a year later. They also match those of Fermoy's Liam Lynch and Michael Fitzgerald. However, it was Kerry that set the standard, a year before, for the rest of the country. All these men were standards around which other IRA men would coalesce resulting in escalation. The presence of strong willed and proactive leaders is usually a requisite in the development of guerrilla insurgency. It has been suggested that much of the success of the Missouri pro-Confederate guerrillas was thanks to brutal but effective leadership qualities of William Quantrill.¹⁴ Similarly, it has also been said that the success of Boer guerrillas was down to an inspiring and motivated leader.¹⁵ These men provided both a group others could flock to and their actions inspired others to engage in similar activities.

The IRA's campaign was not orchestrated by a few dedicated guerrilla fighters alone. In June 1918, in south Kerry, another precedent for later republican action was being set. An attempt at a boycott of Mr William Murphy, a shopkeeper in Farranfore, for refusing to sign an anti-conscription pledge was taking place. According to the police 'notices were posted calling on

¹⁰ Hart, *The IRA at war 1916-1923*, p. 85.

¹¹ Augusteijn, *From public defiance to guerrilla warfare*, p.120.

¹² Thomas McEllistrim, MSP. 34, REF840.

¹³ David Fitzpatrick, 'Militarism in Ireland, 1900-1922' in Thomas Bartlett and Keith Jeffreys (eds), *A military history of Ireland* (Cambridge, 1996), p. 402.

¹⁴ Albert Castel, 'Quantrill's Bushwhackers: a case study in partisan warfare' in John T. Hubbell (ed), *Battles lost and won: essays in civil war history* (Connecticut, 1975), pp. 176-7.

¹⁵ Fransjohan Pretorius, *Life on commando during the Anglo-Boer war 1899-1902* (Cape Town, 1999), p.193.

people to boycott him'. At the same time a boycott was attempted against Mr James Talbot, a farmer from near Killarney, for being friendly with soldiers and supplying them with 'necessities'.¹⁶

The next month, the boycotts had spread to north Kerry, a Mr W. Hill, a land agent, in Listowel was boycotted 'by all the shops' in the town for his connections with the crown forces. In nearby Ballyheigue a boycott was being attempted against a farmer Thomas Bolger for having supplied with military with milk and eggs. The police noted that both Bolger and William Murphy were Protestants.¹⁷ The boycotts proved unsuccessful, and all eventually petered out, but they were as symbolic as Gortalea. Gortalea set a precedent for the development of IRA guerrilla activity, similarly the boycotts set a precedent for civilian intimidation, which, as shall be seen, became, in 1920, more common than regular guerrilla warfare.

After Sinn Féin's election success in December 1918 their MPs, as they had promised to do refused to sit in Westminster, and set up Dáil Éireann in January 1919 and a nascent Republic slowly came into being. Together with the campaign to create a viable state a military campaign also developed. Seamus Robinson, of the active south Tipperary IRA, reflected that 'the Dáil declared that the war was still on from 1172. It was cleverly and clandestinely left to circumstances to re-open active armed opposition'.¹⁸ *An t-Óglác*, the Volunteers' newspaper, declared in February 1919, that Volunteers 'must contemplate the possibilities of offensive as well as defensive action'. But, crucially, also warned all civilians with connection to the British administration in Ireland that such links were no longer 'safe'.¹⁹ From the outset it appeared that the IRA's campaign was to be double sided – events like Gortalea represented 'the armed opposition' and the boycotts showed it was no longer 'safe' to have connections with the old administration.

In May 1919 *An t-Óglác* suggested 'one piece of wisdom which Irish Volunteers have learnt and always practiced is to choose their own time and place for striking and not to let the enemy choose them for us'.²⁰ The IRA accordingly were always deeply careful about what military opponents they would take on; to a great degree this was motivated by need for self-preservation. David Fitzpatrick concluded in 1977 that for the Columns that emerged 'their obsession was to preserve themselves'.²¹ This view was reflected by the IRA's opponents. The

¹⁶ CI, MR, Jun. 1918, County of Kerry, TCD BL, CO 904/106

¹⁷ CI, MR, Jul. 1918, County of Kerry, TCD BL, CO 904/106

¹⁸ Seamus Robinson, BMH, WS, 1721.

¹⁹ *An t-Óglác*, 1 Feb. 1919.

²⁰ Ibid, 15 May. 1919.

²¹ Fitzpatrick, *Politics and Irish life*, p.181.

commander of the British Army in Ireland, Sir Nevil Macready, felt the actions undertaken by the Columns were ‘generally confined to minor attempts involving little or no risk to themselves and where the odds were wholly on their side’.²² Similarly, the report on the conflict by the 6th Division stated ‘self preservation has always been the first thought of the rebels’.²³ From the outset the IRA made their campaign work for them by selecting what might be considered manageable targets – targets that would not in turn be in a position to inflict heavy casualties on the IRA.

The war that developed was initially and, arguably throughout the conflict, directed against the Royal Irish Constabulary, a force mainly comprised of Irish Catholics before the arrival of the new recruits from Britain in the spring and Summer of 1920. The RIC were the most obvious symbol of the British Government’s presence as an occupying force in Ireland. Charles Townshend has described the RIC as the ‘primary line of defence against armed rebellion’.²⁴ In 1977 David Fitzpatrick described the RIC as ‘the most accessible manifestations of government’ for republicans to target.²⁵ Fitzpatrick’s comment here cannot be entirely substantiated if one considers the revenue service, postal service, department of education and local government services were in fact more ‘accessible’ and without any means of defence – but could not be interpreted as having the same symbolic links to oppression or occupation. The RIC though, through their association with evictions in the Famine and the Land War and the suppression of the Fenians in 1867, were the one arm of the state most associated with British misrule. More than simply the ‘most accessible’ form of government throughout 1918 up until 1923 no one group raised republican ire more than the RIC. *An t-Óglác* declared in April 1920 that

Any Irishman who joins the service of the enemy in the RIC at the present time must be regarded and dealt with as the worst type of traitor. We have no desire to be harsh to those in peaceful times joined through ignorance, not understanding what they did, and who in these days, have shown no special malevolence in the work they are compelled to do against the Irish Republic but there is no excuse for the Irishman who dons the uniform of the enemy for active service against his countrymen at the present time.²⁶

²² Macready, *Annals of an active life*, p.507.

²³ The Irish rebellion in the 6th Divisional area, p. 21.

²⁴ Townshend, *The republic*, p. 7

²⁵ Fitzpatrick, *Politics and Irish life 1913-1923*, p.3.

²⁶ *An t-Óglác*, 15 Apr. 1920.

The 1919-21 conflict to such a large extent being between Irishmen complicates the narrative of it being a ‘war of independence’. Rather, it correlates with some of Bill Kissane’s findings on civil wars – that a civil war often involves armed insurgents seeking to take control of the state or redefine the state. In the case of the IRA they wanted to redefine a portion, but by no means all, of the United Kingdom, that was considered to not truly be a part of the latter.²⁷ But also importantly a civil war can also be partially defined as a conflict between members of the same community.²⁸ This extends to the IRA vs RIC as though the two groups had wildly different political loyalties they shared the same ethno-religious cultural background. And, as will be shown, the IRA were also just as likely to attack civilians with whom they shared the same ethno-religious cultural background.

Despite the deep seated hostility towards the regular RIC, it was not uncommon for informal deals to be reached between RIC men and the IRA. James Cronin from Milltown recalled that in his area ‘The RIC sergeant was a decent type. His name was Whinton. He was a protestant and wanted no trouble in his district’ and accordingly the RIC in Milltown made few arrests.²⁹ Similarly, Ellen McGillicuddy, a member of Cumann na mBan and IRA intelligence officer, who ran a pub in Castleisland was in touch with the local RIC who gave her information on the movements of the Black and Tans.³⁰ Bernard O’Connor, the District Inspector for Dingle, was handing on information to the IRA Intelligence Officer, Tadhg Kennedy.³¹ These show informal but very important links could develop, these were presumably based on people having known each other for years.

In 1919 in Kerry attacks on the police and civilians associated with the crown forces were comparatively rare. Joost Augusteijn has noted a general ‘decline in activity and participation’ throughout 1919.³² There were exceptions, such as William Keane, from Ballylongford, who recalled that during 1919 his company regularly ‘raided people friendly with them [the RIC]’.³³ The main aspect of the IRA’s campaign was the collection of weapons. In the narrative from Bureau statements this policy, seemingly encountered as much support from the civilian population as it did opposition.

²⁷ Kissane, *Nations torn asunder*, p. 34.

²⁸ Ibid, p. 62.

²⁹ James Cronin, BMH, WS, 1000.

³⁰ Ellen McGillicuddy, MSP 34, REF 58065.

³¹ Tadhg Kennedy, BMH, WS, 1413.

³² Augusteijn, *From public defiance to guerrilla warfare*, p.270.

³³ William Keane, MSP, 34 REF 6427.

Cornelius Brosnan recalled that the Newtownsandess Company collected ‘about thirty shotguns in all’ during 1919.³⁴ Peter Browne, the captain of the Scartaglin Company, recalled that most of the guns collected were from people in ‘sympathy’ with the Volunteers. But there were cases ‘where, however, there was any doubt as to the reliability of an owner [to keep them out of British hands], a few armed [and in some cases masked] men visited the house and took possession of the weapons’.³⁵ James Cronin, from Milltown near Kilorglin, recalled that weapons were given up ‘voluntarily’ but the IRA also raided the Godfreys, owners of the ‘big house’ in Milltown.³⁶ Around Tralee Cahill gave instructions for the collection of weapons, most were handed over, apparently, ‘without any fuss’.³⁷ Similarly Paddy Paul Fitzgerald recalled, in Tralee, weapons were given over ‘without any grumbles’.³⁸

In Annascaul Patrick Houlihan, recalled receiving instructions to collect weapons towards the end of 1919 ‘we collected about six or seven guns in raids and some guns were handed to us without having to raid for them’.³⁹ Patrick Lyons, remembered that in Ardferf weapons were collected from people ‘in sympathy’ with the Volunteers.⁴⁰ Timothy Houlihan remembered that in Ballybunion ‘there was not much doing’ in 1919 besides ‘the collection of arms’.⁴¹ According to John Scannell, who was captain of the Volunteer Company in Anabala near Rathmore, all arms collected by the volunteers were given over willingly.⁴² In the Kilorglin area Bertie Scully said some weapons were handed over willingly while others were not.⁴³ Similarly in a joint statement Killarney IRA leaders, Michael Spillane and Michael J. O’Sullivan, recalled: ‘friendly farmers yielded up their shotguns without protest. Loyalists were compelled to surrender their privately owned arms and were generally too scared to protest’.⁴⁴ In Sneem, a number of people, including the local Parish priest were reluctant to hand over their weapons, the priest was reportedly ‘unfriendly afterwards to the IRA’.⁴⁵ In Ballymacelligott, according to Thomas McEllistram, weapons were mainly taken from the houses of ‘ex-British army men’ and ‘unionist houses’.⁴⁶

³⁴ Cornelius Brosnan, BMH, WS, 1123.

³⁵ Peter Browne, BMH, WS, 1110.

³⁶ James Cronin, BMH, WS, 1000.

³⁷ Michael Doyle, BMH, WS, 1038.

³⁸ Patrick P. Fitzgerald, BMH, WS, 1079.

³⁹ Patrick Houlihan, BMH, WS, 959.

⁴⁰ Patrick Lyons, BMH, WS, 1166.

⁴¹ Timothy Houlihan, BMH, WS, 969.

⁴² John Scannell, BMH, WS, 1114.

⁴³ Bertie Scully, BMH, WS, 788.

⁴⁴ Michael Spillane, Michael J. O’Sullivan, BMH, WS, 132, 862.

⁴⁵ Michael Teehan, BMH, WS, 961.

⁴⁶ Thomas McEllistram, MSP, 34 REF 840.

Patrick McKenna, recalled that in the Ardfert Battalion ‘each company in the Battalion was engaged collecting all arms in civilian hands. Most of these were shotguns and were handed over without any trouble. In cases where people were hostile, we raided their houses and seized their shotguns’.⁴⁷ William Mullins, a close associate of Cahill’s in the Tralee IRA maintained that receipts were issued for all the weapons that were seized.⁴⁸ Volunteers in the Cahirciveen district took weapons from ‘loyalists’ houses’.⁴⁹ But Around Castlegregory weapons were handed over to the Volunteers ‘without any fuss’.⁵⁰

No consistent narrative emerges, but what appears obvious is that willingness to hand over weapons was only a little more common than unwillingness. This arguably reflects the conclusions of chapter one of there being a general feeling among IRA veterans that while they had considerable support from civilians they also faced consistent opposition. This recognition of a lack of universal support also helps explain the levels of violence against civilians that is explored below.

Daniel P. O’Sullivan recalled a type of incident in 1919 that would become a common type of occurrence in the subsequent years:

there was an old women from a place...[called] Lounihan out in the country, housekeeping for the RIC in Kilgarvan. She lived in a house besides the barracks. She was ordered to leave her job and go home, but she refused. I was ordered to get two Volunteers and take her home by force if necessary. We went into the house about 1 a.m. and woke her up nice and easy and took her home to her son. We warned the son that if he let his mother return to the RIC he would be shot.⁵¹

As 1920 came around a willingness to use the weapons collected and attack the much vilified RIC occurred.

Regular military action by the IRA Spring –Autumn 1920

In Cork and Tipperary through 1919 unauthorised attacks began to occur, and while Gortalea set a standard it was followed on by the Kerry IRA. In January 1920 GHQ gave authorisation to all units to attack the police but in Townshend’s words ‘GHQ may have declared war on

⁴⁷ Patrick McKenna, BMH, WS, 1205.

⁴⁸ William Mullins, BMH, WS, 801.

⁴⁹ Denis Daly, Paidraig O’Conchubair, Michael Breathnach, BMH, WS, 786.

⁵⁰ Patrick O’Shea, BMH, WS, 1144.

⁵¹ Daniel P. O’Sullivan, BMH, WS, 1191.

paper but in terms of encouraging actual violence it was cautious'.⁵² For instance an IRA action under Liam Lynch to disarm a group of British troops, in September 1919 in Fermoy, was only authorised on the condition that there was to be no killing.⁵³ Mulcahy was correct as many among the Volunteers, let alone amidst the general public, did not want to see violence, he also wanted to preserve as many active Volunteers in the field by avoiding Volunteer casualties.

In 1919 Kerry seems to conform to Augusteijn's view that the year was generally marked by a 'decline' in Volunteer activity. As said, Kerry did set a standard – a standard that was not followed up on. 1919 progressed with Tipperary and Cork being responsible for the lion's share of Volunteer activities, with Kerry slipping further and further behind. The violent action in these two counties was, however, began to convince GHQ to develop a less cautious approach. Florrie O'Donoghue, the adjutant for the Cork No.1 Brigade, considered that it was the level of activity by the Cork and Tipperary brigades that convinced GHQ to authorise nationwide attacks on the RIC in January 1920.⁵⁴ The results were startling. Peter Hart, has shown that IRA violence increased dramatically in January 1920.⁵⁵ He characterised, GHQ's authorisation on the use of violence and the subsequent surge in violence in 1920 as amounting to 'the second Rising', in other words the actual starting point for the conflict.⁵⁶ Jeremiah Mee, a constable serving with the RIC in Listowel felt 'until the end of 1919 Kerry, to a large extent, escaped the ground storm; Listowel in particular was comparatively quiet'. 1920 produced a sea change, and though Mee and his colleagues had yet to experience violence 'we realised we were on the edge of a 'war zone' and that the 'zone' was daily extending and at any time might engulf us'.⁵⁷ In Kerry, the authorisation did give considerable impetus to Volunteers, as there was a startling increase in the level of attacks. Kerry activating itself in response to authorisation with GHQ is more than a little ironic when considering the frankly terrible relationship the Kerry IRA would develop with GHQ.

The IRA's campaign in Kerry had limited success and differed in intensity and nature from place to place. Brian Hughes has written of IRA intimidation that it 'could be dramatically different not only from county to county, but district from district'.⁵⁸ This is certainly true in relation to various IRA units' attitudes towards both intimidation and violence in Kerry.

⁵² Townshend, *The republic*, p.78.

⁵³ *Ibid*, p.105.

⁵⁴ *Ibid*, p. 81.

⁵⁵ Hart, *The IRA & its enemies*, p. 73.

⁵⁶ Peter Hart, 'Definition: defining the Irish revolution' in Joost Augusteijn (ed), *The Irish revolution 1913-1923* (New York, 2002), p.23.

⁵⁷ J. Anthony Gaughan (ed) *The memoirs of Constable Jeremiah Mee, RIC* (Kildare, 1975), pp.75-6.

⁵⁸ Hughes, 'Defying the IRA' (Trinity College Dublin, 2014), p.209.

Volunteers from Ballylongford, Rathmore, Ballymacelligott and east Kerry, parts of the Dingle Peninsula and Tralee were eager to use lethal force against the R.I.C and these areas engaged in both lethal IRA violence and intimidation of the civilian population. Volunteers from Cahirciveen, on the other hand, rarely engaged in lethal violence but were consistently intimidating civilians perceived to be opponents, while Killarney Volunteers rarely engaged in lethal violence or intimidation of civilians.

The guerrilla campaign that developed in Kerry was sporadic. On 3 January 1920 Constable Clarke was shot and wounded in Ballylongford.⁵⁹ The next month on 18 Camp barracks, west Kerry, was attacked, led by Castlegregory IRA leader, Tadhg Brosnan – Brosnan becoming something like the west Kerry version of McEllistrim and Cronin. The Camp barracks was not captured or burned but the attack was regarded as a sea change. RIC County Inspector Heard reflected ‘practically all the young men of the county are more or less disloyal but for the attack on Camp barracks their disloyalty has up to the present been of the passive nature so far as attacks on the police are concerned’.⁶⁰

Peter Browne recalled that Cahill and both Brigade and Battalion staffs did not give authorisation for the initial attacks on barracks in the county. Browne felt the officers, such as Cahill, ‘were out of touch with the fighting material’ and that specifically Humphrey Murphy, who was then Brigade Quartermaster, who pushed forward and was responsible for organising the unauthorised attacks.⁶¹ Certain individuals were accredited with the performance of the IRA in certain areas. For instance the Flying Column leader in north Kerry Denis Quille was described as ‘the moving spirit in the north Kerry activities and was primarily responsible for the formation and working of the north Kerry Flying Column’.⁶² Charles Townshend writes the conflict ‘was quite different from most wars which soldiers were acquainted. It was shaped by the determination of a few local leaders, primarily in Tipperary, Cork, Clare, Limerick and Kerry, to strike at the British in any possible way’.⁶³

But attacks on the RIC did not have to involve actually shooting at, let alone killing anyone. On 9th March a Constable Bennett was set upon by a group of IRA men between Causeway and Ballyheigue, who made off with his revolver.⁶⁴ On the 11 April the Lixnaw police hut was

⁵⁹ IG, MR, Jan. 1920, TCD BL, CO 904/111.

⁶⁰ CI, MR, Feb. 1920, County of Kerry, TCD BL, CO 904/111.

⁶¹ Browne, BMH, WS, 1110.

⁶² Denis Quille, MSP, 34 REF 1983.

⁶³ Townshend, *Political Violence in Ireland*, p.332.

⁶⁴ *Cork Examiner*, 10 Mar. 1920.

raided while the police were at Mass.⁶⁵ On 24 July *The Kerryman* reported that while three RIC Constables were drinking in a pub in Ardfert, one had left his rifle placed against the counter. On finishing his drink the Constable found his rifle was gone.⁶⁶ One cannot help but wonder about this particular incident. Perhaps the Constable had come to some understanding with the IRA or perhaps he had agreed to sell the rifle to the IRA? Or maybe some opportunistic IRA men quickly grasped their chance? On 15 September two constables, in plain clothes, travelling to Killarney, from Kilgarvan, by train were held up at Morley's Bridge and deprived of their revolvers and 12 rounds of ammunition.⁶⁷ The IRA party searched the entire train which contained a large number of Irish-Americans, on their holidays, who were, no doubt, rather startled.⁶⁸

A possible explanation for these non-lethal acts could be a general reluctance to take human life. One IRA officer from Mayo recalled 'The RIC contained many decent men whose relations with the people were generally good...The indiscriminate killing of RIC would get a lot of our people against us'.⁶⁹ Some contemporaneous sources seem to suggest that familial connections between the IRA and RIC may have acted as a partial deterrent. In November 1919 the County Inspector G.M. Heard described Kerry as 'a good recruiting ground for the police force and naturally relations of police are scattered over the whole county'.⁷⁰ The next month he said that 'the policy of violence is damaging the Sinn Fein cause in this county... (Kerry) was the best recruiting area...for the RIC consequently the force is very largely related in the county. This has a steadying influence on public opinion in relation to the murder of officials'.⁷¹ Denis Quille reflected on this too saying of the IRA's that 'we didn't handle them [the RIC] properly for their brothers were in the IRA'.⁷² Also Bertie Scully from the south west of the county reflected on the RIC that they were 'driven by circumstance into a situation unforeseen, [they] did not deserve the deaths they got. Neither were we "hard men" nor "gun men" nor "killers", as our reputation built itself up under the circumstances. Very few of us would relish the idea of depriving a human being of his life'.⁷³ A reluctance to take human life was to be found among some IRA men in Kerry but the high levels of lethal violence in the county show it was not a prevailing feeling.

⁶⁵ Weekly Summary, Week ending 10 -17 Apr. 1920, TCD BL, CO 904/148.

⁶⁶ Weekly Summary, Week ending 18 - 25 Jul. 1920, TCD BL, CO 904/148.

⁶⁷ Weekly Summary, Week ending 12 - 19 Sept. 1920, TCD BL, CO 904/149.

⁶⁸ *Cork Examiner*, 18 Sept. 1920.

⁶⁹ Dominic Price, *The flame and the candle: war in Mayo 1919-1924* (Cork, 2012), p.141.

⁷⁰ CI, MR, Nov. 1919, County of Kerry, TCD BL, CO 904/110.

⁷¹ CI, MR, Dec. 1919, County of Kerry, TCD BL, CO 904/110.

⁷² O'Malley, *The men will talk to me: Kerry interviews*, p. 43.

⁷³ Bertie Scully, BMH, WS, 788.

On 13 March Ballybunion barracks was attacked. This was the first incident in which the IRA did damage to the surrounding roads. All roads leading to Ballybunion from Tralee, Listowel and Ballylongford were blocked with felled trees, one Constable was slightly wounded.⁷⁴ On 19 March Gortalea barracks was attacked and completely destroyed by fire.⁷⁵ McEllistrim and Cronin were behind the attack – demonstrating their ever escalating role.⁷⁶ The police surrendered and the IRA arranged for Dr Murphy of Farranfore to attend to the one injured RIC man.⁷⁷

On 1 April a ‘determined attack’ on Scartaglin barracks occurred, without any significant results. Again the attack led by McEllistrim, Cronin and Johnny O’Connor.⁷⁸ And on the same day two constables were fired at in Castleisland and the next day two constables were attacked and disarmed outside the barrack at Causeway. On April 4, in Kerry though not stated where, a house that was intended for use by the RIC was ‘completely destroyed by fire’.⁷⁹

This was occurring alongside a general attack on some elements of the British state. On 8 April Cahill wrote to Géaroid Ó Súilleabháin, Adjutant General GHQ., that the Brigade as following instructions from Headquarters and burning unoccupied barracks. Also, other arms of the British state were being attacked. The income tax offices and customs offices in Tralee were raided and ‘all books and papers were removed and burnt’.⁸⁰ On the 13 April an RIC patrol was fired at in Tralee but no one was hurt.⁸¹ It was also in June that the first Flying Column was set up in Kerry, centered in Ballymacelligott and led by McEllistrim, Cronin and Johnny O’Connor – the latter becoming a particularly involved individual.⁸²

The first major operation of the Tralee IRA occurred in June. On 2 June Fenit barracks, was attacked by an IRA party led by Paddy Paul Fitzgerald. An IRA party established itself in the next house and began a fusillade at two in the morning. The fight lasted two hours and resulted in the IRA succeeding in setting the barracks alight. A Sergeant Murphy and Constable Regan were wounded. A destroyer in Tralee bay, seeing the flames, landed a party of Marines but by then the IRA party had decamped. All roads leading to the barracks were cut.⁸³

⁷⁴ Ibid, 15 Mar. 1920.

⁷⁵ *Cork Examiner*, 26 Mar. 1920.

⁷⁶ Thomas McEllistrim, BMH, WS, 882.

⁷⁷ *The Kerryman*, 27 Mar. 1920.

⁷⁸ Ibid, 2 Apr. 1921; see also Dwyer, *Tans, terror and troubles*, p.186.

⁷⁹ Weekly Summary, Week ending 29 Mar. – 11 Apr. 1920, TCD BL, CO 904/148.

⁸⁰ O/C Kerry No.1 to Adjutant General, 8 Apr. 1920, MAI, CP/A/0494/VIII.

⁸¹ *Cork Examiner*, 20 Apr.1920.

⁸² Thomas McEllistrim, BMH, WS, 882.

⁸³ *Cork Examiner*, 3 Jun. 1920.

On 6 June the IRA attempted to attack the barracks at Brosna in north Kerry and made 'comprehensive and formidable' trenching of the surrounding roads. However, the Abbeyfeale RIC became aware of the operation and managed to arrest six Volunteers before the operation commenced.⁸⁴ *The Kerryman* described the roads blocked 'by felled trees, road gullets, severed wires and telegraph poles'.⁸⁵ On 11 June Newtownsandess barracks was vacated. That evening a party of military fired on a group of IRA men who entered the Barracks as 'the military anticipated the burning of the barracks on its evacuation by the police', three IRA men were captured.⁸⁶

By July across Ireland a total of 400 barracks had been burned together with 50 courthouses.⁸⁷ On 5 July an eight man police patrol was attacked at Causeway but without fatalities. On 11th July Rathmore barracks was attacked resulting in the death of a constable with another constable and sergeant wounded.⁸⁸

On 11 July Farranfore RIC barracks was attacked. The attack lasted forty five minutes but there were no casualties. On 13th July an RIC motor lorry was attacked between Cloghane and Dingle, at Kilmore near Connor Hill, resulting in the death of Constable Roche and Lenihan and Constable Campbell and District Inspector Fallon receiving serious injuries.⁸⁹ The attack was led by Tadhg Brosnan of Castlegregory, Paddy Paul Fitzgerald and Dan Jeffers of Tralee with the intention of obtaining arms.⁹⁰

On 19 August a military party of thirteen men were travelling in a lorry back to Tralee from Dingle, where they had been delivering supplies to the military outpost in the town, when they were ambushed just outside of Annascaul. The IRA party, led by Tadhg Brosnan,⁹¹ initially called on the lorry to halt but when the order was not obeyed the IRA opened fire. Four troops received light wounds but the military party surrendered shortly after the shooting began. The IRA took the soldiers' arms and ammunition and commandeered a passing car which was used to bring the wounded troops to the Hospital in Dingle. The nine other troops who had surrendered were given their tea in a nearby farmer's house. They were then taken to Dingle where they were let go. The military lorry was also burned.⁹²

⁸⁴ Ibid, 8 Jun. 1920.

⁸⁵ *The Kerryman*, 12 Jun.1920.

⁸⁶ Idem.

⁸⁷ Townshend, *The republic*, p.116.

⁸⁸ IG, MR, Jul. 1920, TCD BL, CO 904/112.

⁸⁹ *The Kerryman*, 17 Jul. 1920.

⁹⁰ MacEoin, *Survivors*, p.356.

⁹¹ Patrick O'Neill, BMH, WS, 1049.

⁹² *Cork Examiner*, 20 Aug. 1920.

Outside of perhaps the attacks at Annascaul, Fenit and Gortalea, in terms of military success the IRA's achievements can be best described as limited. Attacks were irregular with far from spectacular results. Townshend has written of the IRA attacks in 1920 that 'the few successful attacks were heavily outnumbered by failures'.⁹³ No barracks attacks was entirely successful besides Gortalea. The ambush at Annascaul has no sense of bitterness or brutality to it. What is evident is the recurrence of certain individuals in these attacks. The attacks can also be accredited to McEllistrim and Cronin between Castleisland and Tralee, Tadhg Brosnan in the Dingle Peninsula, though a close associate of the cautious Cahill, Paddy Paul Fitzgerald seems to have involved himself as much as possible, Eddie Carmody and his men in Ballylongford in north Kerry, the Volunteers in Rathmore led by Manus Moynihan who seems to have been determined to keep attacking Rathmore barracks. This reflects Augusteijn's conclusions that violent actions resulted in an ensuing 'chain of violent events'.⁹⁴ Not only did certain Volunteers want to maintain a certain level of activity, it also set a precedent and indeed a challenge to other IRA units to get their act together. Augusteijn writes that as the violence of the radicals became more and more common it effectively removed the inhibitions of others and produced more radicals. He writes that 'escalation...significantly lowers the restraints for others'.⁹⁵ After McEllistrim and Cronin had started, it was easier for Carmody, Moynihan, Brosnan and Fitzgerald to follow suit.

But not all Volunteers seemed to have been that pushed. Again much of this must come down to the personalities involved – the Volunteers, particularly, in the Ivereagh Peninsula and Killarney were reluctant to actually fight. Other possible factors may have been a restraining influence in the community such as a Parish Priest. The Ivereagh Peninsula is also both the most mountainous and isolated part of the County and the crown forces did not have a significant presence outside of Cahirciveen. The RIC might have been playing it safe by avoiding any serious patrolling. However, an unwillingness to fight is a common feature in irregular conflicts. In the Second Anglo-Boer War, many Boer commandoes refused to fight – disobeying orders from above, and that only a hardcore of dedicated men willing to fight developed. As in Ireland a picture emerges of a few dedicated fighters with large numbers of inactive volunteers.⁹⁶

⁹³ Townshend, *The republic*, p. 114.

⁹⁴ Augusteijn, *From public defiance to guerrilla warfare*, p.120.

⁹⁵ Joost Augusteijn, 'Accounting for the emergence of violent activism among Irish revolutionaries, 1916-21', in *Irish Historical Studies*, Vol. 35, No. 139 (Spring, 2007), p.337.

⁹⁶ Pretorius, *Life on commando*, pp.196-7.

The IRA, in fact, attacked their opponents between January and November 1920 thirty seven times, seven of which occurred in the offensive of late October early November which resulted in the aggressive counter-response by the crown forces. At the same time a more consistent form of IRA action was developing involving less risk.

A frequent occurrence was raiding trains for goods consigned to the military. On 29 April, late at night, two wagons in Dingle Railway station containing military uniforms, tents and buckets were taken and burned by the IRA.⁹⁷ On 7 May a military water purifying wagon was destroyed while in storage in Dingle railway station.⁹⁸ On 5 June 20 drums of petrol consigned to the military at Ballymullen, were taken from the Great Southern and Railway station in Tralee.⁹⁹ John O’Riordan, who was a member of the Fianna in Tralee, recalled that in such incidents the IRA would retain any military equipment that might be of use such as tents, bedding, trench tools, first aid equipment and simply burned what remained. O’Riordan said there was never any trouble when such incidents occurred as the entire staff working for the railways in and around Tralee were either all members of the IRA or sympathetic.¹⁰⁰ In a reference for Margaret Pendy, an IRA informer working as a telephonist in Tralee telephone exchange, Jim Bailey, station master, wrote ‘the whole [Tralee-Dingle railway line] railway was controlled by a committee who were strictly sympathetic to the [republican] movement’.¹⁰¹ Similarly, in north Kerry the IRA would raid trains at the Kilmorna station as the station manager ‘was friendly and always assisted the IRA on these occasions’ according to local IRA man James Costello.¹⁰²

Military Petrol was a common target for the IRA, particularly in Tralee. On 9 September a goods train left Tralee for Killarney with a large supply of military provisions. The train was held up two miles outside of Tralee and the military goods were taken away. The same evening in the town about 100 gallons of petrol consigned to the military was taken out from the Tralee railway station and poured out on the side of the road.¹⁰³ On 20 September a large quantity of military supplies were seized by the IRA while in storage at the Great Southern and Western Railway station in Tralee.¹⁰⁴ On 16th September two tanks of petrol belonging to the military in

⁹⁷ *The Kerryman*, 1 May. 1920.

⁹⁸ *Idem*.

⁹⁹ *Ibid*, 5 Jun. 1920.

¹⁰⁰ John O’Riordan, BMH, WS, 1117.

¹⁰¹ Margaret Pendy, MSP, 34 REF 50762.

¹⁰² James Costello, BMH, WS, 1091.

¹⁰³ *Cork Examiner*, 11 Sept. 1920.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid*, 20 Oct. 1920.

storage in the Great Southern and Western Railway station, in Tralee, were opened by the IRA and the contents spilled over the ground.

But more menacing and serious attacks were also beginning to occur. Notably attacking RIC men home on leave. It seems that early 1920 saw the IRA around Cahirciveen being particularly aggressive in this regard. In March 1920, in a joint statement, by Denis Daly, Pádraig Ó Conchubair and Michael Breathnach recalled that

an RIC man named Martin Clifford home on leave in the Mastergeehy Company area, was suspected from a conversation overheard in a publichouse, of being engaged in spotting. He used frequent the local RIC Barracks too. The O/C Mastergeehy Company gave an order to have him ambushed and this was done and he was wounded in the hip by a shotgun. He was taken away and recovered and continued to serve in the RIC. He never visited the district again.¹⁰⁵

On 25 March the home of Constable Lemon who was home on leave with a broken leg, in Ballyheigue, was entered by six armed and masked men. They took his handcuffs ordered him to leave Ballyheigue before the end of the week.¹⁰⁶ The most drastic incident occurred in west Kerry, on 14th April Constable Paddy Foley, while home on leave in Annascaul, was attending the fair in the town but failed to return home. On 16, however, his body was found at the Deelis Creamery near Camp, to the north east of Annascaul. The local people were reluctant to give any information to the police on the incident.¹⁰⁷

On 15 April Constable Martin Clifford, who was stationed at Cahir, was shot at, while home on leave, at Derrinaden on his bicycle near Waterville.¹⁰⁸ Clifford died of his wounds. On 28 June Constable Rael, while home on leave at Ardahan, near Ardfert, was shot at in the evening while walking to visit his sister. Rael received very light wounds.¹⁰⁹

On 5 September two brothers, who were both in the RIC, returned to Glaghane, on the Dingle Peninsula, to bury a relative. While having their tea in a neighbour's house a group of Volunteers came to the house to intercept the brothers. The two got away, together with a John Moriarty whose father the house belonged to. The IRA fired on the men killing Moriarty.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁵ Denis Daly, Pádraig Ó Conchubair, Michael Breathnach, BMH, WS, 786.

¹⁰⁶ Weekly Summary, Week ending 30 Feb. – 27 Mar. 1920, TCD BL, CO 904/148.

¹⁰⁷ Weekly Summary, Week ending 10 -17 Apr. 1920, TCD BL, CO 904/148.

¹⁰⁸ *Cork Examiner*, 19 Apr. 1920.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid*, 30 Jun. 1920.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid*, 8 Sept. 1920.

Similarly, several months later in Dingle on 11 September *The Kerryman* reported that a Constable Granville, stationed in Waterford, but on a holiday in Dingle was kidnaped.¹¹¹

Attacking men home on leave and out of uniform, and usually not armed, showed an IRA willing to engage in irregular war and adopt tactics to suit their capabilities. It was also part of a wider campaign against people without weapons that was as much an element of their campaign as guerrilla warfare.

Irregular military activity directed against civilians. Spring –autumn 1920

Together with the development of guerrilla warfare in the county, attacks on or instances of intimidation of civilians with connections to the RIC began to occur. Charles Townshend has noted that intimidation of civilians was necessary for the boycott of the police to work, showing that the boycott clearly did not have universal support.¹¹² Accordingly from an early stage civilians connected to the British administration were singled out for intimidation initially in Brian Hughes' term 'non-lethal ways'.¹¹³ And, as mentioned earlier, it appeared from the outset that the campaign orchestrated by the IRA would be double sided.

In early 1919 Seamus Robinson posted a proclamation, in South Tipperary, that called 'on every person in the pay of England (magistrates, jurors etc) who helps England to rule this country or who assists in any way the upholders of foreign government in this south riding of Tipperary will be deemed to have forfeited his life'.¹¹⁴ As Townshend has noted 'coercion was, ultimately, a vital element in the state building process'.¹¹⁵ This is seen in the fact that such IRA non-lethal acts against civilians were, in 1920 at least in Kerry, more common, than standard military or guerrilla operations.

In May 1920 *An t-Óglách* outlined this was necessary as the RIC were able to obtain information from civilians – and it was crucial that this stopped.

The ostracisation of Irishmen in the enemy police service must be carried out vigorously and effectively. Barrack servants, friendly tradesmen and all in social intercourse with these men should be boycotted. One of the principal aims of the enemy forces of occupation has been his intelligence department. To-day it is our principle weapon against them. The Irish members of the enemy police were

¹¹¹ *The Kerryman*, 11 Sept. 1920.

¹¹² Townshend, *The republic*, p.160.

¹¹³ Hughes, *Defying the IRA*, p. 209.

¹¹⁴ Robinson, BMH, WS, 1721.

¹¹⁵ Townshend, *The republic*, p. 130.

specially trained in the art of extracting information and making observations under the guise of social intercourse. To-day for the first time in many years their activities in this respect are rendered largely ineffective in a considerable portion of the country, and they can be rendered wholly ineffective if the boycott and social ostracism is rendered sufficiently rigorous.¹¹⁶

The idea of ostracising civilians connected to the crown forces had long been an aspect of republican thinking. During the conscription crisis Ernest Blythe wrote in *An t-Óglác* that

We must recognise that anyone, civilian or soldier, who assists directly or by connivance in this this time [of the conscription crisis] against us, merits no more consideration than a wild beast...the man who drives a police car or assists in the transport of army supplies, all these having assisted the enemy must be shot or otherwise destroyed with the least possible delay.¹¹⁷

Thankfully, the extremes Blythe called for were never reached but such sentiments were acted upon. IRA attacks on civilians are, understandably, a controversial topic within the historiography.

Sinead Joy in her 2005 work, *The IRA in Kerry 1916-1921*, wrote ‘it seems perceived (civilian) opponents of the IRA bore the brunt of volunteer retribution’.¹¹⁸ But Joy also concludes that in Kerry ‘it is to the rebel’s credit, however, that there were not too many instances of serious wrongdoing or crime’.¹¹⁹ Augusteijn writes that the boycott of the police presented a problem for the movement as so many people had professional links to the police.¹²⁰ And not wanting to receive a negative press and ‘to secure grassroots support meant that they rarely inflicted serious injuries’.¹²¹ In rallying public support, for events like republican hunger strikes, he writes ‘sympathy was, however, extensive and little coercion was necessary to persuade most people’.¹²² And that ‘only mild persuasion’ was necessary on the part of republicans to get civilians to support their cause.¹²³ Similarly, Marie Coleman writes of the IRA’s campaign in County Longford that ‘the overall impression which one gets of the civilian population...was that the majority was either sympathetic or at least passive’.¹²⁴ Are Joy,

¹¹⁶ *An t-Óglác*, 15 May. 1920.

¹¹⁷ Townshend, *Political Violence in Ireland*, p. 320.

¹¹⁸ Joy, *The IRA in Kerry 1916-1921*, p.64.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid*, p.55.

¹²⁰ Augusteijn, *From public defiance*, p.273.

¹²¹ *Ibid*, pp. 277-8.

¹²² *Ibid*, p.270.

¹²³ *Ibid*, p.268.

¹²⁴ Coleman, *County Longford*, p.153.

Coleman and Augusteijn's assessments' accurate? The extent to which the IRA would frequently attack civilians puts some doubt on these claims. Peter Hart and Fearghal McGarry, on the other hand, consider, in McGarry's term the 'suppression of internal [civilian] dissent' as a defining factor of the IRA's campaign as the more straightforward military or guerrilla elements.¹²⁵ In Peter Hart's words

Throughout Ireland, political mobilisation, guerrilla warfare and state repression radicalised all kinds of communal boundaries, leaving those outside the local majority vulnerable to victimisation...Everywhere the desire was to impose unity and uniformity on one's 'own people' and to establish or maintain control of territory seen as 'ours'.¹²⁶

In Hart's view some of those who were most 'vulnerable' were people in, what became the Free State, who had connections to the old administration. Perhaps there is some regional variation based on the presence of religious minorities that informs these different conclusions. For instance, Augusteijn has argued that in counties on the western seaboard with almost entirely Catholic populations the IRA had a more homogenous relationship with the civilian population.¹²⁷ Augusteijn writes that in Mayo, like Kerry on the western seaboard with an insignificant protestant minority, the I.R.A had majority support and the shooting of civilians suspected as spies proved difficult as they invariably came from within the I.R.A's own community. In fact in Mayo no civilians were shot as spies.¹²⁸ This is unlike Cork, the subject of Hart's research, where there was a significant protestant minority, or indeed in Monaghan –the subject of McGarry's research where considerable numbers of Protestants were shot as informers. Where does Kerry fit in with these conclusions? Consistently civilians were targeted by the IRA but it rarely seems to be on the basis of religion, rather it was for having a connection with the crown forces.

Together with the development of guerrilla tactics 1920 saw the consistent suppression of perceived civilian opponents. John Joe Sheehy would later say that 'constant harassment was now our motto' in 1920 and this clearly extended to civilians.¹²⁹ Kalyvas has noted that the intimidation of potential civilian opponents is a key component of the campaign of irregular troops or insurgents 'In practice, they [the insurgents] are looking for active collaboration from

¹²⁵ McGarry, *Eoin O'Duffy*, p. 70; Hart, *The IRA & its enemies*, particularly Chapter 12 'Taking it out on the protestants' and Chapter 13 'Spies and informers'.

¹²⁶ Hart, 'Definition' in Augusteijn (ed), *The Irish revolution*, p.26.

¹²⁷ Augusteijn, *From public defiance*, p.291.

¹²⁸ Ibid, p.291.

¹²⁹ MacEoin, *Survivors*, p.356.

a small number of dedicated supporters, and passive but exclusive collaboration from the population at large; they also seek to prevent civilians collaborating with their rivals'.¹³⁰ Accordingly, much of the IRA's energies in the county were from preventing civilians having any type of association with the crown forces.

Early 1920 set an ugly precedent. On 16 March the *Cork Examiner* reported that both the Cahirdaniel and Ballinaskelligs barracks had been closed down and both RIC garrisons were transferred to Cahirciveen.¹³¹ On 16 March Cornelius Kelly, the caretaker of Cahirdaniel Court house, was murdered by the IRA in his home. The RIC who had recently evacuated their Cahirdaniel barracks had left their bicycles in Kelly's care. Four days earlier the barracks had been broken into and windows and shelves were broken.

Cornelius' wife Bridget later told an inquest into her husband's death what happened.

I remember the night of the 16th. About 9 O'Clock my husband, my brother and my child were sitting at the fireside. My husband was sitting on a chair and I was combing my child's hair when the front door slammed in and suddenly a number of men rushed into the house. There were about six of them there. They were masked and had fawn coats on them. They shouted "Hands up" and some of them said it twice. They carried some kind of firearms...After they came in we put up our hands. I told them not to frighten the child. My husband said "take them" he meant the bicycles that were in the house. There was no reply. I heard click of arms the moment they said "hands up". My husband made no resistance but was shot immediately. He fell across the fire and never spoke afterwards. My brother picked him up. My brother is 29 years my child is 9 years. After the shot was fired the men rushed out with the bicycles. It all happened in a couple of minutes. I sent the child to Mrs Matt O'Connor who went for a priest.¹³²

The killing of Kelly was unusual given both the reluctance of Volunteers on the Ivereagh Peninsula to engage in lethal violence, throughout 1919-21, and also due to the innocent nature of Kelly's work. Other explanations might be some type of local vendetta or simply jittery Volunteers who caused an unintended and horrible accident. We may never know as unfortunately, but perhaps understandably, there is no IRA testimony on the incident.

¹³⁰ Kalyvas, *The logic of violence in civil war*, p.104.

¹³¹ *Cork Examiner*, 16 Mar. 1920.

¹³² *Kerry Weekly Reporter and Commercial Advertiser*, 3 Apr. 1920. I would like to extend my thanks to T. Ryle Dwyer for pointing me in the direction of sources surrounding Cornelius Kelly's death.

Raiding the mails, thankfully, proved more common than murdering caretakers. On 19 March a postman was held up between Scartaglin and Farranfore and all the letters addressed to the police were taken from him.¹³³ This became an almost weekly occurrence.¹³⁴ David MacAlliffe, recalled that on the subject of raiding mails ‘the idea in carrying out raids on the mail was not alone to obtain information we also wanted people to know that the mails were likely to be raided and frighten anyone who might be inclined to give information. After the letters were examined and marked “censored by the IRA” they were left at the post office in Brosna during the night’.¹³⁵ According to James Daly, the captain of the Barraduff company in east Kerry ‘we had a regular crowd in our company area censoring mails [in 1920]...Anything of a suspicious nature was taken by the Battalion Adjutant’.¹³⁶ Postmen were regularly held up.

The following are just a few examples. On 14 June John Foran, a postman, was held up by the IRA at Carrigan between Abbeyfeale and Brosna, and his mail bag taken. The next day the mail bag was found in the garden of the Brosna post office, all registered letters were untouched while others were opened but returned with the addition of ‘Passed by Censor’.¹³⁷ As this was almost a weekly occurrence in 1920 in the county and reported on in the press it gave people an understanding that almost anything they wrote might be read by an audience it was not intended for. As David MacAlliffe noted this was intended to be a warning of the dangers of informing. The report by the 6th Division felt this policy was adopted by the IRA to find people giving information to the Crown and ‘with a view to raiding these people and damaging their property’. The report also rather smugly noted that these raids had little or no effect materially on the crown forces ‘for the simple reason that official correspondence was then being transmitted under military escort through military channels’.¹³⁸

The IRA leadership wanted nothing untoward to occur in these raids on the mail. On 19 June same day the Mallow to Tralee train was held up at Ballybrack outside Killarney, the IRA raiding party retained all official correspondence from the police, and destroyed all income tax forms and military correspondence. The party also found four letters containing payment for the staff at the Cahirciveen cable station. The Castleisland IRA wrote to GHQ saying the money

¹³³ *The Kerryman*, 20 Mar. 1920.

¹³⁴ See figure two.

¹³⁵ David MacAlliffe, BMH, WS, 1139.

¹³⁶ James Daly, BMH, WS, 1111.

¹³⁷ *Cork Examiner*, 15 Jun. 1920.

¹³⁸ The Irish rebellion in the 6th Divisional area, pp. 45-6.

had been ‘commandeered’ as it was government property and asked what to do with it next?¹³⁹ Géaroid Ó Súilleabháin replied that ‘you will have every penny returned. The fact that it is the property of the enemy government does not make it less binding on us to pressure are [sic] morals. Nothing would do more to break this than such an act’.¹⁴⁰

It was not uncommon for Ó Súilleabháin to have to make such demands of the Kerry IRA. In late May O’Sullivan, wrote to Cahill complaining that the house of a Mr Fitzgerald, Rock Lodge, Loughhill, west Limerick was raided by a party of Volunteers, from Newtownsandess, led by a man named Aherne, who took a watch and field glasses. They apparently ‘terrified the women’ in the house.¹⁴¹ The IRA in Kerry were less keen to investigate the incident let alone reprimand those responsible. Cahill replied saying he was in touch with the Listowel Battalion O/C who informed him the Newtownsandess Company were innocent and ‘I am inclined to believe the Captain of the Newtownsandess Coy is Wm Sullivan not Aherne as stated’.¹⁴² Similarly, Paddy Paul Fitzgerald in July 1920 led a raid on a Swedish boat docked at Fenit, and took five shotguns and 5,000 rounds of ammunition. Fitzgerald was reprimanded by GHQ. and made return what he had taken to the apparently indignant Swedes.¹⁴³

Raiding of trains became just as common and was often resented by civilians. Patrick J. McElligott, O/C of the Listowel Battalion recalled:

In the autumn of this year [1920] I with others of the company took part in holding up trains coming in from Limerick on one side and Tralee on the other, in an endeavour to prevent the supply of English Bacon and clothing reaching their destination. This action caused a lot of annoyance and bad feeling among the trades people of the town [Listowel] towards the IRA.¹⁴⁴

This reflects Charles Townshend’s view that; ‘republican military operations undoubtedly ran against the grain of local feeling in many places’ this surely can be extended to non-military operations.¹⁴⁵

Together with the consistent raiding of mails a concerted campaign against those supplying, or associated with, the police also developed in the spring of 1920. Any men suspected of wanting to join the RIC or British army were targeted together with the relative of members of

¹³⁹ Unclear whether O/C Kerry No.2 or Brigade Adjutant to GHQ, 14 Jun. 1921, MAI, CP/A/O495/XVIII.

¹⁴⁰ Adjutant General to O/C Kerry No.2, 17 Jun. 1920, MAI, CP/A/0495/XIX.

¹⁴¹ Adjutant General to O/C Kerry No. 1, 22 (?) 1920, MAI, CP/0494/VIII.

¹⁴² O/C Kerry No.1 to Adjutant General, 16 Jun. 1920, MAI, CP/0494/VIII.

¹⁴³ Paddy Paul Fitzgerald, BMH, WS, 1079.

¹⁴⁴ Patrick J. McElligott, BMH, WS, 1013.

¹⁴⁵ Townshend, *The republic*, p.259.

the crown forces and former members of the crown forces. On an unspecified date in March a Michael Broderick from Listowel, while out walking, was met by six men and made swear he would not join the RIC¹⁴⁶ According to Stephen Fuller, in Killflynn north Kerry, in early 1920 his regular duties included the harassment of people with relatives in the RIC, in the hope that this would persuade them to resign.¹⁴⁷ During the same period, Michael Cooper, from Scartaglin, recalled that regularly 'I went to the parents of those who had sons serving in the RIC asking them to induce them to leave the force'.¹⁴⁸

Instances like the killing of Kelly occurred again but without lethal results – and usually took the form of assaults on men with connections to the crown forces. On the night of 15 March Michael Driscoll, in Dingle, was shot at but not hit. Driscoll was friendly with the police.¹⁴⁹ On 17 June an un-named ex-soldier, living in Churchill, between Fenit and Tralee, was dragged from his home and tarred and feathered. He was apparently 'well known in the district for his actions against Sinn Féiners and the Volunteers' he reputedly also recently attacked an IRA man.¹⁵⁰ On the 11 May, Denis O'Connor an ex-soldier from an unstated location in Kerry, received a letter threatening him with death.¹⁵¹ On 13th July Andrew Quirke, an ex-soldier, was lured by a William Conway, a member of na Fianna, to come to Moyderwell Cross in Tralee. At Moyderwell Cross he was dragged by a number of men to Barrack Lane where he was told 'You want to join the Police, but you won't join them now'. Quirke was badly beaten and left unconscious.¹⁵²

In July Patrick Lyons, from Lixnaw recalled that 'other incidents around this period were the threatening by members of the Company of young men intending to join the RIC'.¹⁵³ On 10 August Richard Johnston, an ex-soldier, was assaulted between Tralee and Blennerville. Johnston was blindfolded, stripped of his clothes, his hands were tied and he was tarred. Johnston later said his assailants called him a 'fly boy' and said he was a spy for the police. Johnston was later taken to Ballymullen, by another ex- soldier called Michael Fitzgerald, where the tar was removed.¹⁵⁴ On 18 June a police patrol outside of Castleisland discovered

¹⁴⁶ Weekly summary, Week ending 29 Mar.- 11 Apr. 1920. TCD BL, CO 904/148.

¹⁴⁷ Stephen Fuller, MSP, 34 REF 6759.

¹⁴⁸ Michael Cooper, MSP, 24 SP 125.

¹⁴⁹ Weekly summary, Week ending 29 Mar. - 11th Apr. 1920. TCD BL, CO 904/148.

¹⁵⁰ *The Kerryman*, 19 Jun. 1920.

¹⁵¹ Weekly Summary, Week ending 16 May. - 23 May. 1920, TCD BL, CO 904/148.

¹⁵² *The Kerryman*, 2 Oct. 1920.

¹⁵³ Patrick Lyons, BMH, WS, 1166.

¹⁵⁴ *The Kerryman*, 14 Aug. 1920.

Edward Rattigan, a retired RIC sergeant, tied to horse and trap blindfolded and wearing women's clothes. Ratigan said he was about to be brought to a Sinn Féin trial.¹⁵⁵

On 8 September James T.J. Murphy, a demobilised army captain, while playing golf on the Tralee Golf Course, was accosted by two men. He was taken away from the course and stripped, blindfolded and tarred. He was then tied to a tree. Murphy had made efforts to join the RIC. The IRA had found evidence of this in Murphy's correspondence, which they had been raiding.¹⁵⁶ Murphy was described by *The Kerryman* as 'well known exponent' of the game of golf.¹⁵⁷ On the incident, Michael O'Leary O/C of the Fianna in Tralee, recalled:

One day in the Autumn of 1920 a Fianna boy named Billy Conway who was serving his time to the tailoring trade, was handed a man's coat to press. In the inside pocket he discovered some papers which, through curiosity, he proceeded to read. Having read them, he hid them on his person and later turned them over to me. The correspondence was a reply to an application for membership of the Auxiliaries, which had been made by an ex-British army officer named Murphy living in Tralee. The following day, with Tommy O'Connor, the Brigade Adjutant, and an IRA man, I removed Murphy from the Golf links to a place a mile outside the town. We then informed the Brigade Vice O/C Joe Melinn, of Murphy's intention to join the RIC and asked for instructions as to his disposal. We were ordered to tie and feather him and tie him to a gate or a pillar on the public road. This we refused to do but offered to shoot him instead. We were then ordered to hand him over to the Company Officer IRA Tom Sheehy, of Oakpark Company. After we handed over our prisoner a very good job was done with the tar bucket, but this did not prevent Murphy becoming a very efficient Auxiliary later.¹⁵⁸

It was also reported on the 24 July that an unnamed ex-soldier was beaten up in Tralee as he was making attempts to join the police.¹⁵⁹ On 24 October Patrick and Daniel Sullivan, Listowel district, were beaten up by members of the IRA for having attempted to join the police. They also cut off their sister's hair and burned a rick of corn that belonged to their father Jeremiah Sullivan, a farmer.¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁵ Ibid, 26 Jun. 1920.

¹⁵⁶ Weekly Summary, Week ending 5- 12 Sept. 1920, TCD BL, CO 904/149.

¹⁵⁷ *The Kerryman*, 11 Sept.1920.

¹⁵⁸ Michael O'Leary, BMH, WS, 1167.

¹⁵⁹ Weekly Summary, Week ending 18-25 Jul. 1920, TCD BL, CO 904/148.

¹⁶⁰ Weekly Summary, Week ending 24 – 31 Oct. 1920, TCD BL, CO 904/149.

The IRA in Tralee were more aggressive when it came to targeting ex-soldiers/potential recruits than any other IRA unit in the County. This, presumably, is due to Tralee being the largest garrison town in Kerry and of having a long tradition of service in the British Army, which the IRA were, obviously, keen to curtail. The long-term success of these measures against men considering joining the crown forces is of course hard to quantify. D.M. Leeson considers that the ultimate success of this policy was seen in the fact that the British government could no longer get sufficient numbers of new recruits in Ireland for the RIC and had to start recruiting in the rest of the United Kingdom.¹⁶¹

Threatening public notices also became common and were often directed at traders who did business with the police and military. On 10 April a notice was posted in Cahirciveen threatening an S. Harris to stop supplying the RIC with turf.¹⁶² These public notices could make threats against named individuals. On 14 April the following notice was posted in Ballybunion

Public notice

The following shopkeepers in Ballybunion are boycotted on account of supplying member of the Royal Irish Constabulary with food and drink. E.T Enright, William O'Carroll, Miss Cissie Flaey [sic], Thomas MacAulliffe (Newspaper shop), James Clancy.

The Irish police are Ireland's worst enemies, and were it not for them, England could not hold us one week in slavery. Any persons dealing in any one of these shops, or holding communication with their owners will be severely dealt with. If any of the persons named in this notice wish to have the boycott removed, it will be done when they publicly refuse to supply the police.¹⁶³

According to the police as a result of the notice no one in the town would have any business with the police. Timothy Houlihan recalled in Ballybunion, 'the company from time to time warned the local shopkeepers by posters not to supply the RIC with groceries as we knew they [the RIC] were getting a lot of information in these shops about the movements of the local

¹⁶¹ Leeson, *The Black and Tans*, p. 23.

¹⁶² Weekly Summary, Week ending 10 -17 Apr. 1920, TCD BL, CO 904/148.

¹⁶³ Weekly summary, Week ending 25 Apr. 1920 – 18 April 1920. TCD BL, CO 904/148.

IRA'.¹⁶⁴ Similarly on the evening of 14 April in Cahirciveen notices were put under the doors of all the traders in the town to cease supplying the police or their families with food, fuel or clothing.¹⁶⁵ GHQ formulated an order that stated 'the voluntary supplying of materials of any kind to the enemy forces is forbidden' and that pressure should be placed on contractors to break all contracts with the crown forces.¹⁶⁶ The frequent use of public warnings that named individual transgressors reflects Kalyvas' conclusions that for threats to work they must be made 'publicly... [and be] persuasive and personalised'.¹⁶⁷ In Ireland public shaming from the pulpit was a part of life, and the IRA were building on this tradition.

It was not just traders who were warned not to interact with the RIC but the wider community as well. On 24 April, the following notice was put up on a post box at Garragh Bridge, near Glenbeigh:

Notice on behalf of the Irish Republic

The people of this district are warned that for their own safety and in the interests of their country they should absolutely avoid all communication of a friendly nature with the RIC This force of men is specially organised for the maintenance in our down trodden country of a tyrannical foreign government by a system of spying and corruption unrivalled in the history of any land, The police who come from among the people themselves are traitors [sic] to their own flesh and blood, sworn to spare neither parent, brother, sister or wife in the discharge of their degrading duty, the God-given rights of their fellow countrymen, they should therefore be avoided. Let no other Irishman or woman with a sense of principle and honour be seen speaking to or in any way tolerating the existence of a peeler either in public or in private.

Beware

To those who ignore this meted out the punishment of traitors.

SOLDIERS OF THE IRISH REPUBLIC

Up the Rebels.¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁴ Timothy Houlihan, BMH, WS, 959.

¹⁶⁵ Weekly summary, Week ending 18- 25 Apr.1920, TCD BL, CO 904/148.

¹⁶⁶ N/D GHQ Memorandum on supplying of materials to crown Forces, UCDA, P7/A/19.

¹⁶⁷ Kalyvas, *The logic of violence in civil war*, p.141.

¹⁶⁸ Weekly summary, Week ending 25 May. - 2 May. 1920, TCD BL, CO 904/148.

In Tralee, in May, the IRA put up posters that according to the police ‘warned girls against keeping company, or walking with soldiers. The girls are reminded that in 1916 England’s soldiers shot down their brothers. Soldiers are warned that if they are found with girls, they will be shot’.¹⁶⁹ On 9 May notices were posted up at Brosna’s Roman Catholic Church warned that any persons who spoke to the police would be treated like spies.¹⁷⁰ On 12 May the Petty Sessions court was being held in Brosna. A notice was put up saying anyone who entered the court house would be shot.¹⁷¹

On 30th May more notices were posted in Cahirciveen warning people against talking or having any intercourse with the police.¹⁷² On 20/21 June notices were posted in Killarney warning people against ‘associating or having any intercourse with police’.¹⁷³ On 27 June a number of notices were posted up on the main street of Castleisland warning people against associating or talking to the police, the notices also called for a boycott of persons who let houses to the police.¹⁷⁴ Such warnings, were clearly having some form of success. Tadhg Kennedy recalled that after a certain point ‘there was considerable antagonism to the RIC and it wasn’t popular to be seen associating nor talking with them’.¹⁷⁵ This feeling cannot be seen as universal though. When an RIC man and native of Kerry was shot in Tipperary in November 1920 his funeral in Ballylongford, according to the *Cork Examiner*, was ‘largely attended by members of the general community who expressed regret at the deceased’s untimely death’.¹⁷⁶

These were not empty threats. In the spring of 1920 the houses of people still doing business with the RIC began to be attacked. David MacAliffe, from Brosna recalled: ‘the order to boycott the RIC was rigidly enforced and in some cases where local residents failed to obey the boycott order and continued to deal with the RIC we fired into their houses. I don’t think we got sanction from our Battalion officers for the shooting’.¹⁷⁷ On the 18 April shots were fired into five houses in Brosna. Four of the householders had supplied the police with goods. The fifth had driven a constable.¹⁷⁸

Similarly, on the evening of 20 April a shot was fired through the window of a shop in Rathmore belonging to Michael Lynch as he had continued to do business with the police.

¹⁶⁹ Weekly Summary, Week ending 16 May. – 23 May. 1920, TCD BL, CO 904/148.

¹⁷⁰ *Idem*.

¹⁷¹ Weekly summary, Week ending 25 Mar. - 2 May. 1920, TCD BL, CO 904/148.

¹⁷² *Idem*.

¹⁷³ Weekly Summary, Week ending 20 Jun. – 27 Jun. 1920. TCD BL, CO 904/148.

¹⁷⁴ Weekly Summary, Week ending 27 Jun. - 4 Jul. 1920, TCD BL, CO 904/148.

¹⁷⁵ Tadhg Kennedy, BMH, 1413.

¹⁷⁶ *Cork Examiner*, 25 Nov. 1920.

¹⁷⁷ David MacAliffe, BMH, WS, 1139.

¹⁷⁸ Weekly summary, Week ending 18 Apr. - 25 Apr. 1920. TCD BL, CO 904/148.

Several days before he had received a letter warning him to stop.¹⁷⁹ On 13 May a sack of turf belonging to James Kelly, from Cahirciveen, was burned. Kelly had earlier supplied turf to the police.¹⁸⁰

Though attacks on property were common enough arson was rarely used by the IRA in 1920. There are two known examples. On 6th June Wynne's Castle, outside of Glenbeigh, was burned by the IRA.¹⁸¹ In 1921 it became common to burn 'Big Houses' across the country to prevent them being used as barracks for the crown forces, it occurred on occasion in Kerry but was most common in Cork and it is most likely that this would explain the burning of Wynne's Castle. The other example of arson is unfortunately difficult to find information on. On 11 May, in an unstated location in the County, the home of Thomas Walsh was burned. The families of Constables Travers and Kenny had rented a room from Walsh.¹⁸²

Threats made in person and kidnappings also occurred. In Sneem, Denis J. O'Sullivan recalled that 'We applied a boycott to the RIC They had some friends in Sneem amongst the shopkeepers and we went around the shops carrying arms and warned them to stop supplying the RIC'.¹⁸³ On 26 June *The Kerryman* reported that J. Moriarty, who worked at Gortalea railway station, was kidnapped and taken to 'an unknown destination' as he had agreed to transport military equipment.¹⁸⁴

Such intimidation seemed to work. According to Patrick O'Shea, around Clahane outside of Tralee 'the boycott of the RIC was rigidly enforced in Clahane and the RIC found it necessary to carry in supplies to the garrison by motor lorry'.¹⁸⁵ The boycott appears to have been very successful and widespread across the county. Over the month of June it was reported:

An attempt to boycott the police spread over the whole county and in several cases it became necessary to distribute provisions to them from district headquarters per motor. Married police in several cases were served with notices to leave their houses. Intimidation was rampant and was widely employed by Sinn Feiners to enforce their decrees...wide areas of the county are now without supervision owing to the closing and subsequent destruction of barracks.¹⁸⁶

¹⁷⁹ Idem.

¹⁸⁰ Weekly Summary, Week ending 16 May – 23 May 1920, TCD BL, CO 904/148.

¹⁸¹ Weekly Summary, Week ending 30 May – 6 Jun. 1920, TCD BL, CO 904/148.

¹⁸² Weekly Summary, Week ending 9 - 16 May 1920, TCD BL, CO 904/148

¹⁸³ Denis J. O'Sullivan, BMH, WS, 958.

¹⁸⁴ *The Kerryman*, 26 Jun. 1920.

¹⁸⁵ Patrick O'Shea, BMH, WS, 1144.

¹⁸⁶ IG, MR, Jun. 1920, TCD BL, CO 904/112.

It was only in June, in General Order No. 6, that GHQ formalised their policy on civilians associated with the crown forces: 'Those persons who are associated with the RIC shall be subjected to the same boycott, and the fact of their association with and tolerance of this infamous force shall be kept in public in every possible way'.¹⁸⁷ Chief Constable Major Egan, who served with the RIC in the county, would later write in a reference for a publican in Tralee who was persecuted that in Kerry 'the greatest intimidation prevailed against all persons who were known to be in sympathy with the crown forces'.¹⁸⁸ By July the Inspector General was reporting a decrease in outrages but 'the decrease indicated no improvement in the state of the area but rather pointed to the fact that the power of Sinn Fein was so generally acknowledged that it was unnecessary to resort to outrage...boycotting of the police was steadily owing to terrorism'.¹⁸⁹

The Dingle Peninsula was regarded as the worst spot in the county. James Fitzgerald, from Lispole on the Dingle Peninsula, recalled that after the setting up of the Dáil courts

Some of the people in the area continued to use the British courts after our own courts had been established and we had a section of our own company ready to remove them from either carts or trains unless they gave an undertaking to take their cases to the Republican courts. We had an unknown destination ready for them. Only one person refused to give the undertaking but after being blindfolded decided to give the undertaking and was let go.¹⁹⁰

Refusal to heed or obey these commands from the IRA could have long term effects. Robert Fitzell a farmer from near Ballylongford, in an appeal for compensation from the British government maintained that his house was raided between 1920 and 1921, and he was shot at in July of 1921 all because in 1919 he would not sign a document in favour of the Irish republic: 'Every householder in the parish signed the paper except myself another Protestant farmer and myself' and that was 'the sole cause' of the trouble.¹⁹¹ Similarly, Michael Carmody and his brother in law James Meade, ex RIC men and both farmers living in Ballylongford, were 'pressed' into joining the IRA but refused to do so, in the Autumn of 1920, resulting in a boycott against the two which lasted until 1925. No one would buy their produce at markets, and on one occasion they were taken from their house and beaten.¹⁹² James Brennan ex RIC sergeant,

¹⁸⁷ Hughes, *Defying the IRA*, p. 82.

¹⁸⁸ Margaret Brennan, TNA, CO 762/130/4.

¹⁸⁹ IG, MR, Jul. 1920, TCD BL, CO 904/112.

¹⁹⁰ James Fitzgerald, BMH, WS, 999.

¹⁹¹ Robert Fitzell, TNA, CO 762/162/19.

¹⁹² Michael Carmody, TNA, CO 762/134/13.

also from near Ballylongford, from the Autumn of 1920 up to the spring of 1922 could not find any man willing to work on his farm, as a result he lost much of his produce, in his appeal for compensation Brennan was described as ‘loyal’.¹⁹³ Another ex-RIC man John O’ Donoghue, who owned a shop in Kilgarvan, from October 1920 onwards had to supply the IRA with food ‘at the point of the revolver’, in December 1921 O’Donoghue was taken from his home and had to undergo a mock execution, and his house was raided on several occasions up until February 1924 all ‘on account of our loyalty to the British Government’.¹⁹⁴

Death threats were also not uncommon, for instance on 1 May Daniel Devans, from Cahirciveen, received the following letter

Dear Sir, if you seek compensation for your turf that was destroyed which you had no right to sell to the police, if you sell any more turf to them or help them in any way you may as well be making your peace with God. Take this warning and don’t associate with police in future and give up your compensation, or if you don’t the lead will find you.¹⁹⁵

On 12 July D. Hussey, a publican in Castleisland, received a letter threatening him with death for supplying drink to the military.¹⁹⁶ On 2 June an unnamed man who conveyed ammunition belonging to RIC from their barracks in Killorglin was taken from his home in the evening and after ‘a severe reprimand’ made promise he would not work for the RIC again.¹⁹⁷ Many within the broader republican movement were uncomfortable with these tactics. On 9 May the Cloghane Sinn Féin club on the Dingle Peninsula strongly condemned threatening letters that had been sent to two ‘most respectable members of our community’ and that the use of threatening letters was ‘detrimental to the reputation of Sinn Féin’.¹⁹⁸

The campaign against the police and their relations was not universally embraced as a letter by Pádraig Ó Siochfrada O/C Dingle Battalion,¹⁹⁹ to GHQ, clearly reflects a number of qualms. He asked:

1. Are the people to refuse to sell them food

¹⁹³ James Brennan, TNA, CO 762/144/15.

¹⁹⁴ John O’Donoghue, TNA, CO 762/27/13.

¹⁹⁵ Weekly Summary, Week ending 2 - 9 May 1920, TCD BL, CO 904/148.

¹⁹⁶ Weekly Summary, Week ending 11– 18 Jul. 1920, TCD BL, CO 904/148.

¹⁹⁷ *Cork Examiner*, 7 Jun. 1920.

¹⁹⁸ *The Kerryman*, 15 May 1920.

¹⁹⁹ Horgan, *Dying for the cause*, p. 128.

2. If so are they to refuse to sell food for their wives and children + milk for their babies.
3. One or two women who cook + wash for them are they to be made to give up their job.
4. If a trader has a contract with them for supplies is he to complete or break the contract.
5. Are doctors...to be allowed attend the police?²⁰⁰

GHQ replied that people independent of the police must refuse to sell them food, people could sell food to their families, women who cooked and washed for them had to give up their jobs, independent traders had to break their contracts and doctors were allowed to attend to the police.²⁰¹

GHQ in fact, formulated a policy on how to deal with the families of RIC men in an undated document: 'It is considered necessary to remove them from close touch with the ordinary population...such people must not be allowed to live unmolested in houses commandeered from the people...[and] it will become more and more necessary to drive in all enemy outposts and agents'. Volunteers were to observe the extent to which family members visited barracks and the likelihood of their transferring information on the IRA to the crown forces.²⁰²

A common practice was to destroy the property of RIC men and preventing them or their relations from renting any property. On 28 April armed and masked men called at the house of Jeremiah Lyons, where the family of a Sergeant Watson were staying, in Listowel. They removed Sergeant Watson's furniture and insisted that Watson's family leave the area. The Watsons left the following day.²⁰³ On 17 June, Michael Doyle, a landlord in Castleisland, received a letter telling him to 'clear out' Constable Foley and his family who were staying in his house. On 24 June Charles Collins, District Inspector for the Castleisland area, received a letter from his landlord to leave his house. The landlord's servants threatened to leave him if the D.I. did not leave.

In Tralee, in particular, attacks on those connected to the crown forces could be aggressive and long drawn out. On the night of 24 June an explosive device was placed outside Michael Costello's public house on Russell Street in Tralee. The fanlight, three panes of glass and the

²⁰⁰ O/C Dingle Battalion to GHQ, 10 Jun. 1920, MAI, CP/A0495/XVI.

²⁰¹ Reply to query Dingle battalion from GHQ, N/D, MAI, CP/A0495/XVII.

²⁰² Wives and families of RIC, Black and Tans etc., N/D GHQ document, UCDA, P7/A/20.

²⁰³ Weekly summary, Week ending 9 - 16 May 1920, TCD BL, CO 904/148

door were badly damaged. Costello had continued to do business with the RIC.²⁰⁴ Michael Costello, an ex-RIC man, would later seek compensation from the British Government for the incident. According to Costello, after the attack 'I was boycotted by members of the IRA parading outside of my house and preventing any person from coming in. I lost all my customers save R.I. Constabulary'. Costello maintained he received letters that threatened that his house would be blown up if he continued to serve the crown forces. Costello maintained the boycott continued into 1922. As a result of the constant intimidation his wife became deranged and the IRA subsequently prevented her relatives from visiting. Costello also had a son-in-law who joined the R.U.C. and on returning to Tralee in June 1926 the son-in-law received letters warning him to leave Kerry. Costello sold his pub in 1926 but maintained republicans interfered with the auction so that the pub was not sold at its full worth. His reference for compensation was given by Mr Albert Quinnell, a solicitor in Tralee, who said the trouble in fact started because Costello refused to serve the IRA²⁰⁵

A similar case occurred in the town a few days later that had similar long term effects. In the early morning of 6 July an explosive device blew up outside the public house of John Brennan, of Rock Street, Tralee. The fanlight and a window were damaged. Brennan had a number of RIC men as lodgers.²⁰⁶ John's daughter Margaret later made an appeal for compensation on behalf of her father and said the premises had been raided on a number of occasions in 1920 including in July when his employees were not allowed enter the premises. In August 1920 he received the following letter:

Sir.

It has come to my knowledge that you are accommodating enemy police in your premises thereby making a barracks of same. This action on your part is highly treasonable to the Republic and you are hereby ordered AT ONCE CEASE accommodating these enemy policemen

Mise

Commandant I.R.A

Competent Military Authority

²⁰⁴ Weekly Summary, Week ending 20 - 27 Jun. 1920. TCD BL, CO 904/148.

²⁰⁵ Michael Costello, County Kerry, TNA, CO/762/130/3.

²⁰⁶ Weekly Summary, Week ending 4 - 11 Jul. 1920, TCD BL, CO 904/148.

From the time of the letter on Brennan maintained ‘the boycott and persecution became more intense’ and his customers were often threatened and that his children ‘were hooted [at] in the streets and threatened with haircutting and tarring as spies and informers’. Brennan’s widow wrote that at the beginning of the Truce when Brennan began making improvements but in August all the workmen on the job were ordered to cease by the IRA. One mason was reportedly threatened with death if he did not stop. The completion of the rebuilding only took place in 1923.²⁰⁷

The process could also result in severe ostracisation and a number of families suffering as a result. On the 11 April Mrs Murphy, the wife of Constable Murphy, was forced to leave the recently vacated RIC barracks in Knocknagoshel where she were still staying. Murphy went to stay with a Mrs Sullivan, another wife of a policeman. Sullivan received a letter that she was to leave the parish. On the 16 April a neighbour, Mrs Donnellan, received the following letter ‘Mrs Donnellan. The rumour has it that Mrs Murphy is to reside in your house. If so your house will be burned. We regret such action, but we must comply with a general order’.²⁰⁸

On 20 June the house where Mrs Sullivan and Mrs Murphy were staying in Knocknagoshel was forcibly entered by the IRA and the women were given a letter demanding they leave the parish. The two women went to the Parish priest for assistance but he said ‘he could nothing, that they were strangers, and must go’. On 25 Mrs Sullivan’s home was again raided, the IRA again demanded she leave Knocknagoshel; they removed her furniture, which was then ruined by rain. Mrs Sullivan and her four children then moved to Castleisland.²⁰⁹

The last few examples give an extent of the brutality and perseverance of those behind these attacks, but in 1920 attacks on civilians were still relatively restrained. Actual attempts at murder of civilians by the IRA were still rare in 1920. A notable exception was the attempt to kill a Resident Magistrate. On 11 May, the Resident Magistrate, Mr E.M.P. Wynne was shot at while travelling to the Petty Sessions Court in Causeway. He was fired up two miles from Causeway at Ballinerig. Wynne was armed and returned fire. He killed one of his assailants, Michael Nolan, a lieutenant in the Causeway IRA Company.²¹⁰ Wynne in a statement later maintained that he was fired upon and then called upon to put his hands up. Wynne took out his revolver and shot Nolan, the assailants then fled and Wynne, apparently yelled ‘Come on

²⁰⁷ Margaret Brennan, County of Kerry, TNA, CO 762/130/4.

²⁰⁸ Weekly summary, Week ending 18 - 25 Apr. 1920, TCD BL, CO 904/148.

²⁰⁹ Weekly Summary, Week ending 20 Jun. – 27 Apr. 1920. TCD BL, CO 904/148.

²¹⁰ Weekly summary, Week ending 9 - 16 May 1920, TCD BL, CO 904/148 see also Horgan, *Dying for the cause*, pp. 117-8.

you cowards’ after them.²¹¹ As with many other examples this case had a sequel. On 11 September in Tralee a van of furniture consigned for R.M. Wynne was removed from storage at the Great Southern and Western Railway station and burned. Wynne, who had lived in Ballymullen for twenty years, as the Resident Magistrate had recently moved to London as he was ‘apprehensive of danger’ following the attempt on his life the previous May. Wynne was also not permitted to bring his furniture with him.²¹²

Analysis and Conclusion

The following shows the tactics most used. The following tables are derived from the incidents reported in the RIC’s Inspector General, County Inspector, Weekly reports and the incidents recorded in *The Kerryman*, *The Cork Examiner* and *Manchester Guardian*.

Table seven. Form of attack/interference/intimidation directed against civilians and number of instances in County Kerry in 1920

Forms of attack/interference/intimidation directed towards civilians in 1920	Number of instances
Seizure of weapon from civilian	1
Shooting of civilians	3 (two not fatal, one fatal)
Postmen held up	5
Threats made in person	3
Family made leave their home	1
Public notices	7
Threatening letters	3
Trains held up	11
Destruction of property	3
Arson	3
Kidnapping	6
Mail car held up	1
Private houses raided	6
Courthouse raided	1
Assaults	8
Landlord threatened	2

²¹¹ *The Kerryman*, 15 May 1920.

²¹² *Cork Examiner*, 13 Sept. 1920.

Houses attacked	9
Girls with hair cut	11
Total	84

The dynamics of the IRA's campaign in Kerry changed in November 1920 with their first major offensive that resulted in an aggressive counter-response followed by the rapid escalation of 1921. However, if we examine the dynamics of the IRA's campaign in 1920 it appears that they attacked their military opponents on thirty seven occasions while instances of interference/intimidation of civilians took place on eighty four occasions, making the strictly military or guerrilla actions half of their campaign. The nature of the IRA's campaign varied from place to place. In Tralee intimidation beatings and even bombings were common while actual attacks on the crown forces were rare. In Cahirciveen intensely aggressive warnings were frequently posted and beatings were common, but attacks on the crown forces were virtually unknown. The battalion example is perhaps not perfect as Cronin and McEllistrim, though strictly from the Furies mid-Kerry Battalion, undertook most of their operations in the Castleisland east Kerry Battalion and in 1921 would operate in south Kerry. But if we take Castleisland alone it has the highest rate of instances of civilian intimidation, and within the Battalion structure was most common in Brosna. Interestingly, while the IRA's Lixnaw Battalion was most likely to attack the crown forces they did not have a particularly high rate of interference/intimidation of civilians. This presumably comes down to collective decisions of certain IRA units.

In Tralee for instance a number of men looking to join the RIC were tarred and feathered, this happened nowhere else in Kerry, suggesting that the same group of people were responsible for all these attacks or that the IRA leaders in the town reached a collective decision on how to deal with potential RIC recruits. Similarly, forced hair cutting was most common around Cahirciveen where it occurred on five occasions, next to only two in Tralee and two in Lixnaw. This again would suggest that the same people were behind all these incidents or that the leadership in Cahirciveen made a collective decision on the issue. In any case it shows that the IRA in Tralee and Cahirciveen came to individual or separate conclusions as to the best methods to deter potential civilian threats.

Table eight. Number of instances of attack/intimidation/interference per Kerry IRA battalion in 1920.

Battalion	Number of instance of attack/ intimidation/interference with civilians
Tralee	12
Lixnaw	5
Ardfert	3
Listowel	8
Castlegregory	1
Dingle	1
Kilorglin	6
Firies	2
Castleisland	16
Killarney	6
Rathmore	2
Kenmare	1
Ballymacelligott	0
Kerry No.3 (did not have a Battalion structure)	9
Total	84

Table nine. Instances of regular I.R.A violence directed against combatants per Kerry IRA battalion

Battalion	Regular combat I.R.A action
Tralee	2
Lixnaw	8
Ardfert	5
Listowel	2
Castlegregory	1
Dingle	4
Firies	3
Castleisland	6
Kilorglin	3
Killarney	1
Rathmore	1

Kenmare	1
Ballymacelligott	0
Kerry No.3 (did not have a Battalion structure)	0
Total	37

The time frame of IRA actions also reveals much, particularly in relation to the counter campaign by the crown forces explored in the following chapter.

Table ten. Instances of I.R.A violence directed against combatants per month in 1920

Month	Number of intra-combatant IRA actions 1920
January	1
February	1
March	4
April	4
May	1
June	4
July	7
August	1
September	2
October	6
November	7
December	0

IRA violent action was relatively consistent, with the obvious increase in the October/November offensive 1920. There is an evident increase in the summer followed by a decrease in August and through September. This decrease is presumably due to the arrival of the Black and Tans in July, the first reprisals in the county also occurred in July.

Table eleven. Instances of I.R.A violence directed against civilians per month in 1920

Month	Number of irregular IRA actions 1920
January	0
February	0

March	6
April	10
May	10
June	18
July	8
August	6
September	7
October	5
November	1
December	1

Table twelve. Incidents of IRA interactions with civilians versus between other combatants, per battalion area in 1920 in graph.

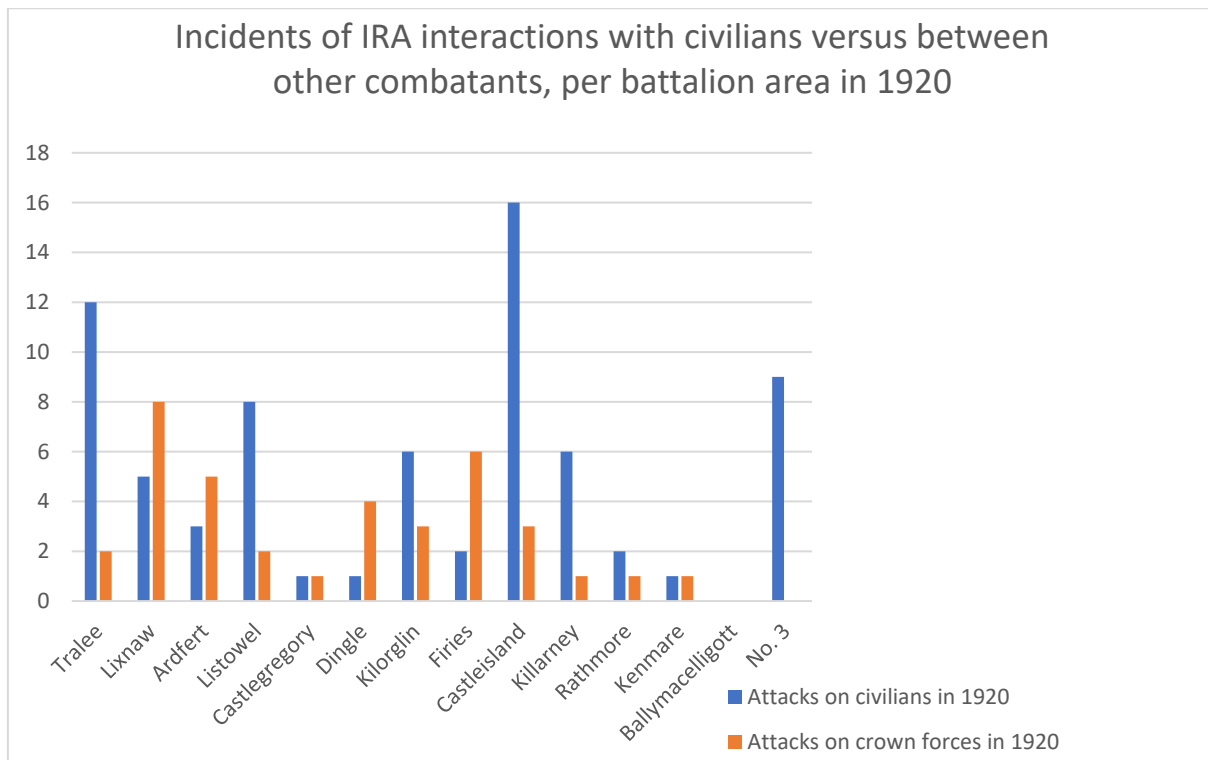
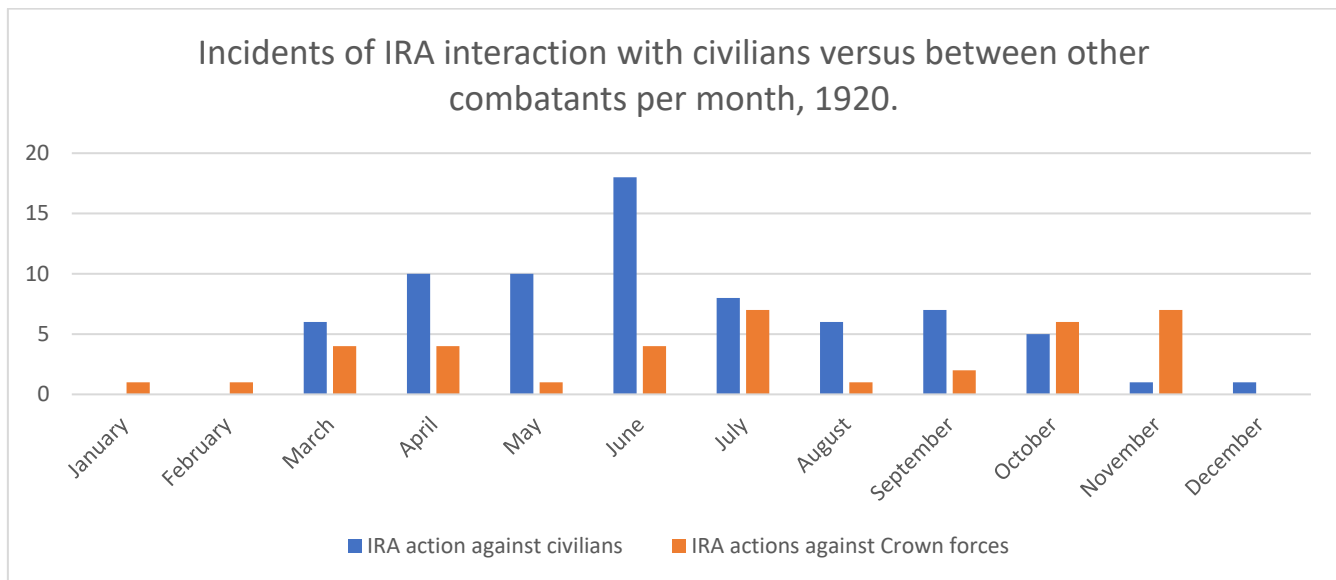


Table thirteen. Incidents of IRA interactions with civilians versus between other combatants, per battalion area in 1920 in graph.



In relation to non-lethal IRA violence it is again noticeably higher than the attempts at regular lethal IRA violence – noticeably the highest levels are in the spring and early, and do not necessarily correlate with attempts at lethal IRA violence. June for instance saw eighteen of the more irregular non-lethal acts but June also saw the relatively restrained figure of just four for

attempts at lethal violence. Noticeably, there is an evident decrease in both after July, revealing that the activities of the crown forces could be a deterrent to both.

The sheer frequency of the intimidation of potential civilian threats makes it just as much, or perhaps more, a part of the story of the revolution in the County as the actual guerrilla war that McEllistram, Cronin and Brosnan were trying to instigate. Charles Townshend has written that 'reading between the lines, we may suspect that there was more public 'neutrality' than the republican leadership found entirely comfortable'.²¹³ When looking at the high levels of violence directed against civilians this would suggest that not only 'neutrality' existed but considerable opposition existed too, or that enough public opposition existed to warrant very considerable levels of IRA activity. As Brian Hughes has noted these actions are 'inextricable' from a broader understanding of the revolution.²¹⁴ This thesis would contend that they are not only inextricable but are almost more intrinsic to understanding the IRA's revolution as the actual fighting.

Obviously events such as these do enter into the popular national understanding of the conflict, as Charles Townshend has noted that

It may be true that, as modern guerrilla theory holds, the survival and success of guerrilla groups is dependent on a substantial measure of popular co-operation. Yet this reasoning is finally inconclusive. The title of any government to represent a 'nation in arms' is at best dubious, but that of a subversive movement must necessarily still more dubious than that of an established state. If the people adopt an attitude of neutrality the claims of activists to 'represent' them is largely notional and can only be justified ex post facto by official revolutionary historiography.²¹⁵

However, as unpleasant as it would have been to be a civilian victim of the IRA, it was unlikely to result in the loss of life. This was all to change in November 1920 with the aggressive reprisal policy orchestrated by the crown forces in the County that would in turn lead to an IRA more willing to use violence not only against their military opponents but civilians they considered to be acting against them too.

The frequency of these attacks on civilians can be perhaps explained by factors such as the lack of risk involved, but presumably there are other factors involved. The intimidation itself

²¹³ Townshend, *The republic*, p. 261.

²¹⁴ Hughes, *Defying the IRA*, p. 207.

²¹⁵ Townshend, *Political violence in Ireland*, p. 339.

represented what has been described as an internal ‘moral economy’ in Irish rural life of preventing co-operation with the state. Gavin M. Foster has written that ‘An underlying hostility to the authority of the state – any state it would seem – also created disaffection, an attitude that can be traced back of older Irish traditions of popular resistance to English law and outside interference with the local ‘moral economy’.²¹⁶ Clearly this concept of the ‘moral economy’ or need for universal acceptance or submission is important. Townshend has written of the land war that ‘many of the crimes which the government saw as part of the system of terrorism were clearly designed to make the fear of punishment by the ‘unwritten law’ greater than the fear of the landlords’ law’.²¹⁷ In a similar manner to republican policing this can be linked to the idea of achieving a type of cultural uniformity. The preoccupation with this cultural uniformity or preoccupation with civilians is reflected in the IRA being more likely to interfere with civilians than attack combatants. These attacks also show the extent to which the IRA considered it necessary to stop those collaborating with the old regime or those who might consider doing so. It seemed to have been important than actually attacking the old regime.

There is also, arguably, a greater sense of bitterness and inhumanity in these attacks than the more regular intra-combatant fighting. For instance, no one forced the IRA to give the British troops cups of tea after the Annascual ambush, if anything it appears to reveal a type of ‘respect between warriors’ or comradeship between the armed groups. The image of Mrs Murphy though destitute and completely isolated from her community, unable to even find spiritual consolation, is far more startling. This ties into the material in chapter three and four in relation to issues around morality – people were being punished for their transgressions for having stepped outside or betrayed the nationalist or republican project. This incident, reveals something that is unfortunately hard to quantify – the effect of these attacks on other people. These actions were clearly meant to stop active co-operators but also to dissuade any potential co-operators. The case of Mrs Murphy, and indeed of some people being shunned up to the year 1926, show the extent to which the IRA’s policy of enforcing non co-operation was not only effective but persisted.

²¹⁶ Foster, *The Irish civil war and society*, p. 128.

²¹⁷ Townshend, *Political violence in Ireland*, p.159.

Chapter six. British reprisals

Introduction. British justification of reprisals and their effects on republican activists

Throughout 1919-21 there was no unanimity of purpose among the crown forces about how to view civilians, let alone how to treat them. Many in the crown forces were, understandably, uncomfortable with reprisals but consistently pushed forward the idea that they were only occurring because of the IRA and the only civilians who suffered had direct links to the IRA or Sinn Féin; this idea became the single most common motif in their own discourse on the subject.¹ The officers of the 6th Division, based in the Martial Law area, had the following view of reprisals:

Finding that the whole population was combining to shield those who murdered their comrades, the troops and police began to take the law into their own hands, and to wreak vengeance on the persons and property of those whom they suspected of being implicated. Such a procedure was obviously only the working of the laws of nature, and a return to the custom in vogue in savage countries before a legal code was introduced, but, as was bound to occur, the innocent in many cases suffered instead of the guilty.²

Similarly, Nevil Macready believed that any excesses conducted by the crown forces were due to the IRA from whom the crown forces ‘took their cue’.³ The 6th Divisional Area’s report on the conflict noted that after the shooting in Fermoy in September 1919, that resulted in the first major reprisal, ‘there was an immediate outcry against the troops, but nothing was said by way of condemning the murders’.⁴ This feeling went to the head of Government. On 3 December Lloyd George denounced critics of reprisals ‘the Premier complained that the critics of reprisals did not...denounce the treacherous and brutal murders of police and soldiers’ and that by criticising reprisals it only ‘encouraged the extremists’.⁵ This was, in essence, the standard narrative that emerged from the crown forces - all responsibility ultimately lay with the IRA for starting the trouble and the crown forces were unfairly victimised for reacting in kind.

¹ Leeson, *The Black and Tans*, pp. 211-3.

² The Irish rebellion in the 6th Divisional area, p.62.

³ Macready, *Annals of an active life*, p.522.

⁴ The Irish rebellion in the 6th Divisional area, p.18.

⁵ *The Manchester Guardian*, 4 Dec. 1920.

Even in the more critical reports this was maintained. In early 1921 General Sir Henry Lawson, made a report on conditions in Ireland. He argued that 'so far they (the crown forces) seemed to have treated the whole population on the same lines and their point of view seemed to be that of forces operating in an enemy country against guerrilla warfare very much had the Germans in France in 1870 and in Belgium in 1914'. But maintained 'there was nothing of a calculated nature [about reprisals]' and though 'mistakes had been made, the innocent was sometimes killed for the guilty, and there seemed little doubt that these individual killings amounted at least the number as that of the servants of the crown disposed of by the IRA'⁶

The idea that innocent people might suffer as a result of the activities of the crown forces was consistently denied. A major aspect of official and unofficial reprisals was arson, but the crown forces again maintained it only occurred as a result of IRA activity and only those with connections to the IRA had their homes burned. Military Headquarters in Cork announced that after the home of three 'Sinn Feiners' had been burned after the burning of two loyalist homes in Upton, in April 1921, that

It is the intention to carry on these official reprisals in that proportion, or if that proportion does not have the desired effect, in greater proportion. That is to say, if there are continued burnings, if two loyalist houses are burned, three Sinn Fein will be burned officially, and if that does not stop the thing six will probably be burned.⁷

In late January 1921 the commander of British troops in the 6th Divisional area, Sir Peter Strickland, gave an interview to the *Evening Standard* in which he was equally defensive:

We do not destroy houses simply because an ambush has taken place and the house has been occupied by the ambushers. It is only where a resident who refuses to give information, as many of them do on the grounds of republican sympathy, and where they are known republicans that we have to perform that unpleasant duty.⁸

The 6th Divisional report, produced after the cessation of the conflict, recognised that before the introduction of Martial Law the wrong people had been targeted in reprisals but as a result of the implementation of marital law 'official reprisals were introduced, which ensured that the

⁶ *The Kerryman*, 8 Jan. 1921.

⁷ *Cork Examiner*, 30 Apr. 1921.

⁸ Interview with General Strickland, clipping from *The Evening Standard*, 25 Jan. 1921, Strickland papers, Box P.363, IWM.

only people who suffered were those who were guilty of outrage, or openly sympathetic with the perpetrators of it'.⁹ In essence the high command consistently maintained that any acts of arson were entirely reactive and those who suffered were actively opposing the crown forces. Again the entirety of blame was placed on the IRA, but the last two comments would suggest that the crown forces were more discerning in choosing their victims than was actually the case in reality – as the following sections will show.

Despite these numerous justifications or dismissals of reprisals or that innocent people suffered, the high command of the British Army and Police in Ireland made perpetual, and ineffective, calls for calm and discipline to be maintained – in an admission that things were out of hand. On 17 August, General Sir Nevil Macready, issued a warning to the troop that any lapse of discipline 'will be visited with the severest discipline' and wanted officers 'to ensure there will not be the least grounds for allegations of looting or retaliation'.¹⁰ On 7 October, in a review of the RIC, Sir Hamar Greenwood 'emphasised that reprisals would ruin the discipline of the force and that they could not be countenanced by those in authority'.¹¹ In early November the Weekly Summary, the in-house RIC journal, maintained, that the purpose of the police in Ireland 'is to suppress crime and extirpate criminals...Arson, looting, and all indiscipline are offences against the people of Ireland. Their persons and property are sacred'.¹²

Despite these warnings, as the summer came to an end, the crown forces were given an increasingly free hand to engage in the activities that were being, apparently, decried from on high. On 4 September Dublin Castle announced that under the New Coercion Act the holding of inquests was now forbidden in county Cork, Clare, Kerry, Galway, county Limerick, Longford, Roscommon, Mayo, Louth and Limerick and Cork cities. Inquests when necessary were to be constituted by a court of inquiry 'under the army act', effectively the crown forces, when forced, would only be investigating themselves.¹³ In a strange situation the crown forces consistently condemned reprisals or claimed they were exaggerated but never made serious efforts to investigate let alone stop them. In fact the situation was murkier even than that, as in private, Macready admitted he would be 'damn glad' if a policeman 'reprised' as long as he hid his identity.¹⁴

⁹ The Irish rebellion in the 6th Divisional area, p.62.

¹⁰ *The Kerryman*, 21 Aug. 1920.

¹¹ *Ibid*, 9 Oct. 1920.

¹² *Cork Examiner*, 6 Nov. 1920.

¹³ *Ibid*, 4 Sept. 1920.

¹⁴ Fitzpatrick, *Politics and Irish life*, p .30.

In some respects it appears the crown forces, at the highest levels approved of reprisals and felt brutality was necessary to crush the rebellion. This was not necessarily without historical precedent. In the American civil war Union policy was initially largely directed by General George B. McClellan. McClellan believed in the chivalry of war and felt that the war should be fought entirely on the battle field and for his troops to always behave courteously and respectfully towards southern civilians – contact with civilians was, in fact, to be minimal.¹⁵ McClellan had the backing of Lincoln until 1863 when the war continued to drag on without any obvious end in sight. In order to bring the war to a close Lincoln promoted Generals Grant and Sherman, men who felt the war could only be won through not only the destruction of the southern armies but breaking the morale of southern civilians. Sherman famously declaring ‘war is cruelty, you cannot refine it’ and introduced a policy of vicious plundering and arson through Georgia and South Carolina, not only to destroy the bread basket states supplying southern troops, but, through sheer acts of cruelty, to show Confederates that this was the price of secession.¹⁶ The American example is particularly, relevant when considering the fact that Lloyd George felt he was a Lincoln-type figure saving the Union.¹⁷ It is quite possible that Lloyd George concluded he needed to adopt a Sherman-style approach of collective punishment to stop the rebellion.

The crown forces seemed intent on explaining that if reprisals occurred it was due to the difficult circumstances they found themselves in – this attitude has accordingly influenced the historiography. In a previous chapter it was shown that within the historiography there has been a tendency to, if not mitigate the nature of reprisals, then at least emphasise the context in which they took place. For instance David Fitzpatrick has described reprisals as the product of ‘frustration of battle-hardened men in search of an elusive enemy’.¹⁸ D.M. Leeson, comes to a similar conclusion – frustration, isolation from civilians, unable to identify their opponents are usually seen as the factors that caused reprisals.¹⁹ This emphasis on the hardships experienced has perhaps created an over-emphasis on why they occurred rather than how they played out. This chapter instead looks at what actually occurred during reprisals or how they played out.

Within the scholarly research on the dynamics of reprisals, particularly by Augusteijn and Leeson, clear patterns emerge in how they manifested – apparently the families of Volunteers

¹⁵ John Keegan, *The American Civil War* (London, 2010), p. 152.

¹⁶ McPherson, *Battle cry of freedom*, p.809.

¹⁷ Charles Townshend, ‘The Irish war of independence context and meaning’ in Catriona Crowe (ed) *Guide to the military service (1916-1923) pensions collection* (Dublin, 2014).

¹⁸ Fitzpatrick, ‘Militarism in Ireland’ in Bartlett and Jeffreys (eds), *A military history of Ireland*, p. 403.

¹⁹ Leeson, *The Black and Tans*, p.210

suffered disproportionately, in relation to other civilians, at the hands of the crown forces. Leeson writes that the RIC 'Black and Tans' and Auxiliaries had a good perception of who their enemies were and were careful in their selection of targets. Leeson seriously re-examines the idea of drunken, rampaging Black and Tans by arguing that 'in many cases the police chose their victims with care, even in the midst of a riot'. Leeson writes that 'the police attacked well known republicans and left other people alone'²⁰, but also accepts in many reprisals there was no evident 'sense' to who was selected in some reprisals.²¹ Augusteijn, much earlier, noted in relation to reprisals in the counties under his scrutiny that the property of Volunteers and their families suffered most:

The concentration [of reprisals] on Volunteers who had been arrested previously and their families was evidenced in all areas. Among them [houses burned] were; Eamon O'Dyers's and Dan Breen's family in Tipperary, Ned Moane's, Michael Kilroy's and Tom Maguire's homes in Mayo, the Larkins in Derry City, and Dr Jim Ryan the MP for south Wexford.

According to Augusteijn these houses were 'continually raided'.²² It seems from an early stage the RIC were able to recognise who their opponents were. At some times, it may be the IRA's own fault as they could not have been so open in their activities. Bertie Scully felt the RIC around Killorglin were able to recognise who the local IRA leaders were by simply observing a Volunteer parade on St Patrick's Day in 1918.²³ Thomas Pelican, a Fianna member from Listowel, recalled that he had to go on the run after the RIC had spotted him as part of a party raiding a train in Listowel station for 'blacklisted goods'.²⁴ Others felt from the initial stages of the campaign the crown forces seemed to have particularly accurate information. Patrick J. McElligott, O/C of the Listowel Battalion, recalled that 'soon after the arrival of the Tans (in Listowel town), a large number of the best IRA men in the area were arrested, mostly in their homes, which showed that the enemy intelligence was first class'.²⁵

Together with reprisals the crown forces were also engaged in constant raiding of the homes of suspected IRA men. Raids often took place at times deliberately chosen to humiliate and shock. Cornelius Brosnan, from Newtownsandess recalled raids often taking place in the very

²⁰ Ibid, p.173.

²¹ Idem.

²² Augusteijn, *From public defiance to guerrilla warfare*, p.229.

²³ Sean (Bertie) Scully, BMH, WS, 788.

²⁴ Thomas Pelican, BMH, WS, 1109.

²⁵ Patrick J. McElligott, BMH, WS, 1013.

early morning ‘before people would be out of their beds’.²⁶ Michael Pierce recalled that after an attack on Ballyheigue coastguard station, in May 1920, his home was raided and while the RIC were questioning his father ‘struck him a severe blow in the face’, though a military sergeant rebuked the Sergeant Madden who was responsible.²⁷ Denis Quille recalled that from September 1920 his house was constantly raided, forcing him to go on the run. His family continued to suffer despite his absence, in May 1921 Black and Tans informed his wife that they had just shot and killed him a few miles outside of the town.²⁸

The constant raiding also meant it was impossible for IRA men to stay at home – to avoid arrest they almost had no other choice but to take to the hills and become guerrillas. Augusteijn has written that in Tipperary ‘fearing nightly visits to their families, more and more local Volunteers were forced to sleep away from home each trying to find his own safe house’.²⁹ As raids began to take place, Patrick Lyons, from Lixnaw, recalled: ‘several raids by the crown forces on my home and the homes of other prominent men in the IRA and Sinn Fein also took place, with the result that I and other prominent IRA [men] had to go on the run’.³⁰ The crown forces were aware of this. After major reprisals in Clare in September 1920 the County Inspector reported that ‘practically no Sinn Feiner now even sleeps in his own house’, seemingly unaware that this was ultimately making the situation much worse.³¹ In effect both reprisals and raids both had the opposite of the desired effect by pushing men into becoming full-time activists – thus encouraging rather than discouraging violence.

Some scholars have suggested that reprisals did act as an effective deterrent to IRA violence. Sinéad Joy, in her 2005 work, *The IRA in Kerry 1916-1921*, writes the County experienced little violence. Joy argues that this lack of activity in the county can be explained by a desire of IRA men not to provoke the wrath of the crown forces, together, with a fear for their own personal safety and safety of their families.³² The original commander of the Castlebar battalion also deliberately avoided organising any engagement out of fear of reprisals.³³ Brian Hughes, recently, has also noted that the IRA in Meath, Clare and Wexford actively prevented operations from going ahead to prevent reprisals.³⁴ Seamus Robinson, in Tipperary, believed many under his command would not involve themselves in violent actions for fear of reprisals against their

²⁶ Cornelius Brosnan, BMH, WS, 1123.

²⁷ Michael Pierce, BMH, WS, 1190.

²⁸ Denis Quille, MSP, 34, REF12059.

²⁹ Augusteijn, *From public defiance to guerrilla warfare*, p.164.

³⁰ Patrick Lyons, BMH, WS, 1166.

³¹ Fitzpatrick, *Politics and Irish life*, p. 31.

³² Joy, *The IRA in Kerry*, pp 96-104.

³³ Augusteijn, *From public defiance to guerrilla warfare*, p. 129.

³⁴ Hughes, *Defying the IRA*, pp 54-5.

property.³⁵ This reflects a general pattern as Kalyvas has noted in relation to guerrilla conflicts in general that sometimes insurgents in fact stop their activities locally to prevent indiscriminate violence against civilians they know.³⁶

Despite some IRA activists deciding to curtail their activities to prevent reprisals, on the whole, I would contend, the activities of the crown forces primarily acted as a galvanising force for the IRA. *The Manchester Guardian* noted, before larger reprisals had even taken place in Kerry in November 1920, that

the truth is that the intensive policy in counties like Cork, Galway, and Kerry, where soldiers, police, “Black and Tans” and cadets raid and search continually and threaten and terrorise Volunteers has only stiffened the very spirit which it was sought to suppress...reprisals and terrorism cow the general population, but they make the more desperate the most sought-after men.³⁷

Similarly, in 1998 Peter Hart noted the arrival of the new recruits from mid-1920 acted primarily ‘a catalyst for violence’.³⁸ Augusteijn has written ‘members of the crown forces in places where the IRA was inactive often felt as threatened in areas as those in active areas, and thereby, through overreaction, could activate the local IRA’.³⁹ This would seem to be the case in Kerry. This equates directly with the county’s experience. This is also reflected in some IRA records. Edward Joseph Walshe, who was Vice Commandant of the north Kerry 8th Battalion, maintained that the reorganisation of the north Kerry IRA in 1921 took place ‘in order to cope with the increased activities of the crown forces’.⁴⁰

Billy Mullins, of Tralee, remembered that it was in fact the activities of the Black and Tans and Auxiliaries in November 1920 that drove IRA officers Paddy Cahill, Dan Jeffers, Paddy Paul Fitzgerald away from Tralee. They went into the Dingle peninsula, where they formed a flying column, together with Tadhg Brosnan, and went on to participate in the ambushes at Lispole, Glenbeigh, Killoglin and Ballymacandry.⁴¹

However, the Cahill column operated outside of the Tralee area. Also the fluid column of McEllistram and Cronin, rarely operated in their own native Ballymacelligott and usually in the

³⁵ Ibid, p.54.

³⁶ Kalyvas, *The logic of violence in civil wars*, p. 158.

³⁷ *The Manchester Guardian*, 2nd November 1920.

³⁸ Hart, *The IRA & its enemies*, p.82.

³⁹ Augusteijn, ‘Accounting for the emergence of violent activism’, in *Irish historical studies*, (Spring, 2007), p.330.

⁴⁰ Denis Quille, MSP 34, REF12059.

⁴¹ William Mullins, BMH, WS, 801.

south of the county. Both these examples would verify Joy's, Hughes' and Kalyvas' conclusions of insurgents not wanting to operate in their own areas through fear of bringing down reprisals on neighbours or friends.

The IRA leadership were understandably, worried that Volunteers would overreact in response to reprisals. *An t-Óglác*, like their opponents in the crown forces, called for restraint. *An t-Óglac* also seemed to believe that the Volunteers could protect people during reprisals.

...however, bitterly they [Volunteers] resent the outrages to which their fellow countrymen are being subjected, are not going in the least to lose their heads on that account... while the enemy's forces tend to become more and more bands of armed bandits and drunken hooligans, our organisation is being improved, our discipline tightened... The Volunteers will take steps to deal with marauders and to protect the citizens of the Irish Republic against these armed banditti.⁴²

In September *An t-Óglác* was in fact saying that as a result of reprisals 'our activities have increased' and called on Volunteers planning an ambush to also consider the repercussions and make contingency plans to protect areas that might be subjected to reprisals.⁴³ These were wise words, but in Kerry, at least, the IRA, unfortunately, took no such precautions and the people were at the mercy of the crown forces.

Importantly, while the activities of the crown forces galvanised the IRA into higher levels of activity resulting in the increased levels of violence in 1921, it is curious to note that this situation came about as a result of a policy directed by the crown forces against civilians. The treatment of civilians, by the crown forces, was a crucial catalysing element in the development of the changing nature and face of the conflict.

Initial activities of the crown forces in Kerry

The campaign by the crown forces, in Kerry, was in many respects, similar to that of the IRA – sporadic, inconsistent, and different in certain parts of the country and focused on certain civilians. The first new English recruits into the county appeared in July. On 24 July *The Kerryman* reported that the day before 'a number of Englishmen, wearing police caps and khaki uniforms, arrived in Tralee...and are evidently intended to supersede the local force'.⁴⁴ Tadhg

⁴² *An t-Óglác*, 7 Aug. 1920.

⁴³ *Ibid*, 15 Sept. 1920.

⁴⁴ *The Kerryman*, 24 Jul. 1920.

Kennedy made it his business as Intelligence Officer to know the characters of the new policemen in Tralee, whom he characterised in a way that would become the standard stereotype: ‘most of them took excessive drink, some had criminal records and some a few were decent men who came over to earn the £1 a day as they were unable to get a decent job in Great Britain’.⁴⁵ The first reporting of the new recruits in Kerry was in July. Their deployment does seem to have been a sporadic process, for instance, they were first seen in County Galway in February 1920 and in Tipperary in March.⁴⁶ Leeson has noted that more of these new recruits were sent to counties that appeared more effected by violence than others.⁴⁷ This may partially explain their late arrival in Kerry, which the crown forces, as will be seen below, considered to have been comparatively peaceful.

The first major reprisal to take place in the county was also in July. On 11 July Rathmore barracks was attacked resulting in the death of a constable with another constable and sergeant wounded.⁴⁸ In response Black and Tans, from Killarney, came out to Rathmore on 12 July and burned the town’s creamery.⁴⁹ Creameries were the heart of the economic life for much of rural Ireland and their destruction meant the people in the area around the creamery would not have access to milk. In 1920 -21 the crown forces attacked at least ten across Kerry.⁵⁰ Attacking creameries were the first acts of collective punishment instigated by the crown forces and symbolised how the crown forces would make the entire community suffer rather than just go after the guilty parties. Historians have stressed that reprisals were discriminate as opposed to indiscriminate, but attacking creameries is evidence of the opposite being true. The burning of creameries also goes against the comments made by the leadership of the crown forces that only those connected to Sinn Féin suffered.

The summer through winter of 1920 saw some of the worst reprisals of the conflict. The Tuam reprisal occurred on 20 July.⁵¹ Balbriggan was burned on 24 September,⁵² and Mallow on 28 September.⁵³ This reprisal policy would culminate in 1920 with the destruction of much of the centre of Cork in early December.⁵⁴ Even before any major reprisal had taken place in Kerry the reprisals occurring in other counties were creating real fears and apprehensions

⁴⁵ Tadhg Kennedy, BMH, WS, 1413.

⁴⁶ Leeson, *The Black and Tans*, p. 24.

⁴⁷ Ibid, p. 26.

⁴⁸ Weekly Summary, Week ending 11 – 18 Jul. 1920, TCD BL/CO 904/148.

⁴⁹ Manus Moynihan, BMH, WS, 1066.

⁵⁰ See figures provided below.

⁵¹ *The Kerryman*, 24 Jul. 1920.

⁵² Ibid, 25 Sept. 1920.

⁵³ Ibid, 2 Oct.1920.

⁵⁴ Townshend, *The republic*, p. 218.

among people in Kerry. When the Annascaul ambush took place on 19 August no serious reprisal had yet occurred in Kerry but people in the area fearing a reprisal to be imminent ‘evacuated’ the village. Ex-service men in the town, apparently, approached the local IRA in the hopes of obtaining arms to protect Annascaul from crown forces who they believed were going to attack their homes.⁵⁵ On 28 August *The Kerryman* also advised readers to contact insurance agents if they were worried about reprisals effecting their property.⁵⁶

The next large burning was in October. On 18 October the creamery in Abbeydorney was burned. The Manager Mr J. O’Donovan described what happened. A mixed group of RIC and Black and Tans arrived at the Creamery and were preparing to set the place on fire, one RIC man ordered O’Donovan to leave and shots were fired over his head while doing so. The crown forces proceeded to load the creamery’s butter and cheese onto their own lorries. Mr O’Donovan was allowed take away the Creamery’s records from the office but he was beaten in the process and some of the Black and Tans made a failed attempt to break into the Creamery’s safe. The Creamery was then burned. O’Donovan said of those involved that ‘several of them were very drunk’.⁵⁷ Another burning of a creamery took place a few days later when on 24 October there was an attempt to burn the Creamery in Lixnaw,⁵⁸ but local people came to the scene and managed to put the fire out.⁵⁹

By November three creameries had been attacked at Rathmore, Abbeydorney and Lixnaw – the latter two were also attacked, interestingly, without provocation. Attacks without provocations would become a recurring element in the campaign by the crown forces. The study of the crown forces in Ireland should not be restricted to looking solely at the burnings of creameries or larger towns. In fact the reprisals of November were in essence the large scale culmination of a long series of small scale attacks on the civilian population that had begun in the Spring – particularly in Tralee. Most of the attacks also occurred, as with the case of the two creameries, without provocation.

On 4 April, Thomas Clifford who ran the “1916 shop” in Tralee, along with three other men were arrested.⁶⁰ On Tuesday morning 4th May it was found that the window of Mr Eamonn O’Connor’s shop on Nelson Street had been smashed, as were the windows of the office of Mr J.D. O’Connell, solicitor, on the other side of the street and the windows of Tralee Urban

⁵⁵ Patrick Houlihan, BMH, WS, 959.

⁵⁶ *The Kerryman*, 28 Aug. 1920.

⁵⁷ Martin, *Ireland in insurrection*, p.127.

⁵⁸ *The Manchester Guardian*, 30 Oct. 1920.

⁵⁹ *The Kerryman*, 30 Oct. 1920.

⁶⁰ *Cork Examiner*, 6 Apr. 1920.

District Council member, Mr T. Denehy's home on Bridge Street. All three were Sinn Féin members.⁶¹ Tralee was relatively quiet for the next few months but in the evening of 24 June, in response to the bombing of Michael Costello's pub on Russell Street by the IRA, stones were thrown through the window of the public house of a Mr O'Sullivan, on Lower Bridge Street. Mr O'Sullivan was described as a 'prominent' supporter of Sinn Féin.⁶²

It was only up until quite recently that the Volunteers were continuing to patrol Tralee at night, until 'some weeks ago... they were held up by the military and police'.⁶³ And much of the trouble in the town seems to have begun with a desire to prevent republicans acting as police and enforcing their decrees on publicans, covered in a previous chapter. On Saturday 7 August at around 11.30 in Tralee members of the RIC and military came out on to the main thoroughfares of the town and began to discharge their weapons. *The Kerryman* noted 'nothing untoward' had occurred to cause the shootings. Most people managed to find shelter, the Volunteers came and warned people to turn off all lights, and some people still on the streets were searched and questioned. The shooting continued for some time, *The Kerryman* wrote the shooting was intended to 'intimidate' as the Volunteers the previous evening had gone to several pubs to insist they close at ten.⁶⁴ In any case the shooting had caused 'a state of terror'. The *Cork Examiner* noted the irony of the situation as 'it is a strange commentary of the present military regime that they [the crown forces] constitute the only element of trouble. The Volunteers were busy on Saturday night seeing that all the licensed premises were closed at the proper time'.⁶⁵

The events of 7 August would be replayed on a number of occasions in Tralee, with slight variations over the next few months. On 11 August, late in the evening, soldiers and police held up civilians 'on their way homewards' in Tralee.⁶⁶ On the evening of 20 August a motor lorry containing members of the crown forces passed through Blennerville and Tralee discharging shots.⁶⁷

On 28 August *The Kerryman* reported that over the last few days people were being held up and searched in Tralee. It also advised people worried about their property to contact insurance agents in the town.⁶⁸ On 22 September, the *Cork Examiner* was reporting that the people of

⁶¹ *The Kerryman*, 8 May 1920.

⁶² *Cork Examiner*, 26 Jun. 1920.

⁶³ *Idem*.

⁶⁴ *The Kerryman*, 14 Aug. 1920.

⁶⁵ *Cork Examiner*, 11 Aug. 1920.

⁶⁶ *Ibid*, 16 Aug. 1920.

⁶⁷ *The Kerryman*, 21 Aug. 1920.

⁶⁸ *Ibid*, 28 Aug. 1920.

Tralee 'are being nightly subjected to ill-treatment at the hands of the English police stationed here'. The *Cork Examiner* noted that 'Tralee has been singularly immune from any trouble recently and there is not the slightest pretext or justification for the provocative tactics of these police'.⁶⁹ Similarly, on Thursday 28th October a number of civilians were beaten in Tralee, the *Cork Examiner* reflected that the motive 'is only known to the attackers'.⁷⁰

Houses were also subjected to raids. On 18 October Mr T. Clifford, whose property had been subjected to previous raids, was ordered to take down a sign outside his shop that read '1916'.⁷¹ On Friday 29 October, Mr Eamon O'Connor of Ashe Street, while talking to a neighbour was surrounded and beaten up by 'men in mufti' with a trench tool. He had been the victim of earlier attacks. Another five men were also beaten up by Black and Tans that night in the town.⁷²

This type of activity was also occurring outside of Tralee. In Listowel the crown forces engaged in a number of aggressive searches of suspected republicans. On 5 August it was reported that members of the Yorkshire regiment marched through Listowel at ten o'clock in the evening and 'they knocked up the occupants of some of the business houses and made most minute searches, ransacking beds and furniture all over the premises'.⁷³ At the tail end of August and beginning of September the military began making searches in Listowel in the houses of 'ardent' Sinn Féin supporters.⁷⁴

The crown forces' activities, in north Kerry, tended to only affect those connected to the republican movement – in Tralee it appears to have been more indiscriminate. But there were unpleasant exceptions. On 21 September it was reported that a farmer named James Kennelly was held up in Listowel while driving home to Woodford in his horse and trap. Members of the Yorkshire regiment decided to take the trap and throw it into the Feale River. Kennelly was, however, compensated by the officer commanding the Yorkshire detachment in the town.⁷⁵ Beatings also began to be reported in the town. On 23 October *The Kerryman* reported that Mr W. Broderick, while going back to his apothecary shop, on William Street, Listowel, was held up by an Auxiliary, who asked him if he was a 'Sinn Feiner'. Broderick informed him he was not but the Auxiliary punched him in the face anyway.⁷⁶

⁶⁹ *Cork Examiner*, 22 Sept. 1920.

⁷⁰ *Ibid*, 29 Oct. 1920.

⁷¹ *Ibid*, 23 Oct. 1920.

⁷² *The Kerryman*, 30 Oct. 1920.

⁷³ *Cork Examiner*, 5 Aug. 1920.

⁷⁴ *The Kerryman*, 4 Sept. 1920.

⁷⁵ *Cork Examiner*, 21 Sept. 1920.

⁷⁶ *The Kerryman*, 23 Oct. 1920.

Besides the incident with the horse and trap and the beating of Mr Broderick the crown forces in Listowel appear to have been more disciplined in that there were no incidents of random discharging of weapons or breaking of windows, most of their activities were restricted to searches, showing that the military were better than the Black and Tans in maintaining discipline.

The crown forces in Dingle acted like their colleagues in Tralee –being aggressive without any obvious provocation. Late on Saturday night, 14 August, some members of the crown forces seem to have discharged their weapons on the streets of Dingle, no one was hurt.⁷⁷ According to the author of ‘Dingle Doings’ in *The Kerryman* ‘there has been much military activity through the town and western districts, but fortunately no untoward incident has occurred between civilians and the forces of the crown’.⁷⁸ On Friday 15 October at about midnight the people of Dingle were awoken to the sound of gunfire: ‘the firing lasted intermittently for about two hours. The firing was reputedly from a party of military who had just arrived in the town thankfully ‘nobody was hurt, nor was any damage done’.

A similar picture of unprovoked, and thoughtless, hostility by the crown forces also appears in Cahirciveen. On 4 September, a Saturday, ‘firing was freely indulged in’ by members of the crown forces causing crowds to disperse in Cahirciveen. *The Kerryman* reflected: ‘it is not understood what object or purpose it attained by these acts. The town of Cahirciveen and adjacent districts can well rank amongst the most peaceable places in the whole country’.⁷⁹ In Killarney it was reported on 27 July that soldiers were seen discharging their rifles in the Killarney railway station, next to the hotel, ‘the cause of the firing is unknown’.⁸⁰

Unprovoked aggression on the part of the crown forces continued and began to spread to the quieter areas. In early December Killarney was subjected to an attack from the British Army. In the morning of Wednesday 1 December in Killarney four or five uniformed men ‘sallied forth and proceeded to smash indiscriminately nearly all the windows in Killarney; most of the damage was done by stones from the street, collected in a bucket, and then thrown at the windows and ‘the property belonged to people of the most conflicting politics, views and religious denominations’.⁸¹ *The Kerryman* later clarified that exactly the windows in 57 houses were smashed ‘including those of the principal shopkeepers’ in the town.⁸²

⁷⁷ Ibid, 21 Aug.1920.

⁷⁸ Ibid, 9 Oct. 1920.

⁷⁹ Ibid, 11 Sept. 1920.

⁸⁰ Ibid, 29 Jul. 1920.

⁸¹ *The Kerryman*, 4 Dec.1920.

⁸² Ibid, 11 Dec. 1920.

In the first week of December *The Manchester Guardian* also reported that the East Lancashire regiment, one night on an unspecified date, broke exactly 57 windows in Killarney. The window breakers were seemingly indiscriminate breaking the windows belonging to both 'loyalists and Sinn Feiners'. The East Lancashires denied any of their men were involved and claimed the windows had been broken by 'ill-disposed civilians' to 'stir up ill feeling between the local residents and his Majesty's forces.'⁸³ In Cahirciveen on the evening of Tuesday 30 November the crown forces engaged in unprovoked attack with the 'wholesale destruction of plate glass windows' being reported.⁸⁴ Why these unprovoked acts occurred at all is hard to understand. The fact that they often took place late at night would suggest the presence of alcohol and a desire to strike out at any known 'Sinn Feiners'. Another possible explanation is that these men felt that their policy of terror would stamp out any IRA activity before it even occurred – in other words frightening the IRA out of taking any decisive action. Whatever the case this policy of unprovoked aggression failed and reveal the accuracy of Augusteijn's conclusions that the crown forces acting in such aggressive manner only served to 'activate' the IRA.⁸⁵

November 1920 and the change of dynamics

In late October *The Manchester Guardian* described Kerry as 'a district which, as...one can find has been singularly quiet and unsullied by murder of police'.⁸⁶ Likewise Hugh Martin, a journalist for the *Daily News*, who reported on the situation in Tralee and published an account of his experiences in 1921 in a book called *Ireland in Insurrection*, believed Tralee, before November, to be 'one of the most crimeless (areas) in Ireland'.⁸⁷ Previous sections have shown this was certainly not the case.

The month of November 1920 changed the nature of the conflict in County Kerry. The crown forces had been making a nuisance of themselves and interrupting daily life, but actual killing of civilians or arson was still relatively rare. This was all to change. The *Cork Examiner* reported on 2 November 'a series of shootings occurred in various parts of Kerry last night'.⁸⁸ All the attacks in the last section were generally unprovoked but when provoked the crown forces proved to be intensely more aggressive.

⁸³ *The Manchester Guardian*, 10 Dec. 1920.

⁸⁴ *Cork Examiner*, 2 Dec. 1920.

⁸⁵ Augusteijn, 'Accounting for the emergence of violent activism', in *Irish historical studies*, (Spring, 2007) p.330.

⁸⁶ *The Manchester Guardian*, 30 Oct. 1920.

⁸⁷ Martin, *Ireland in insurrection*, p.139.

⁸⁸ *Cork Examiner*, 2 Nov. 1920.

On the evening of 31 October the Kerry No.1 Brigade orchestrated a series of attacks on the RIC across the county. On 31 near Abbeydorney Constables William Madden was shot and died from his wounds, while constables Corbey and McCarthy were both wounded in the attack. Near Kilorglin Constables Caseley and Evans were shot dead. In Ballyduff a police patrol was attacked resulting in one Constable's death and another being seriously injured. In Tralee constables Bright and Waters were kidnapped by the IRA. According to Fianna member, Michael O'Leary, Bright and Waters were shot soon afterwards and buried at Blennerville beach.⁸⁹ In Dingle the next day three on-duty constables were fired on but none were injured. On 1 November Constable Muir and Constable James Coughlan, both stationed at Ballylongford, were on patrol when they were accosted and kidnapped and subjected to particularly harsh treatment in captivity.⁹⁰

In response a series of reprisals began across Kerry, but most notably in what was called 'the siege of Tralee'. These first large scale reprisals, were in response to concerted IRA actions, however, the reprisals were more aggressive, long drawn out and indiscriminate than the actions to which they were responding. Certainly the November reprisals can be regarded as a type of over-reaction. David Fitzpatrick has correctly written that 'the reprisal[s] [were] always more vicious than the incident provoking it'.⁹¹

Tralee IRA man, Paddy Paul Fitzgerald, recalled that 'after [the attacks] which followed a week of terror which will live in the memory of those who went through it until the day they die' and that the Tans 'appeared to have gone mad'.⁹² One member of the crown forces was reported, by The British Labour Party's commission to Ireland, to have said in response to the attacks 'Bad work in Kerry to-night. Three of the crown forces have been killed, but Tralee will pay for it'.⁹³ Michael Doyle, an IRA officer in Tralee, recalled the beginning of the reprisal on the evening of 1 November and its sequels:

Some time around 12 O'Clock...the Tans came out in force and burned down the Town Hall and several shops in the town. On the following day and several days afterwards the Tans appeared to have gone absolutely mad. They shot and plundered all around them.

⁸⁹ Michael O'Leary, BMH, WS, 1167.

⁹⁰ *Cork Examiner*, 3 Nov. 1920.

⁹¹ David Fitzpatrick, 'Ireland since 1870' in R.F. Foster (ed), *The Oxford illustrated history of Ireland* (Oxford, 1989), p.250.

⁹² Paddy Paul Fitzgerald, BMH, WS, 1079.

⁹³ *Report of the Labour Commission to Ireland* (London, 1921), p.19.

As the reprisal began according to Doyle ‘all the prominent members of the IRA left the town’.⁹⁴ The Black and Tans reportedly came out on to the streets in the evening and began ‘shooting frenziedly’.⁹⁵

On the 4 November, the Special Correspondent, for the *Manchester Guardian*, wrote that he had arrived in Tralee on 1 November and found the town ‘deserted’, and, shortly after arrival he and other journalists were questioned by Black and Tans, who said they were looking to ‘do in’ the journalist from the *Daily News*. Hugh Martin, the journalist they were looking for, was actually with the group, and gave a different name.⁹⁶

Martin, himself, recalled that the reprisals began at half past ten on Monday evening with lorry loads of crown forces coming from Ballymullen Barracks who ‘kept up a carnival of shouting and shooting until dawn’.⁹⁷ Similarly, the *Cork Examiner* described the scene: ‘hellish cries [by the crown forces], [who] kept up a fusillade of fire throughout the night’.⁹⁸ That evening John Conway, was shot on Upper Rock Street; two lorry loads of Black and Tans were driving by and shot him dead in his door way. Conway, a 57-year-old painter, with six children, was shot while returning from mass.⁹⁹ An ex-soldier named Simon O’Connor and an old woman named Walsh were admitted to the Tralee infirmary with wounds from indiscriminate firing by the Black and Tans that evening – O’Connor died from his wounds.

It was also reported the Black and Tans fired on the congregation of St John’s Church, Castle Street, as they were leaving Mass.¹⁰⁰ The County Hall was also burned that night, which housed the County Council offices, the Urban District Council offices and the offices of the Harbour Board.¹⁰¹ After a number of raids, over the previous few months, the crown forces, finally, burned the “1916 Shop” belonging to Thomas Clifford.¹⁰² During the night the police were calling out that the town needed to go into mourning for the loss of their colleagues.¹⁰³ The reprisal also does not seem to have been orchestrated by an officer. Martin, in fact, noticed that on the first night the Black and Tans were ‘roaming the streets without an officer’.¹⁰⁴

⁹⁴ Michael Doyle, BMH, WS, 1038.

⁹⁵ *The Manchester Guardian*, 12 Nov. 1920.

⁹⁶ *Ibid*, 4 Nov.1920.

⁹⁷ Martin, *Ireland in insurrection*, p.140.

⁹⁸ *Cork Examiner*, 2 Nov. 1920.

⁹⁹ *Ibid*, 3 Nov. 1920.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid*, 2 Nov.1920.

¹⁰¹ *Report of the Labour Commission to Ireland* (London, 1921), p.19.

¹⁰² *Cork Examiner*, 2 Nov. 1920.

¹⁰³ *The Manchester Guardian*, 4 Nov. 1920.

¹⁰⁴ Martin, *Ireland in insurrection*, p.146.

The Manchester Guardian reported on 3 November that on the second day of the reprisal, Tuesday 2 November, 'The town [Tralee] is in a state of abject terror... The residents have left the town in great numbers'. The paper's special correspondent recorded that Black and Tans came out on to the street and demanded all businesses be shut by two o'clock in the afternoon and any business found open after two would be blown up. He had heard the Black and Tans demand that the town go into mourning for their two dead comrades as the town had previously gone into mourning after the death of Terence MacSwiney.

People are leaving in great numbers. All places of business are closed and heavily shuttered. The streets are vacant and it is no exaggeration to say that everybody here is in a state of abject terror... There are indications that the military may strive to restrain the police, but if they should carry out their threat it may be impossible to send you any further messages.

It was later reported that 24-year-old Thomas Wall had been killed at The Mall, that day. He had been told to put up his hands, which he did. He was then hit with the butt of a rifle and told to run, he was shot dead while he was running away from his tormentors.

The night before the crown forces had posted up notices declaring that if the two kidnapped Black and Tans were not returned 'reprisals of a kind so far unheard of in Ireland' would follow'.¹⁰⁵ Martin, talked with a few Black and Tans who told him 'There was no trouble here till three days ago. Then they declared war, and war it's going to be'.¹⁰⁶ According to the *Cork Examiner* 'the police called on the shopkeepers to close down for the funerals of their companions, stating that they deserved as much respect as the Lord Mayor of Cork'.¹⁰⁷

The next day things became a little calmer, albeit briefly. On 3 November 'a strong detachment' of Lancashire Fusiliers 'moved into the town and patrolled the deserted streets' and the police had been confined to their barracks. *The Manchester Guardian* gave a description of conditions in the town resembling those of one in France on the western front.

Any town along the French front during the war momentarily expecting bombardment could not have spent the hours of apprehension that did the handful of people who remained in the town last night. The bulk of the people had fled, and many of them had taken their hastily gathered treasures with them. Every shop and place of business was not only closed but heavily shuttered and

¹⁰⁵ *The Manchester Guardian*, 3 Nov. 1920.

¹⁰⁶ Martin, *Ireland in insurrection*, p.140.

¹⁰⁷ *Cork Examiner*, 3 Nov. 1920.

barricaded. What people remained kept to their houses – to the back rooms of them... The East Lancashires withdrew after daybreak, and are unaware that they earned the deep gratitude of the people of this much tried town.¹⁰⁸

During the third day, Wednesday 3 November in the morning according to the *Cork Examiner* ‘business is partially reopened but a state of tension still prevails. Shutters are not removed from shops and the people are moving around cautiously’.¹⁰⁹

That night, however, things would get much worse in what the *Cork Examiner* described as ‘an unprecedented outbreak of terrorism’.¹¹⁰ The *Manchester Guardian* reported on 4 November: ‘All was tranquil while the military remained on the streets, but they withdrew about 2.30 a.m. and within a couple of hours numbers of uniformed men left the police barracks’. Carrying hatchets and crowbars ‘they started to attack and set fire to the shops of prominent Sinn Feiners in different parts of the town... The sky was lighted up with fires in different parts of the town’.¹¹¹ The *Cork Examiner* reported ‘the sky was lighted up with fires in different parts of the town, from Rock Street on one [the western] end to Boherbee on the other [the eastern]... scenes of the wildest panic ensued. The screams of women and children were heard from the neighbourhood of the burning buildings mingled with the ring of rifle fire and the explosions of bombs’.¹¹²

In Rock Street, on the western end of the town, Thomas Slattery’s grocery and flour store was burned; the flames also enveloped the neighbouring grocery and spirit business of Mrs Brosnan. Mrs Brosnan and her daughters escaped in their night garments and some of the girls had to jump from the upstairs windows. There was also a failed attempt to burn Thomas Denehy’s licensed premises on Rock Street.¹¹³

In Upper Castle Street, on the eastern side, the licensed premises of Mrs Dunne was set on fire and ‘demolished’. Mrs Dunne and her family had recently left Tralee. Then Mrs O’Rourke’s licensed premises, Boherbee, was attacked. The crown forces broke in and told Mrs O’Rourke and her daughter to leave the house, they then set fire to the kitchen and left. But ‘Volunteers arrived soon after and succeeded in extinguishing the fire before much damage was done’.¹¹⁴ The newsagents of Mr Eamon O’Connor, Ashe Street, that had been subjected to previous raids

¹⁰⁸ *The Manchester Guardian*, 4 Nov. 1920.

¹⁰⁹ *Cork Examiner*, 4 Nov. 1920.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid*, 5 Nov. 1920.

¹¹¹ *The Manchester Guardian*, 5 Nov. 1920.

¹¹² *Cork Examiner*, 5 Nov. 1920.

¹¹³ *The Manchester Guardian*, 5 Nov. 1920.

¹¹⁴ *Cork Examiner*, 5 Nov. 1920.

over the last few months, was then burned and the flames spread to the neighbouring premises of Mr James Murphy, a solicitor, and caused serious damage. According to *The Manchester Guardian* ‘All the premises attacked were owned by prominent Sinn Feiners’.¹¹⁵ Mr Murphy, does not seem to have had a connection with the republican movement, and his two sons had fought in the war.¹¹⁶ The grocery shop of Mr Talbot, Ashe Street, was also attacked ‘because his name appeared in Irish over the door’. No substantial damage seems to have been done though.¹¹⁷ The military were re-deployed at five in the morning ‘and did their utmost to assist in putting out the fires...the civilian population expressed their gratitude to them (the military) for their efforts in saving life and property during the night’.¹¹⁸

The night of 3 November was the worst in terms of sheer physical damage but the crown forces insisted that all shops remain closed which caused greater hardship for the people who decided to stay in the town as the week went on. The next day, 4 November, the following notice appeared posted up in the town:

Final notice

Take notice that all business premises, factories, shops &c, in Tralee must be kept closed and work suspended until such time as the police in Sinn Fein custody are returned. Anyone disobeying this order will be dealt with in a drastic manner.

All the people of Tralee were keeping indoors ‘while hundreds are fleeing to the country from the scene of terror’.¹¹⁹ The *Cork Examiner* reported ‘passing through the lane ways this morning people – men, women and children- were fleeing taking with them mattresses, bedsteads and everything they could conveniently remove to make shelter for themselves for the night’.¹²⁰

By Friday it was becoming evident that the closure of all the shops was resulting in food shortages as ‘business in the town is still completely suspended’, resulting in a shortage of food supplies: ‘the bread supply is exhausted as the bakeries closed down like all other establishments fearing the drastic measures threatened...the people are in a pitiable plight through the lack of fuel and food’.

¹¹⁵ *The Manchester Guardian*, 5 Nov. 1920.

¹¹⁶ *Cork Examiner*, 5 Nov. 1920.

¹¹⁷ *The Manchester Guardian*, 12 Nov. 1920.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid*, 5 Nov. 1920.

¹¹⁹ *Idem*.

¹²⁰ *Cork Examiner*, 5 Nov. 1920.

On the Friday morning the military announced that fairs, markets and public assemblies within three miles of the Tralee post office were banned. The *Cork Examiner* noted that this would make the situation worse as it would prevent other food stuffs from coming into the town. There was also a dire shortage of fuel, on Friday morning it was reported that women were removing 'the charred timbers of the burned houses for fuel'.¹²¹

On Saturday 6 November

all business places and banks are closed... [and the Town had] the appearance of a deserted village, if not for the succession of motor lorries, with police firing the occasional volley, as if to remind the inhabitants that they are the only power that rule now, and that they have every reason to know that they wield supreme control.

The *Cork Examiner* reported that on the Saturday Black and Tans were posted outside of bakeries 'and at bayonet point sent famishing women and children from their doors'. One Black and Tan was heard to remark 'You wanted us to starve, but we will starve you.' Merchants in the town made two deputations to the military who maintained that they were powerless to intervene with the civil authorities.¹²² This would suggest the military in the town were not particularly exercised about the reprisal. They were involved in putting out fires on 3 November, but the worst reprisals only occurred after the military patrols had withdrawn and they made no attempts to stop the police leaving their barracks or actually preventing the burnings. If not actively involved the military were certainly willing to turn a blind eye.

On the Sunday the Black and Tans decided to engage in arson again. On the Sunday, 7 November, the grocery and spirit shop of a Mr Talbot, of Ashe Street, was 'wrecked by bomb'. His house had also previously been attacked earlier in the week. He had been threatened earlier in the day to remove the Irish language name from the front of his shop. It was also reported that there were failed attempts to burn the Technical School and Library in the town on the Sunday.¹²³

By the start of the next week the *Cork Examiner* reported that 'the reign of terror in Tralee...only seems to be increasing in vigour'.¹²⁴ By Monday 8 November the *Manchester Guardian* was reporting that

¹²¹ Ibid, 6 Nov. 1920.

¹²² Ibid, 8 Nov.1920.

¹²³ Ibid, 9 Nov.1920.

¹²⁴ Idem.

The privations, particularly in the case of the poorer classes, are appalling and starvation has by now entered many a home. The breadwinners in many cases were left without wages on Saturday and some only received partial wages... At the rifle muzzle starving people are prevented from purchasing the necessities of life with their meagre resources, and when a shopkeeper dares to open the place is entered and the proprietor is compelled to close under threats, even the pawn shops, the last refuge of poverty, are forcibly closed. The policy of frightfulness is advanced a further stage by creamery proprietors being prevented from taking milk from the farmers with the result that these have no way of disposing of it. At noon to-day a party of some twelve Black and Tans proceeded to clear the almost deserted streets, shouting at the top of their voices and occasionally discharging shots. They fired point blank up McGowen's lane, a narrow congested outlet, and it is surprising that lives were not lost.¹²⁵

On Tuesday 9 November Dublin Castle was claiming that all businesses in the town had re-opened. The *Manchester Guardian* was reporting that on Tuesday 'the police gave permission' for butcher shops and bakeries to open.¹²⁶

By Wednesday 10 *The Manchester Guardian* was reporting that 'the town of Tralee has received permission to resume business'. The previous day the following notice was posted around the town:

Business may be resumed in Tralee tomorrow (Wednesday) in view of the hardship imposed on loyal subjects. Other means will be resorted to for the recovery of the police in Sinn Fein custody. Public houses will remain open up to the usual hour.

On the Wednesday many shops remained closed.¹²⁷ 'The occupants of many business houses took refuge in country districts are yet unaware of the removal of the embargo and their houses are still closed'. However, the police did visit the business premises that were open and inquired as to whether all the assistants were at work.¹²⁸ One visitor to the town described it as like a place 'suffering from the plague' and that 'the armed police are practically always on the streets'.¹²⁹

¹²⁵ *The Manchester Guardian*, 9 Nov 1920.

¹²⁶ *Ibid*, 10 Nov. 1920.

¹²⁷ *Ibid*, 11 Nov. 1920.

¹²⁸ *Cork Examiner*, 11 Nov. 1920.

¹²⁹ *Ibid*, 10 Nov. 1920.

Most of the available documentation suggests that there was a large degree of indiscriminate shooting, looting and assaults occurred that is unfortunately hard to quantify. But some available evidence would suggest that in some of these assaults they still knew who they were targeting. Michael O’Leary recalled that James Stack, Austin’s brother, was severely beaten and made get on his knees and swear loyalty to the crown.¹³⁰

On Thursday 10 November Dublin Castle issued a statement regarding the situation in Tralee, first highlighting the number of IRA attacks that had occurred in the last few days, and that

The maintenance of rigorous discipline under the most unparalleled conditions which to-day exists in many parts of Ireland, is a task of extreme difficulty. No effort is being omitted, however, to ensure that strict discipline shall be observed.¹³¹

The use of the word ‘shall’ seems to suggest that in the future stricter discipline would be enforced and perhaps a tacit or reluctant admission that things in Tralee had got out of hand.

The Labour Party’s report on Ireland wrote that the reprisal had a lasting impact on the people of the town and it was a long time before things could get back to some kind of normality.

Tralee more than any other place visited by the Commission exemplifies the demoralising effects of coercion, and reprisals...The whole population [of Tralee]seemed to be sunk in the depths morbid fear and contagious depression...Petty tyranny, beatings, intimidation, threats of violence against husband uttered to wives, brutal assaults to make boys foreswear Sinn Féin, to denounce the Pope, to spit on photographs of De Valera, to chant the ‘The battle of cry’ of the RIC and innumerable other methods of terrorism, which were reported to the commission, had left their marks on the inhabitants.¹³²

David Fitzpatrick noted in 1977 that ‘local police reports are remarkable for what they failed to say about reprisals’; this is certainly the case in Kerry, where the crown forces were reluctant to admit any kind of responsibility.¹³³ For his report for November the County Inspector noted that there had been some fires in Tralee at the start of the month but ‘the perpetrators were

¹³⁰ Michael O’Leary, BMH, WS, 1167.

¹³¹ *Cork Examiner*, 11 Nov. 1920.

¹³² *Report of the Labour Commission to Ireland*, p. 31.

¹³³ Fitzpatrick, *Politics and Irish life 1913-1923*, pp.30-1.

unknown'.¹³⁴ However, as was suggested in a previous chapter the County Inspectors do seem to have believed that the 'stern' action taken by the crown forces created real improvements.

As a result of the...action taken, following on the murders on 31st October...an improvement has been affected in the attitude of the general body of the people and the number of those willing to engage in outrage has reduced.¹³⁵

November reprisals outside of Tralee

The Tralee reprisal was particularly intensive, not least due to the fact that it was so long drawn out but much of the rest of the County was also subjected to reprisals. Mrs Julia Quille, Denis' wife, home was raided in Listowel, and she recalled that after the early November offensive raids on her home became 'more intensive and savage than ever before'.¹³⁶

According to Richard Glavin, eight lorry loads of Black and Tans arrived in Ballyduff on 1 November and 'looted every shop in the town and burned a public house of a woman named Mrs Lovatt'.¹³⁷ The Creamery in the town was also burned.¹³⁸ Together with two homes, one belonging to a Mr James Boyle, the other victim was not named.¹³⁹

Patrick Lyons recalled 'several lorry loads of Tans arrived in Ballyduff and shot dead there a member of the IRA, John Houlihan. They burned down several houses in the area, after which they arrived in Lixnaw and fired shots into houses in the village and terrorised the people for a couple of hours'.¹⁴⁰ James Houlihan, who was part of the attack on the police at Ballyduff, recalled that his house was the first raided. James was not at home, but his younger brother John was. John was a member of the IRA but not involved in the attack.

They seized him (John), not giving him time to dress, pulled him downstairs and out to the side of the road, placed him against a ditch and riddle[d] him with bullets...They had previously dragged my mother out on to the roadside to witness the shooting.¹⁴¹

¹³⁴ CI, MR, November 1920, County of Kerry, CO 904/113.

¹³⁵ Idem.

¹³⁶ Denis Quille, MSP 34, REF12059.

¹³⁷ Richard Glavin, BMH, WS, 1141.

¹³⁸ *Cork Examiner*, 2 Nov. 1920.

¹³⁹ Ibid, 8 Oct.1920.

¹⁴⁰ Patrick Lyons, BMH, WS, 1166.

¹⁴¹ James Houlihan, BMH, WS, 1118.

They then proceeded to burn the Houlihan's hay shed. In the account given by the *Manchester Guardian* Houlihan was bayoneted before he was shot.¹⁴² Ballyduff was again subjected to another reprisal later in the week. James Houlihan recalled:

Four nights later, the Tans burned the hay sheds and contents of two Sinn Féin peace commissioners named Timothy Hanlon and Michael Harrington, the creamery of a man named Michael Sweeney, the house of an IRA man Bill Dee and the house of two brothers named James and Michael Slattery, all of which were located in the Company area.¹⁴³

In Abbeydorney, Patrick Sheehan, of Ardfert, recalled that after the shooting in Abbeydorney the next morning 1 November, 'several houses in the village of Abbeydorney were raided and burned down by the Tans'.¹⁴⁴

Reprisals in north Kerry seems to have continued but the damage is, unfortunately, hard to quantify entirely. On Saturday 8 November the *Cork Examiner* reported that across north Kerry 'night after night the sky is lighted up with a blaze of large ricks of burning hay and straw'.¹⁴⁵ Brian O'Grady recalled that in Ballylongford, people fearing a reprisal, if the two Constables were not released, 'were becoming frantic and were already leaving the town with their beds. I turned them back with the assurance that the Tan had already been released and that the RIC fellow would be released early in the morning'.¹⁴⁶

Killorglin was also subjected to a reprisal. On 1 November it was reported that before it began 'many are leaving the town and going into the country'.¹⁴⁷ In the reprisal the public house of Denis O'Sullivan was looted, the Sinn Féin hall was burned, together with a garage and a Creamery.¹⁴⁸ The home of Fionan MacCollum, the Secretary of the Gaelic League in Kerry, was also burned. The doors and windows of several shops in the town were also damaged. Mr W.M. Sullivan, was also taken from his home and shot four times but luckily survived.¹⁴⁹

In response to the shooting in Dingle a reprisal took place in Castlegregory and a smaller one in Dingle town. Patrick O'Shea, of Castlegregory, recalled that 'the British sent a mixed lot of Tans and RIC in two lorries to hit up the Castlegregory area. They raided around Stradbally and

¹⁴² *The Manchester Guardian*, 3 Nov. 1920.

¹⁴³ James Houlihan, BMH, WS, 1118.

¹⁴⁴ Patrick Sheehan, BMH, WS, 1088.

¹⁴⁵ *Cork Examiner*, 8 Nov. 1920.

¹⁴⁶ Brian O'Grady, Where Eddie Carmody Died, Continuing old IRA days in Ballylongford', *Shannonside Annual*, NLI, MS 44, 0471, 7.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid*, 2 Nov.1920.

¹⁴⁸ Daniel Healy, BMH, WS, 1067.

¹⁴⁹ *Cork Examiner*, 2 Nov. 1920.

Castlegregory and, after getting drunk, they burned out the house of the parents of Tadhg Brosnan and attempted to burn out the house of [IRA member] Michael Duig. They also wrecked the public house of Mr Maurice Fitzgerald in Castlegregory'.¹⁵⁰

In Dingle on Monday 1 November 'there was great military activity all pedestrians being held up and searched. Reprisals were feared and a general exodus from the town took place, some people took refuge in fishing boats, others took up quarters with their rural friends'. The next day, Tuesday 2 November, Mr John Moriarty's business on John Street was burned but the people of the town came together to stop the fire and to prevent it from spreading.¹⁵¹ This man was later named as Michéal Ó Muircheartaigh, a leading officer in the Dingle IRA.¹⁵²

Despite the reprisals the IRA continued to fight – showing that the reprisals did not seem to be having the desired effect. On the evening of 5 November 1920 a mixed force of police and military were attacked on patrol near Ardfert. The crown forces returned fire and took two prisoners. The same patrol was attacked again near Causeway and again repulsed their attackers. The crown forces estimated that they killed six IRA men. There were no police casualties.¹⁵³

On 8 November the crown forces raided Ardfert. Michael McGuire after hearing the approaching lorries he ran for cover in the graveyard of the Protestant Churchyard, he was subsequently arrested and found dead in Causeway; he had 'never interfered politics'. Another young woman named Theresa O'Connell, aged 15, was shot dead at her doorway.¹⁵⁴

Kerry No.2 decided to follow suit and begin attacking the RIC, despite the brutal reprisals in the Kerry No.1 area. On 9 November Constables Turner and Woods were returning from Killarney to their station at Farranfore by train when at ten in the evening they were attacked while the train stopped at the Ballybrack station. Turner was shot dead and Woods was seriously wounded. Cronin and McEllistrim led the attacking IRA party. After an order came from GHQ to shoot all Black and Tans 'on sight'.¹⁵⁵ *The Manchester Guardian* was also reporting that on 10 November in the neighbourhood of Ballybrack between five and six farm houses had been burned as a reprisal for the shooting of Turner and Woods.¹⁵⁶ Corn sheds and agricultural

¹⁵⁰ Patrick O'Shea, BMH, WS, 1144.

¹⁵¹ *Cork Examiner*, 5 Nov. 1920.

¹⁵² Michéal Ó Muircheartaigh, 24 SP, 1349.

¹⁵³ Weekly Summary, Week ended 31 Oct. - 7 Nov. 1920, TCD BL, CO 904/149.

¹⁵⁴ *Cork Examiner*, 11 Nov. 1920.

¹⁵⁵ Thomas McEllistrim, BMH, WS, 882.

¹⁵⁶ *The Manchester Guardian*, 11 Nov. 1920.

produce were also destroyed.¹⁵⁷ A shop assistant travelling to Tralee from Killarney was taken from the train at Ballybrack and beaten. The homes burned at Ballybrack are difficult to ascertain, but, according to Michael Spillane and Michael J O’Sullivan the homes of two families called O’Meara and the home of Dan O’Donovan were burned near Ballybrack.¹⁵⁸

After the shooting of Constables Woods and Turner notices were posted up throughout Killarney ordering all shops to close from 2 to 3 PM. The military and Auxiliaries searched a number of premises in the town before the ordered curfew.¹⁵⁹ In Tralee, the crown forces attempted to suspend the economic life of Killarney. The holding of fairs and markets, within three miles of the Killarney Post Office, was also prohibited.¹⁶⁰ On 10 November, at 4.00 PM in the afternoon Constable Griffin was shot in Castleisland and seriously wounded.¹⁶¹ In response a public house was burned in the town.¹⁶² It belonged to Cornelius Brown. However unlike the other November reprisals local police and military helped assist in putting the fire out.¹⁶³

Post November

After the early November reprisals some unprovoked hostility from the crown forces, similar to the pre-November occurrences, still persisted but on a larger scale. In one instance in late November there was in fact a large scale attack on property without any known provocation. On 22 November several lorry loads of Black and Tans and regular RIC arrived in Ballylongford where they began a house-to-house search, whilst according to Brian O’Grady, looting a number of public houses. Brian O’Grady remembered that the reprisal began with a group of Black and Tans coming out from a pub drunk and starting to discharge their weapons and smash windows.¹⁶⁴ O’Grady recalled that ‘they assaulted everyone they met and fired several thousand rounds of ammunition’.¹⁶⁵

The Manchester Guardian noted ‘Firing continued through the night. A public house was burned down’.¹⁶⁶ Ballylongford IRA leader, Eddie Carmody, was also discovered and shot by the Black and Tans in the town that night. O’Grady remembered ‘having shot him, they returned

¹⁵⁷ *Cork Examiner*, 11 Nov. 1920.

¹⁵⁸ Michael Spillane and Michael J. O’Sullivan, BMH, WS, 132, 862.

¹⁵⁹ *The Kerryman*, 6 Nov. 1920.

¹⁶⁰ *Cork Examiner*, 11 Nov. 1920.

¹⁶¹ Weekly Summary, Week ended 14 - 7 Nov. 1920, TCD BL, CO 904/149.

¹⁶² *The Manchester Guardian*, 12 Nov. 1920.

¹⁶³ *The Kerryman*, 6 Nov. 1920.

¹⁶⁴ *Where Eddie Carmody Died*, NLI, MS 44, 0471, 7.

¹⁶⁵ Brian O’Grady, BMH, WS, 1390.

¹⁶⁶ *The Manchester Guardian*, 24 Nov. 1920.

to the village and burned down Collins' Creamery, a timber yard, a public house and hardware premises, some private houses, including my own, and broke windows in several other houses. During all this, the people, especially the women, were terrified. They went through a terrible ordeal'.¹⁶⁷ The *Cork Examiner* reported that the only serious damage was to 'the licensed premises of John Collins... [was] totally destroyed by fire'.¹⁶⁸ The Ballylongford reprisal, though it can hardly be described as such in the sense that it was not in response to a specific IRA action, was relatively small but, seemingly, produced some of the same results as a larger reprisal. According to Thomas Carmody 'most of the people of the village left for the countryside as they were expecting their homes to be burned down'.¹⁶⁹ Brian O'Grady recalled that after this particular reprisal life was no longer safe in north Kerry: 'Men were not safe working on farms near a road where lorries of the enemy were passing'.¹⁷⁰

This attack does seem not to have been premediated and started out as a regular search but alcohol seems to have resulted in it getting out of hand. This attack on Ballylongford did, however, occur after the large scale, and provoked, reprisals had occurred in early November – by then the dynamics had changed completely.

On some occasions raiding could become a simple excuse to loot. On 15 December Auxiliaries raided the premises of Mr D.J. Browne, a solicitor with offices on Nelson Street Tralee, and removed two safes from his office.¹⁷¹ On 27th November the Sinn Féin hall in Camp was burned and an attempt was made to burn the public house of Mrs Ashe in Castlegregory.¹⁷² Again, this incident became an excuse to plunder. The house was also looted of wine and whiskey, and the raiders attempted to burn the place by first pouring petrol on pigs and lighting them on fire inside the house. Spillane's Hotel in the town was also burned together with Tadhg Brosnan's home.¹⁷³

The preoccupation with certain individuals continued after the November reprisal together with a fixation on certain areas. It was in late November, that the soon to be locally notorious K. Company of Auxiliaries, led by Major John MacKinnon, arrived in Tralee. Mackinnon was to display a particular vigour and aptitude for his work that would result in him becoming a hate figure and eventually led to his assassination. MacKinnon had a particular preoccupation

¹⁶⁷ Brian O'Grady, BMH, WS, 1390.

¹⁶⁸ *Cork Examiner*, 24 Nov. 1920.

¹⁶⁹ Thomas Carmody, BMH, WS, 996.

¹⁷⁰ *Where Eddie Carmody Died*, NLI, MS 44, 0471, 7.

¹⁷¹ *The Kerryman*, 18 Dec. 1920.

¹⁷² *Ibid*, 4 Dec. 1920.

¹⁷³ *Cork Examiner*, 7 Dec. 1920.

with Ballymacelligott.¹⁷⁴ MacKinnon was clearly perceptive enough and had established enough intelligence on his opponents to discover that Ballymacelligott was home to Thomas MacEllistrim and John Cronin – who were largely responsible for initial IRA actions in the county. MacKinnon never got anywhere near his quarry, neither men had lived at home for months. MacKinnon would, himself, lead a party that resulted in the deaths of two Volunteers, in a particularly brutal incident. On Christmas night, at the home of Creamery manager John Byrne, Ballydwyer, near Ballymacelligott, a company of Auxiliaries broke in and shot dead Volunteers John Leen and Maurice Reidy. Mrs Byrne and her sister-in-law, pleaded for Reidy's life but were kept inside the house. According to a statement made by the Auxiliaries, in Tralee, they had ordered Leen and Reidy to put their hands up, but this order was not obeyed and they were fired upon.¹⁷⁵ The house was then burned.¹⁷⁶

On 16 April Major MacKinnon was shot while playing golf, on the golf course in Tralee, by an IRA sniper. He died about an hour later in Tralee hospital.¹⁷⁷ And though none of his attackers were from Ballymacelligott the crown forces chose to carry out a reprisal in the townland: MacKinnon's last words were allegedly 'burn Ballymac'.¹⁷⁸ According to Bessie Cahill, from Ballymacelligott, fifteen houses were burned.¹⁷⁹ According to *The Manchester Guardian* five houses were burned. They belonged to John Hayes, Mrs McEllistrim – Tom's mother's house, J. McEllistrim, Miss Reidy – who witnessed the death of her brother that Christmas, Mrs Sullivan and F. Hill. The rebuilt creamery was completely burned. The Presbytery at Clogher was also burned.¹⁸⁰ Investigations undertaken by the republican movement claimed six houses were burned.¹⁸¹ The hay shed of Mr Thomas Groves was also destroyed. The survivors recalled that the arson was undertaken by 'masked and armed men'.¹⁸² The *Cork Examiner* reflected that 'the sufferings endured by the people cannot be measured by money's worth'. Farm out houses were also attacked, including that of Richard McEllistrim 'whose calves were roasted to death'. John Reid, a tailor, was also shot while running home on hearing the approach of Lorries. 'A big area in Ballymacelligott was a reeking mass of smoking ruins this morning, and people are terrorised fearing further reprisals'.¹⁸³ Father Trant, who lost

¹⁷⁴ *Kerry's fighting story 1916-21: told by the men who made it* (Tralee, 1947), p.250.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid*, 1 Jan.1921.

¹⁷⁶ Bessie Cahill, BMH, WS, 1143.

¹⁷⁷ Weekly Summary, Week ended 17– 16 Apr. 1921. TCD BL, CO 904/150.

¹⁷⁸ Dwyer, *Tans, terror and troubles*, p. 303.

¹⁷⁹ Bessie Cahill, BMH, WS, 1143.

¹⁸⁰ *The Manchester Guardian*, 23 Apr. 1921.

¹⁸¹ List of all properties burned or partially burned in Munster from January 1921 to the Truce, UCDA, P80/108.

¹⁸² *Cork Examiner*, 6 Jun. 1921; see also Dwyer, *Tans, terror and troubles*, pp. 303-4.

¹⁸³ *Ibid*, 18 Apr. 1921.

the presbytery where he lived, would write to the press that the reprisal represented ‘man’s inhumanity to man could hardly be more strikingly exemplified than in our own inexpressibly sad case’.¹⁸⁴ Captain James Leach would later state the Crown forces could not have been responsible for the reprisal as, according to him, no motor vehicles left the Barracks in Tralee that evening.¹⁸⁵

Reprisals also occurred in Tralee in response to MacKinnon’s death on Tuesday 19 April, and, like the reprisals in north Kerry connections to the republican movement are hard to find among those who suffered.¹⁸⁶ The shops of Mrs Ruby, Mr Brosnan’s drapery in the Mall, Messrs Galvin and son general store on Bridge Street, Charles Nolan’s cycle establishment on Pembroke Street and his own private house across the street, the Railway Hotel, and the public houses of a Mr Costello, Mrs Vale and Mr Flahive all in Boherbee were all bombed. The Monument dedicated to the 1798 rebellion was also torn down. The most extensive damage was done to the offices of *The Kerryman* and *The Liberator*, on Edward Street, ‘armed men entered and smashed the valuable printing machines rendering the publication of these papers impossible’. Also ‘the bursting of the bombs did considerable damage not only in the houses where they were placed, but in the premises on the opposite sides of the streets’.¹⁸⁷

The Kerryman had long been a source of anger for the crown forces. On Thursday 10 March *The Kerryman* received the following warning in the post:

IMPORTANT NOTICE

YOU ARE HEREBY WARNED THAT IF YOU PUBLISH IN EITHER ‘THE LIBERATOR’ OR THE ‘KERRYMAN’ OR CAUSE TO BE PUBLISHED IN ANY OTHER PAPER ANY CASE HEARD AT THE ASSIZE COURT THIS DAY I.E. MARCH THE NINTH YOU DO SO AT YOUR OWN PERIL

BY ORDER

SIGNED

PRESIDENT

ANTI SINN FEIN SOCIETY.¹⁸⁸

¹⁸⁴ Ibid, 27 Apr. 1921.

¹⁸⁵ ALLEGED UNOFFICIAL REPRISAL AT OR NEAR BALLYMACELLIGOTT ON THE NIGHT OF 15/16TH APRIL 1921, Statement by Capt. & D.I. 2 James Leach, V.C., NLI, MS 31,223 (2).

¹⁸⁶ *Cork Examiner*, 21 Apr. 1921.

¹⁸⁷ *The Manchester Guardian*, 23 Apr. 1921; *Cork Examiner*, 21 Apr. 1921.

¹⁸⁸ *The Kerryman*, 12 Mar. 1921. The anti-Sinn Féin society is discussed below.

The next day ‘the police visited all the shops in the town and ordered the people to close their premises until further notice.’.¹⁸⁹ Leach would also deny that the crown forces had any involvement in the reprisals that night because in all barracks and billets in the town ‘no absentees’ were reported; they were all tucked up safely in bed, and he gave out no passes to walk the street to any members of “H” Company of Auxiliaries who he commanded.¹⁹⁰ Captain Durlacher, also of “H” Company would also maintain ‘to the best of my knowledge all the Cadets of the Denny Street garrison were all present in the quarters at Midnight’.¹⁹¹ In the Tralee reprisals none of the victims were described as having connections to Sinn Féin or the IRA. *The Kerryman* was nationalistic and pro-Sinn Féin but it did not actively encourage violence.

The dynamics of reprisals varied from reprisal to reprisal though. After Tralee the largest reprisal to occur in the county took place in Ballylongford/Ballybunion in February 1921 and bore little relation to what had occurred in Tralee. On 22 February Constable George Hewlett was shot and killed in Ballylongford village.¹⁹² And on the same day four shots were fired at Constable Banks in Ballybunion, but he escaped uninjured and there was a failed attack on the Barracks in Ballybunion.¹⁹³ After the shootings major reprisals took place in both towns. In the latter town the amusement hall was burned and there was also reported looting.¹⁹⁴ The Ballylongford reprisal was far more intensive, and initially it was reported by *The Kerryman*, that twenty houses were burned down.¹⁹⁵ This reprisal also correlates with the Fitzpatrick axiom of the reprisal being ‘more vicious than the incident provoking it’

According to Timothy Houlihan, from Ballybunion, after an attempt to shoot three Black and Tans in Ballybunion had failed the next day:

The Tans from Listowel and Tralee arrived in Ballybunion and with the Tans there started to shoot up the town burning down the Cinema. The Listowel and Tralee Tans remained in the town for about an hour and then they went to Ballylongford where they looted and burned down twenty four houses including some business premises in the town.¹⁹⁶

¹⁸⁹ *Cork Examiner*, 21 Apr. 1921.

¹⁹⁰ Bombing outrages in Tralee on the night of 19/20 April 1921, Statement by Capt. & D.I. 2 James Leach, V.C., NLI, MS 31,223 (2).

¹⁹¹ Bombing outrages in Tralee on the night of 19/20 April 1921, Statement by Capt. & D.I. 3 B.R. Durlacher, M.C., “H” Company Auxiliary Division, RIC Tralee, NLI, MS 31, 223(2).

¹⁹² Weekly Summary, Week ended 13 - 20 Feb. 1921, TCD BL, CO 904/150.

¹⁹³ *The Manchester Guardian*, 24 Feb. 1921.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid*, 26 Feb. 1921.

¹⁹⁵ *The Kerryman*, 26 Feb. 1921.

¹⁹⁶ Timothy Houlihan, BMH, WS, 969.

On 24 February *The Manchester Guardian* was also reporting that 20 houses had been burned in Ballylongford.¹⁹⁷ The next week more accurate accounts of the damage caused appeared. Mr John Collins' grocery and spirit business was destroyed. This was the second attack on Mr Collins' premises 'who had not slept in his house for some time...in fear and anticipation of...personal danger'. The public house and general store of Mr Martin Collins, Main Street, was also destroyed, as was a drapers store, and a bakery

The Kerryman wrote that 'The children of the family all infected and suffering from the mumps were thrown from their sick beds through the window by their father into the hands of their terrorised mother, who made her way around to the back of the house to receive them'. A confectioners was also attacked. 'It is estimated that between 17...and families were rendered homeless and as a result of the night's conflagrations.' The local police assisted in putting out the fires.¹⁹⁸

Edmond J. Walsh also recalled that the Black and Tans in the Ballylongford reprisal 'took out several residents and severely ill-treated them'.¹⁹⁹ According to Thomas Carmody 'they looted and raided almost every house in the village'. He estimated at least fourteen houses were burned and described women throwing children from the windows of their burning houses.²⁰⁰

Republican investigations claimed fourteen houses were burned.²⁰¹ On 5 March *The Manchester Guardian* reported that exactly seventeen properties had burned. The paper named the following properties: John Collins' licensed grocery stores and creamery, M Collins' public house, E. Sullivan's hardware store, M. Bambury's drapery store, S. Barrett's grocery store, J. McCabe's bakery, and the private houses of Edward Brandon, (ex-policeman) John Farrell and a Mr Heaphy, John Moran; Mrs Kennelly's house was set on fire but she succeeded in extinguishing the fire, together with 'several labourer's houses' that were also burned.²⁰² An American citizen, Michael Moore, was also badly beaten and his home was burned; the parish hall was also burned together with the local creamery.²⁰³

An ex-constable seems to have been able to persuade the Black and Tans and Auxiliaries involved not to burn several houses on Bridge Street. The house of John Wallace was spared when the arsonist found that he had connections with Trinity College Dublin. Paul Jones' house

¹⁹⁷ *The Manchester Guardian*, 24 Oct. 1921.

¹⁹⁸ *The Kerryman*, 5 Mar. 1921.

¹⁹⁹ Edmond J. Walsh, BMH, WS, 1170.

²⁰⁰ Thomas Carmody, BMH, WS, 996.

²⁰¹ List of all properties burned or partially burned in Munster from January 1921 to the Truce, UCDA/P80/108.

²⁰² *The Manchester Guardian*, 5 Mar. 1921 and 14 Apr. 1921.

²⁰³ *Ibid*, 5 Mar. 1921.

was also spared when they arsonists discovered his son was serving with the British Army. A Mrs Barrett's house was also spared as her late husband had served in the British Army.²⁰⁴ None of the victims had any reported links Sinn Féin or the IRA

In the 6th Divisional Headquarters' version of events the police came to investigate the shootings in Ballylongford and found 'rebels' had donned RIC uniforms expecting reinforcement to arrive to strengthen the barracks, and demanded that all civilians leave. The 'rebels' then assaulted all the civilians who would not leave and burned their property.²⁰⁵ In a piece on the reprisal in *The Kerryman* from 1935 it was reported that the police and military involved did in fact wear civilian clothes.²⁰⁶

Ballylongford in terms of physical damage was akin to the November reprisals but by 1921 the crown forces did not always react in such a manner. No consistency emerges in terms of reprisals. For instance the crown forces reacted in a controlled fashion after the death of D.I. Tobias O'Sullivan in January 1921 – and this may have come down to the restraining influence of a certain officer. On 20 January this O'Sullivan, who was shot dead about twenty yards from the RIC barracks in Listowel.²⁰⁷ In a particularly shocking event O'Sullivan was shot while holding the hand of his five year old son John.²⁰⁸ Following the shooting 'the crown forces rushed in all directions holding up people and searching them. The utmost tension prevailed amongst the inhabitants who were thrown into an intense state of panic. At once they closed up their houses. RIC forces rushed into the station house and held up everyone, discharging shots at the same time'. In his dying moments O'Sullivan is meant to have said that 'he did not believe his assailants were from Listowel'.²⁰⁹ Listowel, had a number of active IRA men but actual violence was rare in the town making O'Sullivan's alleged remarks understandable. Similarly in September 1919 after the shooting dead of a British soldier in Fermoy some of the townspeople maintained that the IRA men involved were not from Fermoy.²¹⁰

In the week following the shooting of D.I. O'Sullivan there was a reported exodus of people showing people felt a reprisal was imminent. 'Things are very quiet in the town [Listowel] a number of families having gone to country and the streets are practically deserted'. Also that 'for the past few nights and days the district has been overrun and searched by crown forces

²⁰⁴ Ibid, 14 Apr. 1921.

²⁰⁵ Ibid, 5 Mar. 1921.

²⁰⁶ Clipping included in Denis Quille, MSP 34, REF12059.

²⁰⁷ Weekly Summary, Week ended 16 - 23 Jan. 1921, TCD BL, CO 904/150.

²⁰⁸ Dwyer, *Tans, Terror and troubles*, p.271.

²⁰⁹ *The Kerryman*, 22 Jan. 1921.

²¹⁰ James S. Jr Donnelly, "Unofficial" British reprisals and IRA provocations, 1919-20: the cases of three Cork towns', *Éire – Ireland*, Volume 45, Issue 1 (Spring/Summer, 2010), p.162.

more than usual activity being displayed since the shooting of D.I Sullivan' and 'a very uneasy feeling exists as to the infliction of official reprisals'.

Captain Watson, officer in charge of troops in Listowel, told an assembled meeting of the principal residents of the town that

it was up to the people to give them [the authorities] further information up to the present he had accorded the inhabitants all the protection in his power and would continue to do so for the 3 days, at any rate, during which time the shops could only be allowed to be opened between ten and twelve o'clock. He could not say what would take place at the termination of the period, but of course there would be some official reprisals.²¹¹

According to Julia Quille, immediately after the shooting a number of houses would have been burned in the town 'but for the intervention of a Capt. Watson who was in charge of the British Military there [Listowel]'. Watson had previously put under arrest a British Soldier under his command who had stolen cigarettes from Mrs Quille during a raid on her house.²¹² Watson appears to have been a restraining influence, and it appears possible that things might have been worse but for his intervention.

Restrictions were, however, put on Listowel. From Monday 24 to Wednesday 26 January all shops in Listowel had to be closed between ten and twelve in the morning.²¹³ In early February the crown forces would begin an intensive campaign in and around Listowel. In the early hours of 2 February a party of crown forces arrived at the home of Mr Jerhmiah O'Carroll, of Droumclough outside of Listowel, his sons were then interned in Tralee, and ordered Mr and Mrs O'Carroll and their daughters out of the house. The house was then burned to the ground; they also burned a hayshed with some 100 tons of hay and 20 tons of straw. On 3 February in the evening 'a general raid' by police and military took place in Listowel, in 'house-to-house searches over thirty arrests were effected'; they were all shortly after released.²¹⁴ However, before their release the thirty persons were made stay in what amounted to a type of cage or compound constructed from barbed wire in the Square in Listowel. Apparently they were made stay for an hour.²¹⁵

²¹¹ *The Kerryman*, 29 Jan. 1921.

²¹² Denis Quille, MSP 34, REF12059.

²¹³ *The Kerryman*, 29 Jan. 1921.

²¹⁴ *Ibid*, 5 Feb. 1921.

²¹⁵ Gaughan, *Listowel and its vicinity*, p.400.

In the first week of March the curfew in Listowel that had initially forced people to be inside their houses by six in the evening was extended to nine in the evening. The fortnightly cattle fairs, held in town, were also prohibited.²¹⁶ In Listowel following the burnings of the Carnegie Hall and the Library curfew was extended and people were not allowed out of their homes between 9 p.m. and 6 a.m.²¹⁷

The only other appearance of a possible restraining influence seems to have occurred after the Ballymacandry ambush in early June 1921. Tom O'Connor recalled that 'After the ambush, I sent Major Marshall a letter to say that if there were any reprisals we would burn out all the loyalists in the district, including himself, so nothing happened then. He went into Ballymullen barracks in Tralee the following morning and as a result nothing happened'.²¹⁸

Similarly, after Head Constable Benson was shot in Tralee, on 14 May the reaction of the crown forces was surprisingly quiescent. Patrick Garvey recalled that the day Benson was shot was a market day in Tralee. After the shooting, being a market day, Garvey described Tralee as being in a state of 'pandemonium' with men and livestock running about in all directions but Garvey was surprised that there were no reprisals after the shooting.²¹⁹

After the shooting more typed notices appeared in Tralee declaring that all business places within a six mile radius was suspended 'until further notice'. On 17, however, British soldiers removed the notices and allowed business to resume and the Commander of the troops in Tralee declared that the notices were 'unauthorised'. Two days later in an official reprisal two houses in Pembroke Street in Tralee were 'blown up', with the furniture inside, for the killing of Benson, and a third house also caught fire as a result.²²⁰ Pembroke Street was where Benson had been shot. The houses were places of business and one private house.²²¹ On 9 June notices were posted in Tralee stating that on account of the murder of John Fitzgerald all fairs, that had recently been allowed to go ahead on the condition of the 'cessation of outrages', were again prohibited.²²² But there were no burnings. The quiescent or relatively restrained responses here are interesting. Perhaps this may have been due to Tralee receiving so much coverage in November that the crown forces in the town were unwilling to-the source of fresh scrutiny by engaging in another reprisal.

²¹⁶ *The Kerryman*, 5 Mar. 1921.

²¹⁷ *Ibid*, 12th Mar. 1921.

²¹⁸ O'Malley, *The men will talk to me: the Kerry interviews*, p. 158.

²¹⁹ Patrick Garvey, BMH, WS, 1011.

²²⁰ *Cork Examiner*, 7 May 1921.

²²¹ *Ibid*, 18 May 1921.

²²² *Ibid*, 6 Jun. 1921.

New methods of intimidation by the crown forces in 1921

In 1921 reprisals did not occur with the same frequency, as in 1920, and the crown forces began to experiment with new methods of intimidation. In some respects the crown forces would adopt the tactics of their opponents to threaten civilians. The crown forces experimented with written warnings but they were not as common as IRA written warnings. On 10 December martial law was declared in Cork, Tipperary, Limerick and Kerry.²²³ Shortly before the implementation of Martial Law the following notices were found in Beaufort, near Killarney:

Warning – Any trees or roads found cut must be filled in at once. Take note, you rebels, unless this is done at once four houses will be burned out and blown up and you to hell with them, so help your God –Signed Anti-Sinn Fein league, two thousand, growing stronger every day, no waiting.²²⁴

On 25 December *The Kerryman*, reported that the following notice that was put up in locations in Kerry from the Anti Sinn Féin Society warning of the number of houses they would burn and individuals they would kill if violence continued - ‘Killarney, no houses , but 5 certs; Tralee district, 29 located men; Kilorglin 15 men, Kilgarvan, 5 men; Cahirciveen, 11 men, 22 houses... Listowel, 16 men, 14 houses; Dingle Peninsula, 75 men, 97 houses.’²²⁵ In the ‘Pars From the Puck’ section in *The Kerryman*, in late December, notices were posted around Kilorglin

warning the men not to be seen with their hands in their pockets or loitering round corners, and that any found doing so would do so at their own risk...the notice was signed “Anti – Sinn Fein Society” but somehow after a short time some of them had disappeared as did many of the hands-into pockets. So far there has not been any noticeable activity at enforcing the order which, however, many are obeying.²²⁶

The only other appearance of the Anti-Sinn Féin Society was in March 1921 when *The Kerryman* received threats purporting to come from the organisation.²²⁷ An earlier equivalent was on 7 September when anonymous notices were posted in Killarney that threatened reprisals on property belonging to ‘Sinn Feiners’ if any damage was done to the property of loyalists.

²²⁸

²²³ Townshend, *The republic*, p. 218.

²²⁴ *The Kerryman*, 4 Dec. 1920.

²²⁵ *Ibid*, 25 Dec. 1920.

²²⁶ *Idem*.

²²⁷ *Ibid*, 12 Mar. 1921.

²²⁸ *Ibid*, 11 Sept. 1920.

Notices from quasi-loyalist groups were not that uncommon – the Black Hand for example. In early 1920 two priests also received threatening notices. Brian Heffernan has noted recently in *Freedom and the fifth commandment: Catholic priests and political violence in Ireland, 1919-21* that members of the Catholic Clergy frequently fell victim to violence and threats from the crown forces.²²⁹ On April 17 *The Kerryman* reported that, in Tralee, Father William Ferris, who was a member of the Gaelic League and sympathetic with Sinn Féin, received the following letter on Saturday 10 April:

To those who encourage crime and murder and are responsible for it in God's sight Beware! For the Black Hand has come to avenge all murderers and you are a marked man. Your time may not be far off so prepare to meet your God!²³⁰

Similarly on 15th May *The Kerryman* reported that Father Curtayne C.C., Ballybunion, a member of Sinn Féin since 1905, received the following letter

TAKE NOTICE

We, the Black Hand, have come to avenge all murders in Ireland, and to take a life for a life. We wish to give you notice to prepare to meet your God, in whose sight all Priests are murderers who incite murder and crime in those who know no better and who instead of preaching love and charity preach shooting is no murder, and those you will have to answer for before God. You are a marked man and your time may be short.²³¹

Fortunately, for Fathers Ferris and Curtayne, the 'Black Hand' made no further appearances in County Kerry and they did not act on their threats, and seemed confined to north Kerry.

John Borgonovo has shown that proclamations purporting to come from the Anti-Sinn Féin Society also appeared in Clare, Wexford, and Antrim but were most prevalent in Cork city and to a lesser extent county.²³² Curiously, his research shows that unofficial instances of arson conducted by the crown forces in the city began 'in earnest' after the appearance of such proclamations, and that Cork City's County Inspector maintained that the organisation, which had no connection with the crown forces, were responsible for the burnings.²³³ In the city Cork's

²²⁹ Brian Heffernan, *Freedom and the fifth commandment: Catholic priests and political violence in Ireland, 1919-21* (Manchester, 2014), p. 189.

²³⁰ *The Kerryman*, 17 Apr. 1920.

²³¹ *Ibid*, 15 May 1920.

²³² John Borgonovo, *Spies, informers and the 'Anti-Sinn Féin Society': the intelligence war in Cork city 1920-1921* (Dublin, 2007), pp. 7-10.

²³³ *Ibid*, p. 12.

No.1's intelligence officers seem to have sincerely believed in the Society existed as a group of loyalists assisting the crown forces in the city, and accordingly they claimed the civilians they killed were members of this society.²³⁴

In Kerry a different picture emerges – the Anti-Sinn Féin Society notices appeared after the most drastic reprisals, and at a time when the crown forces believed they had the upper hand.²³⁵ The IRA in the county also never claimed their civilian victims were members of the society. It might be fair to say that the Anti – Sinn Féin society did not take off in Kerry the way it did in Cork but whatever the case it was almost definitely the work of members of the crown forces as opposed to an actual civilian loyalist group.

Economic sanctions and disruption of daily life

As 1920 turned into 1921 instead of unprovoked assaults and reprisals the crown forces became more likely to interrupt daily life – putting restrictions on fairs and imposing curfews were both particularly noticeable. In late November the Dingle pig fair was cancelled as 'owing to many circumstances no buyers attended'.²³⁶ Fairs scheduled before Christmas in Dingle and Blennerville were cancelled by the authorities.²³⁷ A major new aspect of the crown forces' campaign in 1921 was to prevent the normal economic life from taking place in the country. In the second week of January the military prevented two fairs from going ahead in Kilorglin, but many pig farmers instead went to a fair held in Castlemaine.²³⁸ Pig fairs in Listowel were also cancelled.²³⁹

On Monday 7 March curfew was, however introduced to Tralee. The military announced. 'Curfew is raised within the municipal boundaries of Tralee from the date of appearance of this notice in the press. Curfew between 8 p.m and 5 a.m. will be enforced within three miles of the said boundaries'. The cattle and pig fairs scheduled for Monday 7 March were also prohibited.²⁴⁰

On 8 March *The Manchester Guardian* reported Auxiliaries in Tralee as saying that they were 'only playing the game started by their enemies, and will continue it, even though numbers of innocent people suffer, until the cutting of roads by Republicans is stopped and the roads are

²³⁴ Ibid, p. 33.

²³⁵ CI, MR, November 1920, County of Kerry, TCD BL, CO 904/113.

²³⁶ *The Kerryman*, 27 Nov. 1920.

²³⁷ Ibid, 25 Dec. 1920.

²³⁸ *The Kerryman*, 15 Jan.1921.

²³⁹ Ibid, 22 Jan. 1921.

²⁴⁰ Ibid, 12 Mar. 1921.

restored to their normal condition'. This was after two bridges were blown up on the eastern side of Tralee by the crown forces to keep food supplies easily reaching areas east of Tralee.²⁴¹

The cutting of roads could also result in more isolated areas finding it difficult to access outside supplies of food. The British military also introduced a policy of drives – large amounts of troops being deployed and advancing in a line to comb an entire area for republicans. These operations were rarely successful but they did result in civilians finding it difficult to access food in the case of the Dingle Peninsula drive. In the largest military operation of the conflict in Kerry, the British military attempted to blockade or isolate the entire Dingle Peninsula. In the first week of February the crown forces were described as having 'invested' the entire Dingle Peninsula. Troops prevented 'ingress or egress' between Blennerville and Camp. The Dingle-Tralee train service was stopped and horses were commandeered in Tralee on Thursday 10 February and mounted troops went through the mountains in the Dingle Peninsula 'in search of wanted persons. A general round up of people in these districts began on Thursday'. A 'block house' system was created between Blennerville and Camp. Around Tralee a number of farmer's houses were commandeered outside of Tralee and people from passing between Castlemaine and Tralee.²⁴²

The next week, on 14 February it was reported that, in relation to the blockade stationmaster on the Dingle-Tralee line telegraphed the following to the Secretary of the Railway Clerks' association that 'District blockaded for past week. Supplies exhausted. Women and Children on the verge of starvation'.

In response in an official statement General Headquarters, Parkgate Street, announced

There is no truth in the statements that the inhabitants of parts of Kerry are on the verge of starvation. Crown forces are not interfering with law abiding inhabitants, and there is no embargo on the importation of food stuffs, which are plentiful in the district.²⁴³

However, *The Evening Herald*, had made enquiries and claimed that on 9 February the Dingle-Tralee Line Company received instructions from the military 'that the line was not to be utilised for any traffic' and 'the company received no information as to how long the blockade may extend'.²⁴⁴

²⁴¹ *The Manchester Guardian*, 8 Mar. 1921.

²⁴² *The Kerryman*, 12 Feb. 1921.

²⁴³ *Ibid*, 19 Feb. 1921.

²⁴⁴ *Idem*.

The Manchester Guardian described the operation as ‘one of the most elaborate and systematic military operations that have yet taken place in Ireland’ and that the Peninsula was considered ‘a nest of rebels’ by the military, though ‘there have been few grave outrages in the immediate area, but it is held to be a refuge for the Flying Columns of Sinn Fein Volunteers who are held to be responsible for the ambushes in west Kerry’.²⁴⁵

On 17 February *The Manchester Guardian* reported that people in the peninsula had left their homes and were ‘living in the open fields, and wanted both food and shelter’.²⁴⁶ By the end of the week, though the crown forces were reported to have ‘evacuated the farmers’ houses near Tralee, and ‘all the young men of the parish were rounded up but only about three were detained. The object of their detention was presumed to be for the purpose of warding off an attack on the temporary garrison’. Hostages were also held in the temporary garrison in Castlemaine. *The Kerryman* wrote that they believed the policy of extensive searches by the crown forces would be ‘carried out in a similar manner until they arrived at the sea west of Dingle’. But by the end of the week the regular train service had been resumed.²⁴⁷ James Fitzgerald recalled that it was difficult to get food anyway in 1921 in west Kerry as ‘we could not get supplies from Tralee...food was our chief trouble prior to the Truce, but we managed to break the blockade’.²⁴⁸

The issue of the drive creating food shortages links in to a broader point about how the crown forces suspended supplies coming into the county. On 5 April the Millstreet-Killarney train service was suspended resulting in ‘business in Killarney generally appears to be at a standstill’ and the fair scheduled for the day before was cancelled.

On 9 April *The Kerryman* reported that the recent closure of the train service from Mallow resulted in Kilorglin in people being ‘in a state bordering on alarm and shopkeepers realised that they had no supplies of foodstuffs’. Also On 9 April *The Kerryman* reported that the train service cancellation between Tralee and Limerick was suspended by the authorities. ‘The stoppage of this service will cause considerable inconvenience to the traders and public of the town [Listowel] where martial law and the curfew are already in operation’.²⁴⁹

There was a noticeable decrease in the burnings of creameries but they did not stop altogether and in the case of the Kilorglin burning it was accompanied by the closure of railway line and

²⁴⁵ *The Manchester Guardian*, 15 Feb. 1921.

²⁴⁶ *Ibid*, 17 Feb. 1921.

²⁴⁷ *The Kerryman*, 19 Feb. 1921.

²⁴⁸ James Fitzgerald, BMH, WS, 999.

²⁴⁹ *The Kerryman*, 9 Apr. 1921.

markets – all three must have created considerable hardships. On 11 May the Kilorglin creamery was destroyed, despite the fact ‘the district has been quiet lately, except for the trenching of roads’.²⁵⁰ ‘No markets were permitted for the past two weeks. The train service is still suspended’.²⁵¹

On 20 May the *Cork Examiner* described the effect the closure of the Tralee-Dingle railway line together with the Cahirciveen railway, was having:

Has completely isolated the people of both promontories and left them dependent on such food supplies as are available in their respective districts...hundreds of thousands are without letters or newspapers and know absolutely nothing of what is happening in the outside world. Should present conditions continue much longer the plight of the people will be pitiable.²⁵²

The IRA leadership were aware of these problems. The Divisional Adjutant for the 1st Southern Division wrote to Richard Mulcahy that in the Cahirciveen area ‘a very real possibility of famine existed if something were [sic] not done quickly to alleviate the distress.’²⁵³ The Brigade Adjutant of the Kerry No.3 Brigade wrote to Lynch that the Cahirciveen railway line was closed following the Glenbeigh ambush and was causing huge hardships as the railway line was the ‘sole means of export and import for the town’.

The farm produce as a result is now 3 week on the peoples’ hands and is getting bad...The potato crop of last year was practically a failure and the people are more or less dependent on imports. As a result of the above, food supplies are running scarce, there being only about 120 tons of flour presently in the town, and this supply is spread over Glenbeigh and sometimes Sneem.²⁵⁴

This was the only case when an IRA unit informed headquarters about the situation – and provides a graphic account. The closure of other railway lines was cancelled on several occasions which must have caused similar food shortages but presumably it was worst in the more isolated spots of the Ivereagh and Dingle Peninsulas. On 4 May the Tralee-Dingle railway line was closed by the military and it was announced in an official order that ‘as soon as the roads are repaired the question of reopening the railway will be considered’.²⁵⁵ The military

²⁵⁰ *The Manchester Guardian*, 14 May 1921.

²⁵¹ *Cork Examiner*, 12 May 1921.

²⁵² *Ibid*, 20 May 1921.

²⁵³ Divisional Adjutant 1st Southern Division to C/S, 24 May 1921, UCDA, P7/A/21.

²⁵⁴ Brigade Adjutant Kerry No.3 to O/C 1st Southern Division, N.D. May 1921, UCDA, P7/A/21.

²⁵⁵ *The Manchester Guardian*, 7 May 1921.

undertook this action because ‘It has been proved beyond all doubt that the perpetrators of the Glenbeigh ambush came from Dingle’.²⁵⁶

It was reported on 14 May that by official orders the branch lines between Killarney and Banteer was closed together with the Headford Junction to Kenmare lines.²⁵⁷ On 7 July the *Cork Examiner* reported that the military authorities closed down the Listowel – Ballybunion line owing to the constant raiding of trains on the line.²⁵⁸

Another major aspect of the crown forces’ campaign that seriously interfered with regular life was the forced commandeering of labour. In the second week of February ‘farmers and cottiers residing on the Co. Kerry roads where roads where trenches were recently cut were questioned by crown forces about them, and several persons were obliged to close them up’.²⁵⁹ On 4 February the police and military made a roundup of people in Listowel including ‘shopkeepers, shop assistants, artisans and labourers and even professional men’ and made to repair roads that had recently been trenched. A Mr Jeremiah Galvin, proprietor of the Central Hotel, collapsed on the return journey. Galvin suffered from asthma that effected his heart and it was believed ‘the laborious nature of the work to such he had been so unexpectedly forced and the unusual inclemency of the weather accelerated his death’.²⁶⁰

This became a common occurrence by the crown forces across the county. On 20 February in Dingle the authorities made an estimated 100 arrests, interrupting the fair being held in the town, and 30 were kept in custody. These men were taken to Lispolie and made to fill in the trenches cut in the road. The roads were, however, shortly after cut again.²⁶¹ On Monday 21 March military, Auxiliaries and police left Tralee for Ardfert and rounded up young men in the town who were kept in custody in a house commandeered ‘for the purpose’. ‘The presence of such large numbers of crown forces in the district caused considerable alarm amongst the people’.²⁶²

On Sunday 20 March young men going to Mass in Dingle were held up by the crown forces and made to fill in trenches that had been made in the roads outside of the town.²⁶³ During the last week of March the police in Listowel rounded up a large group of young men and taken to

²⁵⁶ *Cork Examiner*, 5 May 1921.

²⁵⁷ *The Manchester Guardian*, 14 May 1921.

²⁵⁸ *Cork Examiner*, 7 Jul. 1921.

²⁵⁹ *The Kerryman*, 12 Feb. 1921.

²⁶⁰ *Idem*.

²⁶¹ *Ibid*, 26 Feb.1921.

²⁶² *Ibid*, 26 Apr.1921.

²⁶³ *Ibid*, 26 Mar. 1921.

Finuge and were made to reconstruct a bridge that had been destroyed. The officer in charge did, however, let the men seek shelter when it began raining.²⁶⁴ On the mornings of 4 and 5 April young men in Tralee were 'commandeered' to fill in trenches in north Kerry.²⁶⁵

Sometimes economic sanctions were created over the trenching of roads rather than getting men to fix them. On 29 May, on account of the constant obstruction of roads, markets were prohibited at Tralee, Castleisland, Killorglin, Castlemaine and Molahiffe.²⁶⁶ On Sunday 12 June fairs in and around Kilgarvan and Kenmare were prohibited 'until steps have been taken to open up the roads and clear existing obstructions'.²⁶⁷

Analysis and conclusion

The nature of the crown forces' campaign developed and changed in relation to that of the IRA's. Like the IRA's campaign it was, initially, relatively low key - though I am sure the victims of the assaults would not have seen it that way - and only stepped up in intensity in reaction to orchestrated IRA actions across the county.

The activities of the crown forces were also, interestingly, subject to certain local peculiarities. For instance, most of the serious assaults against civilians occurred in the Tralee area and, perhaps, unsurprisingly the most vicious and long drawn out reprisal also occurred in Tralee.

If we take these figures for all actions by the crown forces from 1920-21 directed against civilians, they will reveal much.

Table fourteen. Form of action by the crown forces against civilians, 1920-1921 and a number of instances.

²⁶⁴ Ibid, 2 Apr. 1921.

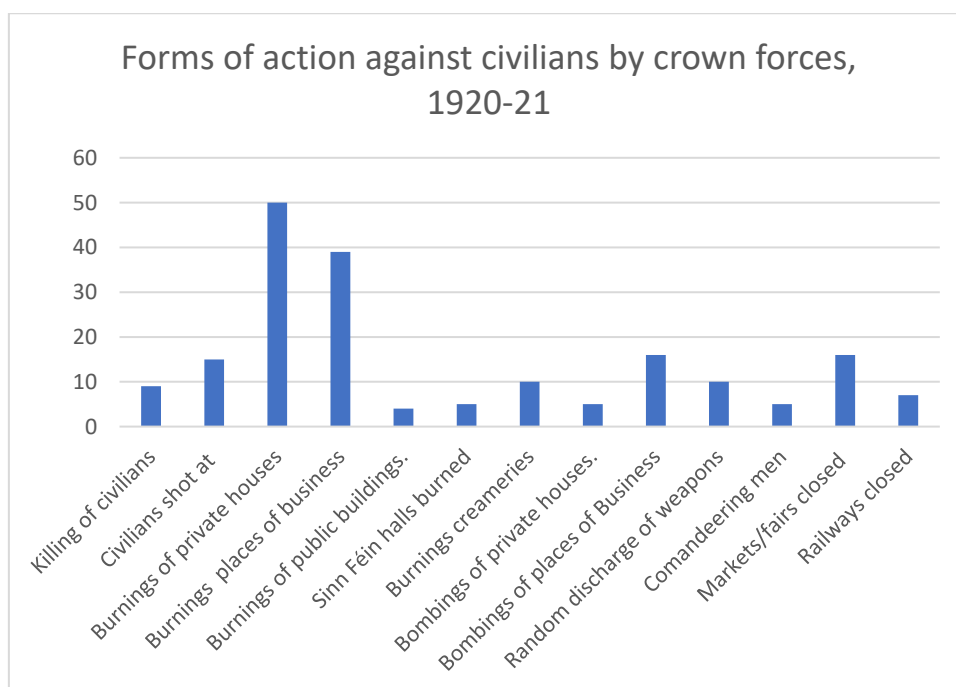
²⁶⁵ Ibid, 9 Apr. 1921.

²⁶⁶ *The Manchester Guardian*, 4 Jun. 1921.

²⁶⁷ *Cork Examiner*, 13 Jun. 1921.

Form of action by the crown forces against civilians, 1920-1921	Number of occurrences
Killing of civilians	9
Instances of civilians being directly shot at but not fatally wounded	15
Burnings and attempted burnings of private houses	50
Burnings and attempted burnings of places of business	39
Burnings and attempted burnings of public buildings.	4
Sinn Féin halls burned	5
Burnings and attempted burnings of creameries	10
Bombings of private houses.	5
Bombings of places of Business	16
Instances when crown forces randomly discharged their weapons	10
Instances when crown forces commandeered men to repair damage done to roads.	5
Instances when fairs and markets were prohibited	16
Instances when railway services between towns were cancelled	7

Table fifteen. Forms of action against civilians by crown forces, in 1920-21 in graph.



It is first necessary to examine their campaign against civilians next to that of the IRA. The campaign by the crown forces, as these figures show, was more intensive than that of the IRA in County Kerry in regard to their respective campaigns against civilians. Take arson, for instance, between 1920 and 1921 the crown forces burned fifty private houses and thirty nine places of business, five private houses were bombed together with sixteen places of business, five Sinn Féin halls were burned together ten creameries. If bombings and arson are brought together in the same categories a total of 125 premises underwent a serious form of attack in Kerry between 1920-21. In 1920 the IRA attacked nine premises, usually shooting through windows, and there were three instances of arson. In 1921 this arson figure doubled to six. But if we take the 1920-21 conflict serious damage or attacks on a premises amounted – according to my collected figures – on eighteen occasions. This shows the crown forces, on an overwhelming scale, were more willing to impose serious material damage on civilians than the IRA. The IRA in Kerry showed an unwillingness to use arson – but this was by no means universal as their neighbours in the Cork IRA showed a particular propensity for arson. In Cork, according to Peter Hart, the crown forces destroyed 216 buildings next to the 209 by the IRA – revealing startling regional differences.²⁶⁸

Also, if we take the shootings of civilians the figures are at first might appear deceptive.

Table sixteen. Name, date and location of civilians killed by the crown forces in Kerry 1920-1921

²⁶⁸ Hart, *The IRA & its enemies*, p. 101.

Name of civilian killed by the crown forces	Date	Location
John Conway	1 November 1920	Tralee
Simon O'Connor	1 November 1920	Tralee
Tommy Wall	2 November 1920	Tralee
Theresa O'Connell (16)	8 November 1920	Causeway
John O'Connor	21 December 1920	Kileentierna, Killarney
Patrick Healy	10 February 1921	Kenmare
James Kennelly	7 March 1921	Lisselton
Daniel O'Driscoll (16)	2 April 1921	Ardfert
Nora Conway	6 May 1921	Caherina, Tralee.

The crown forces killed 9 civilians between 1920-21. The IRA killed eight civilians between 1920 -21, there were another 3 instances of civilians being shot by the IRA but the wounds did not prove fatal. For the crown forces, on the other hand, there were fifteen instances of their shooting on civilians but without incurring fatalities. The IRA shot at civilians on eleven occasions, while the crown forces did so on twenty four occasions. In other words the crown forces were twice as likely to actually fire upon, or attempt to kill, civilians than the IRA were. The fact that there were five occasions when the crown forces randomly discharged their weapons when driving made this more likely. Also, as the next chapter will show, the IRA when executing civilians had some reason, often admittedly on some tenuous grounds, that these civilians were assisting their opponents - the killings of civilians by the crown forces come across as completely random. None of the civilian fatalities had connections to Sinn Féin let alone the IRA. Also if, for instance, we also take the killing of IRA man Patrick Kennedy, near Annascaul on 17 August 1920, he appears to have been shot randomly and the crown forces could hardly have known that he was in fact a Volunteer. This also appears to have been the case with the killing of Frank Hoffman, outside of Tralee, in November. Showing, how trigger happy the crown forces were and that their, seemingly, indiscriminate shooting could, on occasions, result in the shootings of legitimate targets.

Most of the civilian fatalities by the crown forces bear startling similarities. On Saturday 2 April Daniel Driscoll, 16 and another young man named Sullivan were shot by the crown forces in Ardfert. The two were sitting on Liscahane Bridge and fled on hearing Lorries approaching.

They were fired at and Driscoll was mortally wounded.²⁶⁹ The crown forces maintained that the two were part of an IRA party that had fired on them.²⁷⁰ On 26 May John Sheahan was shot, according to the military, for 'refusing to halt'.²⁷¹ He was shot a short distance from his house at Coilbee, near Listowel, while going to visit his uncle.²⁷² On 6 May Nora Conway was killed by a stray bullet outside of her home in Caherina, outside of Tralee.²⁷³ The trouble began when patrols came out on to the streets demanding people return to their homes due to curfew, some young lads running away from the patrol reportedly created a 'stampede'. Conway, looking out from her front door was shot, presumably the patrol had been firing over the heads of the crowd.²⁷⁴ Also on Monday 7 March James Kennelly, who was 65 and from Moneen in Lisselton, near Ballybunion, was shot dead by the crown forces. He was reportedly shot while 'running after cattle which he was herding'.²⁷⁵

Some other examples are not quite so clear cut. On 21 December it was reported in the *Cork Examiner* that a farmer called O'Connor, from Kileentierna near Killarney, was picked up by crown forces and arrested for allegedly having a summons to a Sinn Féin court on him. He was found later on by a priest in a field with both his legs broken. He was taken to a nearby farmers' house, but the crown forces arrived shortly thereafter and murdered O'Connor.²⁷⁶ The Priest Father J.J O'Sullivan did, however, give a statement. John O'Connor arrived early to a Sinn Féin court at the Presbytery Kileentierna on the morning of 14 December over a small dispute over turf with a neighbour. The court had, however, been cancelled as a military raid was expected. O'Connor was unaware of this and was taken prisoner by the military who also burned the Presbytery. He then was brought around the area in a military lorry while raiding went on, including a raid on the home of Humphry Murphy. Murphy informed Father O'Sullivan that they stole food, money and his watch. O'Connor was in the lorry all day and was badly beaten before being dumped. Some people called Cronin found the body and brought him to their house and summoned Father O'Sullivan. On his way from the destroyed Presybtery, O'Sullivan met two British officers who asked as to what he was doing. When he said he was going to give spiritual consolation to a dying man who had been thrown out of an army Lorry, the two officers dashed towards the Cronin house and killed O'Connor. O'Sullivan surmised these two had thrown him off the lorry and assumed he was dead, but rushed off to finish the

²⁶⁹ *The Kerryman*, 9 Apr.1921.

²⁷⁰ *The Manchester Guardian*, 16 Apr. 1921.

²⁷¹ *Ibid*, 4 Jun.1921.

²⁷² *Cork Examiner*, 27 May 1921.

²⁷³ *Ibid*, 14 May 1921.

²⁷⁴ *Cork Examiner*, 7 May 1921.

²⁷⁵ *The Kerryman*, 12 Mar. 1921.

²⁷⁶ *Cork Examiner*, 21 Dec. 1920.

job. O'Sullivan was adamant that O'Connor had no connections with the IRA or politics and was a small farmer with seven children.²⁷⁷

Most of these attacks, however, involved people, understandably, running away from approaching crown forces or being caught in the fray rather than out of having any connection to the republican movement. O'Connor's death is unusual in that he was not killed in the midst of the reprisal and seemingly his having been involved in a Sinn Féin court seems to have sealed his fate. His case of being continually beaten and eventually shot is probably the most brutal killing by the crown forces in Kerry. It is made worse by his posing no threat.

It is now necessary to attempt to make some sense of the larger reprisals that occurred. From the outset it is necessary to state that unfortunately, certain elements, of the campaign by the crown forces, prove very difficult to quantify. In contemporary reports non-specific numbers of houses are said to have been raided together with the breaking of windows, and assaults. Austin Stack's brother was meant to have been assaulted during the November reprisal in Tralee but it is hard to find out on what day, where in the town and how bad the assault was. It is also impossible to quantify the number of people who would have been searched after mass for instance. Frustratingly, also, on Saturday 8 November the *Cork Examiner* noted that in north Kerry 'night after night the sky is lighted up with a blaze of large ricks of burning hay and straw'.²⁷⁸ This would appear to suggest that incidents of arson may have, in fact, been more extensive but were not properly reported on. It is, for instance, difficult to collect more accurate information about reprisals in more remote areas.

Reprisals were by no means homogenous. Leeson has written that large scale reprisals took place 'when community relations (with the crown forces) were especially bitter'.²⁷⁹ This appears evident in relation to Tralee – as the level of assaults and other actions by the crown forces before November would suggest that the crown forces in the town already disliked the population. The Tralee reprisal does also seem to fit Leeson's model that those who suffered most had a connection to Sinn Féin.²⁸⁰ But I would argue that the reprisals of November 1920 only partially fit Leeson's model.

In the reprisal in Tralee there does appear to have been a kind of vendetta involved and a preoccupation with certain people, but whether they posed a threat to the crown forces is open

²⁷⁷ Statement by Rev J.J. O'Sullivan concerning case of John O'Connor, murdered 14 December 1920, taken at Dublin May 21 1921, UCDA, P80/74/ (I).

²⁷⁸ *Cork Examiner*, 8 Nov. 1920.

²⁷⁹ Leeson, *The Black and Tans*, p. 172.

²⁸⁰ *Ibid*, p. 273.

to debate. Thomas Clifford's "1916 shop" that was burned on 3 November had been frequently visited by the crown forces who insisted that his Irish language name be removed from above the shop; he had also been arrested in April. Eamon O'Connor's windows had been smashed in May and he himself had been beaten up in late October, Thomas Dennehy's windows had been smashed in May too. All these men were Sinn Féin members but none were senior Volunteers. The crown forces also continued to be fixated on these same people after the reprisal. Thomas Dennehy, who had his business burned down only a few weeks previously, was arrested while cycling to Castleisland.²⁸¹ On Tuesday 7 December the RIC visited Mr John Talbot's licenced premises on Nelson's Street and ordered to remove his name written in Irish on the fascia board above the shop. Talbot's shop had been looted in the recent reprisal. Mr Talbot subsequently removed the Irish name.²⁸² It would also suggest that the same members of the crown forces were fixated on certain individuals and continued to return to molest them. It was also not only the crown forces in Tralee that were concerned with Hugh Martin. In November 1920 Denis Quille, of Listowel, was arrested and severely beaten by Auxiliaries. During the beating Quille recalled 'they accused me of helping him [Martin]!'²⁸³

Though the people targeted in Tralee did have connections to Sinn Féin it needs to be asked whether they actually posed a threat to the crown forces. The senior IRA leaders in the town Paddy Cahill, Billy Mullins Dan Jeffers and Paddy Paul Fitzgerald escaped early on and their homes were not touched. The two fatalities of the reprisal, Tommy Wall and Simon O'Connor, were not Volunteers. Leeson has suggested that even in the most seemingly chaotic reprisals the crown forces chose their targets with care but this was not the case in Tralee. This would suggest faulty intelligence or the simple correlation that business people in Tralee sympathetic with Sinn Féin were also IRA men. The closure of business and preventing of markets created serious food shortages, which affected everyone in the town regardless of their politics. The burning of government property such as the County Hall, and the attempted burning of the town's library can only be regarded as senseless. The burning of creameries, across the country, also affected entire rural communities regardless of politics.

Reckless or senseless attacks, against allies or potential allies, are not that uncommon by troops in conflict. In the Crimean War, for instance, French and British troops disrespected and

²⁸¹ *The Kerryman*, 4 Dec. 1920.

²⁸² *Ibid*, 11 Dec. 1920.

²⁸³ Denis Quille, MSP 34, REF12059.

attacked and sometimes stole from their Ottoman hosts, despite being on the side of the Ottoman Empire.²⁸⁴

The Tralee reprisal was the longest running in the conflict but also bore similarities to a number of other reprisals, particularly in regard to the mass exodus of people. After the Kilmichael ambush ‘the people of the locality (Macroom) are clearing out of the locality in terror’.²⁸⁵ As Black and Tans proceeded to Tubbercurry, in County Sligo in October, Hugh Martin recalled many people leaving their homes.²⁸⁶ A similar exodus of people also occurred in Dingle, Ballylongford and Kilorglin. The exodus of people fearing reprisals continued into the final stages of the conflict. After the Rathmore ambush in May 1921 ‘a large percentage of people have left the village.’²⁸⁷ Also after an attack in Cahirciveen in May fearing reprisals ‘a large number of residents, have left the town’.²⁸⁸ Also in Mallow, after the successful raid on the Barracks in the town, in September people large numbers of people were reported as having left the town in anticipation of the coming reprisal.²⁸⁹ Similarly, the first target of the crown forces in both Mallow and Tralee were the Town Halls – both of which housed the largely republican Urban District Councils.²⁹⁰ The crown forces, presumably believing the buildings to be the power bases of Sinn Féin.

The reprisals in the rest of the county were not as long drawn out, but particularly in north Kerry, could be just as brutal as the events in Tralee. Information on reprisals in north Kerry is also harder to collect – some buildings having been burned but unfortunately it is difficult to find the names of the owners. This lack of information is, probably, largely due to Tralee getting more media attention as it was both a larger town and as the reprisal was on a larger scale. However, if we examine the available documentation it appears Sinn Féin members were largely targeted, but again, besides the home of Tadhg Brosnan in Castlegregory, the homes of no senior IRA men were attacked. Accordingly, the overwhelming consensus from the available documentation shows civilians suffered disproportionately at the hands of the crown forces, and that the crown forces were far more likely to attack civilians than their actual opponents.

²⁸⁴ Figes, *Crimea*, pp 182-3.

²⁸⁵ *The Kerryman*, 4 Dec. 1920.

²⁸⁶ Martin, *Ireland in insurrection*, p.88.

²⁸⁷ See Manus Moynihan, BMH, WS 1066; *The Manchester Guardian*, 14 May 1921.

²⁸⁸ *Cork Examiner*, 24 May 1921.

²⁸⁹ *The Manchester Guardian*, 30 Sept. 1920.

²⁹⁰ James S. Jr Donnelly, ““Unofficial” British reprisals and IRA provocations, 1919-20: the cases of three Cork towns’, *Éire – Ireland*, Volume 45, Issue 1, (Spring/Summer, 2010), pp. 181-2.

The Ballymacelligott reprisal bears a similarity to the Tralee reprisal in that its victims had links to the republican movement, and, in fact, quite prominent IRA men notably the McEllistram family. But crucially none of the people who suffered represented any kind of substantive threat to the crown forces. However, the next largest reprisal at Ballylongford does not fit Leeson's model as it does not appear that any of the victims had a connection with the republican movement. It is important to state that none of the victims of the north Kerry reprisals of early 1921, are described, in the available documentation, as having any connection with Sinn Féin or the IRA. In terms of physical damage Ballylongford was the largest reprisal. This reprisal seems to have effected all strands of people those in business, labourers, retired ex-servicemen and returning migrants showing how anyone could be caught up in reprisals. Also, again they were again an overreaction to a relatively minor IRA action.

In some instances, only the homes of IRA men were targeted. On 8 May after a failed attack on Black and Tans at Killeagh, near Farranfore, John J. Walsh, from Currow, recalled that 'three parties of mixed forces left Farranfore barracks and burned three houses as a reprisal for the Killeagh shooting. The houses were Humphrey Murphy's, Ballybeg, Brigade O/C, Thomas Daly's, brigade adjutant, and my house at Lyre'.²⁹¹

Stathis N. Kalyvas' conclusion on indiscriminate action by incumbents against civilians in guerrilla warfare can be applied, to a certain extent, to the situation in Ireland. He writes that such violence is selected 'on the basis of criterion, usually location' and can often be indiscriminate on the basis of the incumbents not knowing who to discriminate against.²⁹² This is partially correct in relation to Ireland. On one level if an IRA ambush took place the reprisal would, almost, inevitably occur in the town nearest to the ambush site –Tralee, Ballybunion, Rathmore, Castleisland, Killorglin etc. However, between 1920-21 the crown forces tended to target people with some association with the republican movement – though as shown not necessarily those in the IRA. Kalyvas also writes that such violence by incumbents tends to lead to more people joining up with the insurgents.²⁹³ This bears only a certain correlation to events in Ireland. Reprisals did lead to increased IRA action but, in Kerry at least, most Volunteers, who went on to become permanent fighters, had joined by 1918 and no noticeable increase occurs in Volunteer numbers after 1918 or indeed after November 1920 when the worst reprisals occurred. Kalyvas does write that reprisals do create 'the desire for revenge' which produces 'armed reaction' which does apply, at least, to Kerry.²⁹⁴ Dan Keating, from Tralee,

²⁹¹ John J. Walsh, BMH, WS, 1002.

²⁹² Kalyvas, *The logic of violence in civil war*, pp. 145-8.

²⁹³ Ibid, p. 151.

²⁹⁴ Ibid, p.154.

later in life, would maintain that he joined the IRA after witnessing reprisals but, in this, he appears to be the exception to the rule.²⁹⁵ What the next chapter will show is that in 1921 the IRA become far more aggressive and willing to use lethal violence. The obvious inference to make is that on one level, yes, the reprisals created an appetite for revenge but also that the reprisals and activities of the crown forces, in general, so often included the use of lethal violence that the IRA in turn were now existing in an environment where lethal violence was less of a standout occurrence and thus more permissible or at least expected given the circumstances. This I feel can explain the phenomenon of the IRA's killings of civilians as 'spies and informers' explored in the next chapter.

The dynamics of the crown forces' campaign, clearly, changed in 1921 though. More regimented attempts to deal with the problem occurred with the 'drives' in west and east Kerry, but, as said, these operations did not result in any substantive gains. Interestingly, though, through 1921, civilians continued to bear the brunt of the crown forces campaign.

Townshend notes that by the late Spring of 1921 that the morale had increased, within the leadership of the crown forces, but they were still acutely aware that they had not inflicted any serious damage on the IRA – with the exception of the debacle at the Customs House, and increasingly engaged in community punishments, but this still did not have the desired effect.²⁹⁶ In Kerry this was certainly the case as the latter sections of this chapter showed the frequency with which fairs were banned, trains services halted and men commandeered for labour. In a way the interruption of the economic life of Tralee in November was regularised in 1921 through the banning of fairs. On at least sixteen occasions fairs and markets were prohibited by the crown forces, and these figures are in themselves deceptive. For instance on 29 May fairs and markets were prohibited in Tralee: they were then again prohibited on 9 June after the order having recently been suspended: it is hard, therefore, to ascertain exactly how many fairs or markets had been cancelled in the interim period.

Also the closure of certain railway lines was in fact more dramatic as it could prevent outside supplies coming into the county; this occurred on seven occasions and usually was the cancelling of the Cork and Limerick lines that went on into Kerry. This could cause particular hardship in the form of creating food shortages, most notably in Cahirciveen.

²⁹⁵ Uinseann MacEoin, *The IRA in the twilight years 1923-1948* (Dublin, 1997), p .617. Curiously, this is also the same narrative presented in Ken Loach's 2006 film *The wind that shakes the Barley*.

²⁹⁶ Townshend, *The republic*, p. 288.

The campaign by the crown forces in Kerry, arguably, became more thorough or considered as time went on. Beginning initially with unprovoked beatings and acts of arson in the summer of 1920, by the winter of that year it had developed into a more intensive of systematic terror. The examples of both Ballylongford and Ballymacelligott showed that such reprisals would persist into 1921 but the crown forces would rather implement measures to effect the economic life of the country; this was doubtless partially due to the negative reaction to the November reprisals. Kerry historian, T. Ryle Dwyer, in 2001 highlighted how the November reprisals gained widespread international coverage.²⁹⁷ And indeed, this reflects a national pattern as most of the major reprisals in the country occurred in 1920.

It could be argued, and indeed it appears, with some of the attacks conducted against civilians by the crown forces were sometimes simply cases of violence for the sake of violence. Actions like these had a precedent. Both pro-and-Union militias in Kansas and Missouri in the American Civil War have been described as being inspired by ideology, but also that their ruthless implementation of violence appeared ‘nihilistic’ and ‘pathological’.²⁹⁸ Indeed, it was in fact not in the reprisals but the lower scale acts of violence, such as shooting from Lorries, random beatings and smashing of windows, that appear to have a clear nihilistic dimension, or simply acts of meaningless violence. Did these men get some kind of perverse thrill from acting in such ways? Sometimes the frequency of the discharge of weapons and random assaults would suggest that this was the case.

An obvious conclusion to make is that this rowdy behaviour was the product of heavy drinking, making these men boisterous, reckless and violent. The presence of alcohol has often been presented as a major contributory factor or explanatory factor for reprisals.²⁹⁹ Leeson has written that reprisals were in fact ‘fuelled’ by alcohol; he correctly highlights that reprisals often began with the looting of a public house and the public houses were also often looted during reprisals.³⁰⁰ The reprisals at Ballylongford are testament to this, also many republicans recalled the crown forces, particularly in the earliest moments, of the Tralee reprisal as being drunk. But this raises other questions in relation to drink as a contributory factor. Were these men drunk every day? Were they all drinking heavily? Were their actions the result of some unique drunken collective? Is it impossible for a man to assault another man, or burn a house while sober? If this was the case it would seem to suggest a force of men in a near constant state of violent intoxication, as some violent action by the crown forces, small or large, were almost

²⁹⁷ Dwyer, *Tans, terror and troubles*, p. 229.

²⁹⁸ McPherson, *The battle cry of freedom*, pp.784-7.

²⁹⁹ Leeson, *Black and Tans*, p. 207- 9.

³⁰⁰ *Ibid*, p. 208.

constant features. Can this be explained by alcohol alone? Many of the crown forces probably did over indulge on a regular basis, but it seems unlikely that drinking can explain all the violent acts that occurred. Blaming it all on alcohol also robs these men of any complicating ideological motivation; it also downgrades these men to boozed up thugs without reflection or motivation. This is unsatisfactory.

But did they feel like this was necessary to stop the threat to their country or even their way of life? This almost senseless level of destruction or violence was not uncommon in contemporary Europe also. Emilio Gentile notes Italian Fascists engaged in startling brutality against anyone or anything associated with socialism. Indeed it appears that much of their violence was, like that of the Black and Tans, an almost an over-reaction to what was in fact a limited threat.³⁰¹ As has been shown the crown forces' actions were unprecedented in relation to the action they were responding to. The example of fascist Italy is not without some precedent. Sir Henry Wilson, as the head of the army, felt the government was not adequately dealing with left wing and nationalist threats not only to Britain but to the Empire itself and believed stronger measures were necessary, not unlike Mussolini's views on the government before his coup. The extremity of Wilson's rhetoric has led Townshend to write that it 'probably posed more of a threat to British mainstream politics than it did to Irish republicanism'.³⁰² Can it be said that Wilson could have become leader of these men – the reactionary violence of these men show they had the obvious potential to become a continental European style White Guard – as in Russia, Finland, or indeed fascist style militant group as in Italy or Germany – all of these groups were made up of ex-servicemen, with the exception Finland that did not participate in the First World War, who felt their way of life was being threatened. All they needed was a leader – from the more benevolent Finnish Mannerheim or thoroughly unpleasant Mussolini. Without wishing to celebrate the death of an individual had Wilson lived he may have raised further problems.

But beyond this over reaction, there was also a clear lust for revenge. The example of the American Civil War can also be extended in this regard. Union troops under General Sherman engaged in notorious destruction whilst advancing through Georgia and South Carolina, the brutality reaching its most extreme in the latter state. The destruction was deliberate policy to cripple the southern war effort, however, what was noticeable was the common Union soldiers' desire to 'revenge' themselves on the two states they saw as most responsible for secession and

³⁰¹ Emilio Gentile, 'Paramilitary violence in Italy: the rationale of fascism and the origins of totalitarianism', in Robert Gerwarth and John Horne (eds), *War in peace: paramilitary violence in Europe after the Great War* (Oxford, 2012), p.92.

³⁰² Townshend, *The republic*, p. 404.

therefore the war, and interestingly the victims were mainly civilians as opposed to actual Confederate troops.³⁰³ The American Civil War, had gone on for over four years, and had created unprecedented carnage and the Union soldiers involved would have lost friends and comrades; in a way the authorisation of the destruction was pandering to this lust for revenge. Part of the strategy was to make Confederate troops in Virginia anxious by inflicting suffering on their loved ones at home. Similarly, not counting the unprovoked assaults, all the major reprisals occurred after an IRA action that resulted in the deaths of members of the crown forces. The first major reprisal in September 1919 in Fermoy was after the killing of a British soldier, and all reprisals in Kerry – Tralee, Ballymacelligott, Rathmore, Ballylonford - occurred after the deaths of members of the crown forces. Seemingly, the primary motive for reprisals can be seen as the desire for revenge. But also, like in Georgia and South Carolina, the victims of these reprisals were civilians, either the innocent or families of IRA or Sinn Féin members, in the hope that the IRA would cease engaging in violent acts. This also helps explain the over – reaction. The reactions were meant to be bigger than the act they were responding to as a means of showing there would be no toleration of IRA action and it would be drastically punished. This was not without a precedent in British treatment of insurgency. Similarly, twenty years earlier the British campaign of arson of Boer homesteads was intended to break continued Boer resistance.³⁰⁴ It could be argued that this chapter has shown that there was far more of a coldly calculating aspect and rational to these attacks than has previously been believed.

³⁰³McPherson, *Battle cry of freedom*, p.826: The comparison was made at the time, Lloyd George believed he was a Lincoln like figure fighting to save the Union.

³⁰⁴ Denis Judd and Keith Surridge, *The Boer War: a history* (London, 2002), p.192.

Chapter seven. IRA interactions with civilians 1920-1923

IRA military developments in 1921.

On 11th December 1920 martial law was introduced in Cork, Tipperary, Limerick and Kerry.¹ This together with the reprisals policy emboldened the RIC in Kerry who now thought they had the upper hand. The County Inspector reported ‘ambushes on the crown forces are fewer...there is a prospect of improvement provided the pressure exercised by crown forces is maintained.’² His predictions and hopes were soon to be dashed though. The introduction of martial law, in fact, seems to have had the opposite of the desired effect creating an escalation of IRA violence rather than a decrease, David Fitzpatrick writes that ‘the diffusion of violence was accelerated rather than retarded by martial law’.³

This chapter has a similar structure to chapter five – initially examining the development and dynamics of the IRA’s strictly military campaign in 1921 together with how the issues around IRA intimidation of civilians developed into 1921. This chapter also examines the more troubling issue of how, as the conflict progressed the IRA became more willing to use lethal methods against civilians perceived as ‘spies and informers’, examining each case of civilians murdered by the IRA, together with an assessment of the historiographical debates on the issue. The chapter concludes with a section on how the issues examined played out in the truce and civil war period.

In January the RIC were reporting the typical problems they had been experiencing over the past year. ‘Intimidation by IRA of the country people is frequent’, the roads were apparently trenced ‘about every mile’. The R.I.C did seem to believe that despite these problems they were winning the conflict. The County Inspector maintained that IRA had lost much of their fighting capabilities, and that they would never ‘regain the hold they had on the popular imagination’ and the police were now capable of travelling wherever they wanted in the county.⁴ Some small case operations took place, in January, but without any recognisable success.⁵ In late January there were two high profile assassination attempts. On 19th January, in the first attempt on his life, Auxiliary Commander Major MacKinnon was shot at outside of

¹ Townshend, *The republic*, pp, 217-218.

² CI, MR, Dec. 1920, County of Kerry, TCD BL/CO 904/113.

³ Fitzpatrick, ‘ Militarism in Ireland’ in Bartlett and Jeffreys (eds), *A military history of Ireland*, p. 405.

⁴ CI, MR, Jan. 1921, County of Kerry, CO 904/114.

⁵ Weekly Summary, Week ended 9 Jan. - 16 Jan. 1921, TCD BL/CO 904/150.

Ballymullen barracks, he returned fire and was not hit. The next day D.I. Tobias O'Sullivan was shot dead outside the RIC barracks in Listowel.⁶

I would contend that the dynamics of the conflict were to change with the arrival of Andy Cooney from GHQ. Cooney was sent to revitalise the IRA in the county, the deficiencies of the Kerry IRA as seen by GHQ were described in the introduction, and in Cooney's biographer's words 'to organise greater resistance to the British'.⁷ Cooney was a medical student, from Tipperary, who became a full time activist for GHQ in 1921. He arrived in Kerry at some point in January where he began a rapid reorganisation of the No.2 Brigade. After his arrival in the county the first professional flying column developed - a column responsible for the IRA's greatest successes in the county. Cooney also fostered communication and a spirit of friendliness between Kerry No.2 and GHQ, together with ensuring Kerry No.2 became integrated into the new 1st Southern Division structure. Kerry No.1 remained stubbornly outside of all these new reforms. Charles Townshend has suggested that the crucial factor in the radicalisation of certain IRA units or their willingness to use violence all hinged on their joining in the conflict at an early stage and that 'thereafter no amount of prodding from above could spur on slow starters to make up lost ground'.⁸ This does not seem entirely correct as Cooney's, does seem to have played a major role in the galvanising of the south-east Kerry IRA units, units who had played little to no significant role in the conflict so far.

Cooney's first task was forming a Column in the Kerry No.2 Flying area.⁹ The column went into operation on 2nd March and was composed of thirty men. For the past month the Column had been engaged in a training course at the Gap of Dunloe, organised by Cooney.¹⁰ Dan Allman was appointed O/C of the Column with Tom McEllistrim as vice O/C.¹¹ Allman being given the leadership role is a rather curious decision when considering the fact that McEllistrim had more experience than Allman, and the Column contained other more experienced men, associated with McEllistrim, like Johnny O'Connor, Peter Browne and John Cronin.¹² Perhaps the issue of localism again arises. These men were all, technically, mutineers from Kerry No.1 and perhaps the south Kerry men refused to be led by people they associated with Tralee.

⁶ Weekly Summary, Week ended 16 Jan. - 23 Jan. 1921, TCD BL/CO 904/150.

⁷ MacEvilly, *A splendid resistance*, p.37

⁸ Townshend, 'The Irish Republican Army and the development of guerrilla warfare', in *The English historical review*, (Spring, 1979), p.322.

⁹ MacEvilly, *A splendid resistance*, pp. 39-40.

¹⁰ Thomas McEllistrim, BMH, WS, 882.

¹¹ MacEvilly, *A splendid resistance*, p. 40.

¹² Dywer, *Tans, terror and troubles*, p. 289.

The Column's first operation occurred not in Kerry but in Cork. On 5th March, a combined north Cork brigade, Cork No.2, column under Séan Moylan with the fledgling Kerry No.2 column, ambushed two British army Lorries at Clonbanin, north Cork, in a protracted and bitter fight. The IRA were not able to overcome a British machine gun placed on one of the Lorries but managed to retreat in good order. The major outcome of the ambush was the death of Brigadier General Cummins, commander of British troops in Kerry. Mulcahy was impressed with the action and wrote to Humphry Murphy 'I hope that now that Kerry No.2 is definitely beginning to throw itself properly into the war, that no opportunity, however, small will be lost to show that Kerry is not going to be behind any other Brigade in a matter of initiative and in the matter of ability to strike a blow'.¹³ The British Army, in turn, considered the Clonbanin ambush to be 'one of the worst reverses suffered by the army'.¹⁴

The new Kerry No.2 column went on to develop a spirit of co-operation with their north Cork colleagues. The Cork No.2 column assisted Kerry No.2 at the successful Bog Road ambush outside of Rathmore and the two columns co-ordinated an operation at the Bower, near Rathmore, that proved unsuccessful – the crown forces stubbornly refused to turn up. John O'Callaghan, has noted that in May 1920 the east-Clare brigade assisted the east Limerick brigade's attack on the Killmallock barracks. O'Callaghan considers that this refutes claims by both David Fitzpatrick and Peter Hart that the IRA's pride in place or localism was rooted to such an extent that it prevented inter-brigade co-operation.¹⁵ The co-operation between Cork No.2 and Kerry No.2 seems to verify O'Callaghan's conclusions. Augusteijn has also noted the Derry IRA columns would operate in Donegal, and IRA men from Tipperary operated in Kilkenny.¹⁶ However, the north Kerry IRA rarely co-operated with the IRA in west Limerick and as has been noted earlier there was a noticeable feuding within the Kerry IRA itself, which prevented co-operation between Kerry units in the civil war. Men from Listowel and Tralee never co-operated for instance, and there were very noticeable tensions within the Tralee IRA. The issue is clearly complicated without a single answer.

Some weeks later the No.2 Column would again see action. On 21st March, in south Kerry, at Headford junction, came the largest military style confrontation of the entire conflict, not only in County Kerry but quite possibly in the entire country. At 3.50 in the afternoon thirty 1st Royal Fusiliers coming from Kenmare, were about to disembark at Headford, to continue their

¹³ C/S to O/C Kerry No.2, 21 Mar. 1921, UCDA/P7/A/38.

¹⁴ Townshend, *The Republic*, p. 243.

¹⁵ O'Callaghan, *Revolutionary Limerick*, pp 127-128.

¹⁶ Augusteijn, 'Accounting for the emergence of violent activism', in *Irish historical studies*, (Spring, 2007), pp. 331-332.

journey on to Killarney in a train expected from Mallow. The Kerry No.2 Column under Dan Allman and Thomas McEllistirm had taken up ambush positions in the station and opened fire. Eight regular British troops were killed, and eleven wounded.¹⁷ Two IRA men Allman and Jim Bailey and two civilians were killed in the crossfire. John Breen, a cattle dealer from Killarney, was found dead in the station's waiting room, Patrick O'Donoghue, also a cattle dealer from Killarney, was shot in the train and died of his wounds. Another man Timothy McCarthy, a merchant from Loo Bridge, was shot in the foot. His three year old daughter was also wounded. MacCarthy was walking from the train to the waiting room when the fusillade began, he picked up his daughter and dashed for the waiting room but both received wounds. The little girl was injured in both legs.¹⁸ The early arrival of a second train from Mallow, with another party of military, caused the IRA flying column to withdraw in good order.

On Headford, Mulcahy wrote to Humphry Murphy

I want you to convey especially all the men who were engaged in this fight our very great appreciation of the soldierly spirit in which this very fine piece of work was carried and through and to convey to the officers and men of the brigade as a whole our congratulations that the fighting material in the brigade promised to be so very fine.¹⁹

In the spring of 1921, the much criticised, Paddy Cahill also brought his column into the conflict in a major way. Since November Cahill had been operating in the eastern end of the Dingle Peninsula. GHQ assessment of Cahill's column was that they were primarily devoted to 'eating, sleeping and general amusement'.²⁰ The very next day after Headford though this 'sleeping' column were engaged in an operation that showed significant military capability. On 22nd March a nine man R.I.C patrol, from Dingle, was ambushed at Lispolie, in a protracted fight lasting three hours. The RIC had become aware of the IRA's dispositions and attempted to flank them. The IRA column comprised of Paddy Cahill's column and IRA men from the surrounding area led by Tadhg Brosnan, maintained a steady fire against the flankers and the column managed to retreat in good order. Volunteers Tim Hawley, James Fitzgerald and Thomas Ashe were all hit and died of their wounds, three R.I.C men were wounded.²¹

¹⁷ Figures provided by my supervisor Professor Eunan O'Halpin.

¹⁸ *The Kerryman*, 26 Mar. 1921. See also Horgan, *Dying for the cause*, pp. 237-239, 281-283

¹⁹ C/S to O/C Kerry No.2 Brigade, 16 Apr. 1921, UCDA/ P7/A/38.

²⁰ Townshend, *The Republic*, p. 295.

²¹ Weekly Summary, Week ended 20 Mar- 27 Mar. 1921, TCD BL/CO 904/150. See also Horgan, *Dying for the cause*, pp. 54-56, 131-132, and 137-138.

Attacks also occurred in the streets of Tralee, where a type of urban guerrilla warfare developed like that in Dublin. For instance on 21st March 1921, in Tralee, two bombs were thrown at a four man RIC patrol travelling in a Ford Car. Four civilians were injured but the police escaped unhurt.²² On 16th April Major MacKinnon was shot while playing Golf, by an IRA sniper. He died about an hour later in Tralee hospital.²³ His successor Head Constable Francis Benson promptly met the same fate a month later when on 14th May 1921 he too was shot dead in Tralee.²⁴ Attacks on senior RIC men were not uncommon. On the 8th May in Castleisland Head Constable Storey was shot and killed just after leaving Mass, Sergeant Butler who was with him was also injured.²⁵

In early June the Kerry No.1 Column had its most noticeable success, just outside of Castlemaine. On 1st June 1921 an RIC cycle patrol from Killorglin was ambushed at Glanmere, near Castlemaine. District Inspector McGaughey, Sergeant Collery and Constables Quirke and Cooney were shot dead. Three other constables were wounded.²⁶ The fighting lasted about half an hour. Four other RIC constables managed 'by running' to get back to Killorglin. The I.R.A party succeeded in capturing all their opponents' bicycles as well as the arms and ammunition from the dead and wounded.²⁷ Tadhg Brosnan commanded the operation.²⁸ Cahill was absent from this attack and it is noticeable that while he was present at Lispole, Brosnan was also in charge. GHQ were aware of this and it is reflected in both GHQ and the 1st Southern Division's desire for Brosnan to be replace Cahill as O/C of Kerry No.1.²⁹

The Kerry No.2's next major operation was in Rathmore in east Kerry. The planning and execution of this ambush remain disputed as both Cooney and the captain of the Rathmore Volunteers Manus Moynihan claimed credit for it. The results are not disputed. On 4th May nine RICmen were effectively lured to the Bog Road, just outside of Rathmore, where an IRA party led by Humphry Murphy, Andy Cooney, Manus Moynihan and Séan Moylan and the north Cork Flying Column ambushed them. Five were killed and three others died of their wounds. The IRA party succeeded in taking all their arms and ammunition.³⁰ The RIC described the ambush as 'a particularly brutal crime' as the body of a murdered 'informer' had been used as

²² *The Kerryman*, 26 Mar. 1921

²³ Dwyer, *Tans, terror and troubles*, p.303.

²⁴ Weekly Summary, Week ended 8 May - 15 May 1921, TCD BL/CO 904/150.

²⁵ Weekly Summary, Week ended 1 May - 8 May 1921, TCD BL/CO 904/150.

²⁶ Weekly Summary, Week ended 29 May - 5 Jun. 1921, TCD BL/CO 904/150

²⁷ *Cork Examiner*, 3 Jun. 1921.

²⁸ Dwyer, *Tans, terror and troubles*, p. 316.

²⁹ MacEvilly, *A splendid resistance*, p.48.

³⁰ *Ibid*, p.44.

‘bait ‘to get the RIC o visit the scene. Only one constable managed to escape.³¹ The Bog Road ambush, was militarily speaking the IRA’s most successful ambush in Kerry. The use of the informer (which will be discussed below), seems to have muddied the waters as the ambush is not included in the, otherwise comprehensive, *Kerry’s fighting story 1916-1921*. The exclusion frustrated Cooney who, rightfully, described it as ‘in many ways quite the most successful (ambush) in the County during this particular period’.³² In contrast the 6th Divisional record’s report felt the ambush was ‘the lowest point of treacherous savagery to which the rebels ever descended’.³³

The conflict also began, eventually, to enter into the previously undisturbed parts of the county. In Cahirciveen ‘very cordial relations existed between the military and the inhabitants’.³⁴ But in May the police were concerned that violence was extending into the previous quiet areas of Cahirciveen and Kenmare.³⁵ On 12th May a six man RICpatrol was ambushed in Cahirciveen town. The police returned fire and the I.R.A retreated without inflicting any casualties.³⁶ On the evening of 16th May three Constables were shot at, while out walking, in Cahirciveen. One was slightly wounded.³⁷ Despite the relatively low intensity of these two attacks Cahirciveen was subjected to a substantive reprisal.

On the whole though the operational strategy of Kerry No.3 certainly left a lot to be desired as their activities report for July 1921 shows. On 10th July ‘four (I.R.A) riflemen with bombs entered the town (Cahirciveen). After searching the whole town no policemen was (sic) seen and our men withdrew’. This was the only operation undertaken by Kerry No.3 in July and reveals a haphazard approach, reconnaissance does not seem to have been undertaken let alone any intelligence on enemy movements.³⁸

North Kerry also had a flying column that formed in late January 1921, the Column would in turn split in two – one for the 3rd Battalion area and another for the 6th.³⁹ In north Kerry the IRA frequently attacked their opponents but they tended to target individual members of the crown forces rather than attempt to orchestrate large scale ambushes such as at Castlemaine or Rathmore. There were exceptions to this rule. On 25th April, one mile from Ardfert a fourteen

³¹ IG, MR, May 1921, TCD BL/CO 904/115.

³² MacEvilly, *A splendid resistance*, p.45.

³³The Irish rebellion in the 6th Divisional area, p. 104.

³⁴ *The Kerryman*, 8 Jan. 1921.

³⁵ IG, MR, May 1921. CO 904/115.

³⁶ Weekly Summary, Week ended 8 May - 15 May 1921, TCD BL/CO 904/150.

³⁷ Weekly Summary, Week ended 15 May - 22 May 1921, TCD BL/CO 904/150.

³⁸ Diary of activities, Kerry No.3 Brigade, 7 Aug.1921, UCDA/P7/A/23.

³⁹ Gaughan, *Listowel and its vicinity*, p. 384.

man RIC cycle patrol was attacked, one IRA man was injured but no members of the crown forces were hurt. The fight lasted twenty minutes before the IRA withdrew.⁴⁰ Also on 12th April three police tenders were attacked at Kilmorna, near Listowel, the police maintained they found three dead bodies of IRA men.⁴¹ Police reports were prone to exaggerate as Michael Galvin was the only I.R.A casualty.⁴²

More common, however, were the following types of attack. On the 30th March at Courtnaskhey, near Listowel, Constable MacDougal was shot at, MacDougal returned fire and escaped unharmed.⁴³ On 12th April in Tarbert two policemen were shot at in the village and the barracks was later attacked. One constable was slightly wounded.⁴⁴ On 28th June Constables Cheatley and Coogan were shot at and wounded half a mile outside of Ballyduff.⁴⁵

In east Kerry the IRA were active but, like in north Kerry, there were no notable large scale successes. On 2nd April Castleisland Barracks was attacked. The I.R.A had commandeered a house overlooking the barracks, there no casualties.⁴⁶ On 14th June District Inspector Scully was seriously wounded when an RIC patrol was attacked between Farranfore and Scartaglin, the attack lasted about twenty minutes before the IRA withdrew.⁴⁷

The last major attack by the IRA, ironically enough, took place several hours before the Truce came into effect. Hoping to ambush a British Army Patrol leaving Castleisland, a large IRA party came into the town, under Humphry Murphy's command, hoping to surround the patrol. The fighting began prematurely and the British patrol managed to take cover and call for reinforcements. The IRA column withdrew with three fatalities, and the British with three.⁴⁸

The ambushes at Headford, Rathmore Castlemaine and Lispole were the highpoints for the IRA in the county. The Castleisland attack could have been a major success had it not been for an IRA section beginning the attack prematurely. Castleisland was a technical failure but, like the other large scale attacks, revealed a willingness on the part of the IRA to take on better armed opponents. Similarly, if the second train had not arrived early, the Headford ambush could have been a complete success. Lispole showed quick thinking and ingenuity under

⁴⁰ *Cork Examiner*, 27 Apr. 1921.

⁴¹ *The Kerryman*, 16 Apr. 1921.

⁴² Horgan, *Dying for the cause*, pp. 163-164.

⁴³ Weekly Summary, Week ended 27 Mar. - 3 Apr. 1921, TCD BL/CO 904/150.

⁴⁴ Weekly Summary, Week ended 15 May - 22 May 1921, TCD BL/ CO 904/150.

⁴⁵ *Cork Examiner*, 30 Jun. 1921.

⁴⁶ *The Kerryman*, 9 Apr. 1921.

⁴⁷ *Ibid*, 16 Jun. 1921 see also Weekly Summary, Week ended 12 Jun. - 19 Jun. 1921, TCD BL/CO 904/150.

⁴⁸ Ó Ruairc, *Truce*, p.201.

pressure, while Rathmore showed a ruthlessly brutal IRA. IRA capabilities and levels of determination were clearly increasing in 1921.

If anything these attacks showed that IRA operations in Kerry were consistent but rarely successful. Charles Townshend has argued that operational failures were not necessarily total or complete failures. Townshend writes that regardless of whether an operation failed it implied continued determination and demonstrated popular support and was indicative of the fact that ‘the Volunteers were in business’.⁴⁹ The killings of D.I. Tobias O’Sullivan and Head Constable Storey showed an IRA that was, almost, above squeamishness – willing to kill fathers in front of children and husbands in front of wives. Since the implementation of the reprisal policy, in which lethal violence was often implemented, the IRA also became more willing to both use and violence and kill. There were no reported cases of members of the crown forces surrendering and being given tea.

As in 1920 the IRA’s campaign was by no means made up of combat operations and 1921 saw the almost daily damage to roads, and raiding of the mails and of trains – all of which impeded the movements of civilians.

Low scale operations.

Much of the IRA’s energies, in 1921, were devoted to hampering the movement of the crown forces by damaging roads. In May 1921 *An T-Óglác* called for

incessant activity is what is required of Volunteers everywhere at the present time. We cannot always be bringing of big coups but we can always be doing something. Roads must be cut and bridges destroyed; enemy mails and despatches must be continually raided and intercepted; enemy stores seized; and every possible kind of damage great and small should be inflicted whenever opportunity arises.⁵⁰

Charles Townshend has written that this ‘reflected its (GHQ’s) realisation that most units would never be able to do much more than carry out minor raids on post offices, or individual assassinations’.⁵¹ This, however, had long been the policy of the IRA in Kerry, without any official promptings. In February the Inspector General felt Kerry ‘was not as bad as some

⁴⁹ Townshend, *The republic*, p. 253.

⁵⁰ *An T-Óglác*, 1 May 1920.

⁵¹ Townshend, ‘The Irish Republican Army and the development of guerrilla warfare’, in *The English historical review*, (Spring, 1979), p.330.

counties in Munster' but that there was a 'regular epidemic of road cutting'.⁵² The County Inspector noted, that month, that the only open roads were those between Castleisland and Kingwilliamstown (now Ballydesmond), Castleisland to Abbeyfeale and Castleisland and Tralee.⁵³

IRA leader in north Kerry Patrick J. McElligott recalled that in 1921 'In each area I ordered the intensive blocking and trenching of roads in pot hole style so as to keep up the morale of the men which was very low at this time. This action restored confidence in nearly all the areas'.⁵⁴ On 5th February it was reported that eleven roads between Tralee and Listowel, Ballybunion, Tarbert, Ballylongford and Duagh had been trenched. The people of north Kerry expected an IRA ambush to take place as so many roads had been cut.⁵⁵ On 1st March 'many of the roads leading from Tralee to north Kerry were cut and blocked by felled trees'.⁵⁶

In the first week of April bridges were cut between Mallow and Rathmore resulting in no trains arriving from Mallow in both Killarney and Tralee.⁵⁷ By May The County Inspector noted 'all' roads were trenched or blocked by felled trees making it impossible for the crown Forces to travel at night.⁵⁸ The cutting of roads was becoming widespread across Munster and would frequently result in the security forces 'commandeering' locals to repair the roads. Liam Lynch felt this was beginning to 'nullify the advantages gained by the cutting of roads' and also suggested that 'the civil population should be asked to make a united stand against doing this work for the enemy'.⁵⁹ It is impossible to say how such a policy could have been implemented. In west Limerick, in June, 'all the companies in the battalions are working almost constantly trenching roads and making them impassable'.⁶⁰

In 1921 despite the successes of the IRA in the County GHQ still had a fairly dismal view of the IRA units in the County. Andy Cooney's report on the state of Kerry No.1 in June that in the Dingle battalion little training took place and there was a 'great want of arms', and the Battalion was mainly engaged in road cutting. But what comes across in GHQ papers is the prevalence of damage to roads. The Castlegregory battalion engaged in some training but were

⁵² IG, MR, Feb. 1921, TCD BL/CO 904/114.

⁵³ CI, MR, County of Kerry, Feb. 1921, TCD BL/CO 904/114.

⁵⁴ Patrick J. McElligott, BMH, WS, 1013.

⁵⁵ *The Kerryman*, 5 Feb. 1921.

⁵⁶ *Ibid*, 6 Mar. 1921.

⁵⁷ *Ibid*, 9 Apr. 1921.

⁵⁸ CI, MR, County of Kerry, May 1921, TCD BL/CO 904/115.

⁵⁹ Townshend, *The Republic*, p.261.

⁶⁰ O/C West Limerick Brigade to C/S, 3 Jun. 1921, UCDA/P7/A/20

mainly engaged in trenching roads. The Kilorglin battalion through road cutting had succeeded in isolating the Glenbeigh barracks and the Ardfert battalion had destroyed four bridges.⁶¹

On 19th and 25th April the Tralee-Killarney road was cut at Gortalea. On the same dates the Killtallagh Company cut all the roads in their company area. On the same two dates the Firies company cut all the roads in the company area. On 25th the Kilcumin Company cut all roads in their company area. On the same date the Listry company did the same and held up a post office linesman and took his various tools.⁶²

In the latter stages of the conflict the No.2 Brigade, became a model for efficiency in terms of contact with GHQ For the month of May the Brigade reported that road trenching was conducted by the following companies Lyncromuane, Scartaglin, Curragane, Firies Blackvalley Fossa, Kilcumin, Barraduff, Lisivageen and Anabala. The Ashill company destroyed a bridge on the Tralee-Gortalea road, the Ballymacelligott, Beaufort, Baraduff, Glenflesk and Tureemault companies were each responsible for the destruction of bridges. All the companies in the Killarney and Rathmore battalions had seized bicycles. The Kilgarvan and Fossa companies had seized Belfast goods.⁶³

This occurred together with constant stopping of trains that usually involved raiding the mails. On 14th January, the Kenmare to Killarney mail train was held up at Loo Bridge, near Glenflesk. The mail bags were searched and then returned.⁶⁴ On 13th April a train travelling between Listowel and Ballybunion was held up at Lisselton and the mail on board was taken. In the evening the mail bag was found in a field mark 'censored by the IRA'.⁶⁵ Military equipment was sometimes seized in these raids. On 27th April a goods train was held up outside Gortalea, armed men removed four touring cars and Crossley tender from the train which were burned.⁶⁶ In April a cart containing supplies for the coastguard at Blackwater coastguard station, guarded by three soldiers, was captured and the supplies taken without violence near Kenmare.⁶⁷

On April 6th the Fossa company raided all mails coming into their area. The Firies Company on the 28th raided a train carrying the mail at Molahiffe station. On 27th April the Ballymacelligott company held up a train at the Gortalea and removed and burned two cars that

⁶¹ Developing officers' report on Kerry No.1 Brigade, 23 Jun. 1921, UCDA/P7/A/20.

⁶² Report of activities month of April 1921, Brigade Adjutant Kerry No.2, 5 May 1921, UCDA/P7/A/38.

⁶³ Battalion operations, Brigade Adjutant Kerry No.2 to C/S, 2 Jun. 1921, UCDA/P7/A/19.

⁶⁴ *The Kerryman*, 15 Jan. 1921.

⁶⁵ *Ibid*, 16 Apr.1921.

⁶⁶ *Ibid*, 28 Apr. 1921.

⁶⁷ Operations for month of March 1921, Brigade Adjutant Kerry No.2 to C/S, N/D (C/S received 14 Apr. 1921), UCDA/P7/A/38.

had belonged to the late Major MacKinnon. On the 28th April the mail car was raided by the Kenmare Company on the Kenmare-Killarney road and all parcels relating to the police and military were taken. In the same month the Barraduff and Bealnadeega Companies raided railway stations for equipment.⁶⁸

William McCabe, of the Ballybunion IRA estimated that in the last stages of the conflict the mails were raided at least twice a week in his area.⁶⁹ This is reflected in the available documentation. According to the *Cork Examiner* by June the Listowel-Ballybunion mail train had been held up six times time in three months.⁷⁰

By July two roads were cut in the Kenmare battalion area and one bridge destroyed, in the Rathmore battalion area four roads were cut and two bridges destroyed.⁷¹ In a report by the Kerry No.3, their first and last for the 1919-21 conflict, they reported that on 12th June motor boats used by the RIC to travel between Cahirciveen and Valentia Island were destroyed. In Cahirciveen, on 24th June, the observatory was raided and binoculars and meteorological equipment were taken. On the same day in Waterville the I.R.A raided the electric cable station and seized equipment such as lamps. On the same day the railway station in Kells was raided and telephone apparatus was taken.⁷² On 8th July, it was reported that the mails were again taken from the Tralee-Limerick train at Kilmorna.⁷³

In some respects these operations were just as important as the larger ambushes. For one thing they gave under equipped volunteers, a sense of purpose but for another they severely isolated the crown forces. Constant road blocking made it difficult to move freely outside the larger towns of Tralee, Killarney, Listowel and Dingle.

These operations had another significant component though – they made it difficult for normal people to go about their business. They also robbed civilians of a right to privacy through constant raiding of mails. While the IRA, in 1920, had attempted to maintain certain moral standards through policing they were now involving themselves in the minutiae of people's lives, showing the extent to which civilians were still an important factor in IRA thinking. Civilian believed to be assisting the crown forces, also, continued to suffer harassment from republicans into 1921.

⁶⁸ Report of activities month of April 1921, Brigade Adjutant Kerry No.2, 5 May 1921, UCDA/ P7/A/38.

⁶⁹ William McCabe, BMH, WS, 1212.

⁷⁰ *Cork Examiner*, 28 Jun. 1921.

⁷¹ Battalion operations, Brigade Adjutant Kerry No.2 to C/S, 7 Jul. 1921, UCDA/P7/A/20.

⁷² Kerry No.3 Brigade, Report of activities during the month of June 1921, 8 Jul. 1921, UCDA/ P7/A/20.

⁷³ *Cork Examiner*, 8 Jul. 1921.

Harassment

Concerns about civilians who were supplying the enemy continued to exist. Lynch wrote to Mulcahy in March 1921 that 'It is time we get the Irish people, no matter who they are, not to freely supply the enemy? Several people have larger contracts for meat, oats, and dozens of other important supplies. It seems ridiculous to have the civil population supplying the enemy, while the army is on the field to cut off supplies etc.' Lynch, also advocated a system whereby 'that none of the civil population speak or communicate with them (the crown forces), it will break up their intelligence department'.⁷⁴

Intimidation of civilians considered to be assisting the crown forces continued into 1921 but was not as common as in 1920. On 19th February fifty tons of hay, thirty four tons of straw, a seed sowing machine and a hay shed belonging to J. Dillon, from outside of Tralee, were destroyed. Within the previous two months Dillon had supplied straw to the military and police.⁷⁵ In late March an unnamed contractor in Dingle who had been supplying the military in Dingle had been kidnapped and threatened to discontinue the practice.⁷⁶ On 2nd April reported that a 54 bags of vegetables consigned to Mr Robert Boylan of Derry, in storage in Ballybunion train station were destroyed.⁷⁷ On 18th April the home of Daniel O'Connor, a Tailor from Listowel, was raided by the IRA and he was warned against giving information to the Black and Tans. On 21st March the garage of J.S. Benner, in Tralee, was shot into by the IRA Stones were also thrown and a large plate glass window was broken. Benner was, apparently, on friendly terms with the Auxiliaries stationed in Ballymullen barracks.⁷⁸ On 7th April a motor car belonging to Francis Stephens, in Kilorglin, was burned. Stephens was made drive the car into a field by three armed men, then abandon it. Stephens was on friendly terms with the police.⁷⁹

The police reported instances of intimidation that are hard to verify. In June the police reported that farmers 'are often turned out of bed to allow IRA men rest...(shopkeepers) are visited and their goods commandeered in the name of the IRA, clothing as well as provisions being taken. The IRA generally operate near difficult country, mountains for preference'. Also 'No boycotting is necessary; people not falling into line with the IRA are either shot or

⁷⁴ O/C Cork No, 2 to C/S, 19 Mar. 1921, UCDA/P7/A/38.

⁷⁵ Weekly Summary, Week ended 13 Feb. - 20 Feb. 1921, TCD BL/CO 904/150.

⁷⁶ *The Kerryman*, 26 Mar. 1921.

⁷⁷ *Ibid*, 2 Apr. 1921.

⁷⁸ Weekly Summary, Week ended 17 Apr. - 24 Apr. 1921, TCD BL/CO 904/150.

⁷⁹ Weekly report, Week ended 10 Apr. - 17 Apr. 1921, TCD BL/CO 904/150.

threatened with death. Intimidation is rampant. People having fishing rights, even are obliged to forego them'.⁸⁰

The Kerryman reported on 19th February that Cliff Lodge (described as a mansion) at Rossbeigh, near Glenbeigh, was burned.⁸¹ On 7th March Carnegie Hall, just outside Listowel, was burned by the IRA. In notices posted in Listowel it was announced 'the army of occupation' would no longer hold meetings in the hall.⁸² On 28th May Ballyheigue castle was burned by the IRA. The castle was being used by the crown forces and had been used to hold republican suspects.⁸³ These were only three the only three known instances of arson by the IRA in 1921. Interestingly, in April the Inspector General recorded a different version of events. He stated that 'in the southern part of the County there seemed to be an intention to burn all loyalists who owned property and some of these properties have been destroyed. Numbers of persons who took no part in politics were leaving or contemplating leaving the County'.⁸⁴ Frustratingly, through police and press reports together with republican oral testimony do not refer to examples of house burnings by the IRA in the spring of 1921. In May the Inspector General noted 'there appears to be a determination to burn out all the old Gentleman's Country Houses. This is a Bolshevist scheme within Sinn Fein. The idea is to keep the old families from returning after "peace" and to grab their demesne lands'.⁸⁵ But there are no records to suggest that this extended to Kerry, except in the claims by the County Inspector.

Liam Lynch, however, wrote to GHQ in May that for each republican prisoner shot by the crown forces in response 'we shoot one local loyalist, Prominent Freemason' Lynch also noted that in Cork No.2, Lynch's own stronghold, the IRA had been burning a loyalist house for every republican house burned 'with the result that the local loyalists approached the enemy authorities immediately asking them for God's sake to stop reprisals'. Lynch suggested that this policy be extended to a national level.⁸⁶ In November 1921, during the Truce, Lynch fearing that Lismore castle be occupied by the military asked permission to burn it.⁸⁷ The RIC believed, something similar, was already occurring in south Kerry but this is hard to substantiate. Historian of large estates Terry Dooley notes that only three, of what are termed, 'big houses'

⁸⁰ IG, MR, Jun. 1921, TCD BL/CO 904/115.

⁸¹ *The Kerryman*, 19 Feb. 1920.

⁸² Ibid, 12 Mar. 1921.

⁸³ *Cork Examiner*, 30 May 1921.

⁸⁴ IG, MR, Apr. 1921, TCD BL/CO 904/115.

⁸⁵ IG, MR, May 1921. CO 904/115.

⁸⁶ O/C 1st Southern Division to C/S, 4 May 1921, UCDA/P7/A/20.

⁸⁷ O/C 1st Southern Division to C/S, 2 Nov. 1921, UCDA/P7/A/28.

were burned in Kerry between 1920 and the 1921 truce.⁸⁸ Perhaps the County Inspector might have been exaggerating in an attempt to get more attention for the County and as a result more resources.

Curiously, it was only at the very tail end of the conflict that GHQ issued instructions that if the Crown forces burned houses ‘a similar number of houses belonging to the most active enemies of Ireland may be destroyed’ on condition all details be reported to GHQ But also that if the Crown forces persist despite the counter reprisals ‘they must be answered in the same way, stopping only when the district concerned has been entirely cleared of active enemies of Ireland’. But also that the owners of these houses had to be informed why their property was being destroyed and also crucially ‘for the purposes of such reprisals no one shall be regarded as enemy of Ireland, whether they may be described locally as Unionist, Orangemen, etc. except they are actively anti-Irish in their actions’, and finally that all cases first needed to be authorised by the Brigade Commandant.⁸⁹ But, as said, this state of affairs did not spread to Kerry.

The figures for IRA activities between January and 11th July reveal much

Table sixteen. Instances of IRA action against combatants per Kerry IRA battalion, January 1921 to 11th July 1921.

Battalion	Regular combat I.R.A action 1921
Tralee	7
Lixnaw	3
Ardfert	2
Listowel	11
Castlegregory	-
Dingle	2
Firies	3
Castleisland	8
Kilorglin	7

⁸⁸ Terry Dooley, *The decline of the big house in Ireland. A study of the landed families 1860-1960* (Dublin, 2001), p. 286.

⁸⁹ General Orders, No. 26, Reprisals, 26 Jun. 1921, NLI, MS 33, 913 (7).

Killarney	4
Rathmore	4
Kenmare	5
Ballymacelligott	0
Kerry No.3 (did not have a Battalion structure)	3
Total	59

Table seventeen. Instances of IRA action against combatants per month, January 1921 to 11th July 1921.

Month	Number of regular IRA actions, 1921.
January	6
February	4
March	10
April	5
May	15
June	12
July	9

Regular I.R.A action occurred on fifty nine occasions from January to July 1921 as opposed to thirty seven occasions through the entire year 1920. The sharp upsurge in IRA violence in Kerry in 1921 was not uncommon in other parts of the country, for instance in Dublin in 1920, despite obviously notable operations such as Bloody Sunday, regular IRA operations were few and far between but became common in 1921.⁹⁰ Curiously, no major patterns emerge in terms of time frame. For instance in 1920 IRA action seemed to decrease in response to reprisals by the crown forces, but not so in 1921. For instance the most intense reprisal of 1921 occurred in February, but as will be noticed, regular IRA actions in the county rose after February, with only a drop being perceptible in April.

⁹⁰ Townshend, *The republic*, p.249.

Geographically, incidents occurred most often in north and east Kerry. Showing, the frequency of smaller scale operations such as attempted assassinations. Killarney and Rathmore may appear to have been inactive but in fact the operations that did occur in these areas were large scale ambushes. An interesting discrepancy is apparent here – an area could engage in few attempts at individual assassinations but counter this by attempting large scale operations to inflict more casualties. Large scale operations also put more men at risk if the ambush was not successful and if the column was pursued. Also these types of ambushes required careful planning and access to arms and ammunition and large groups of men who were willing to use them, and access to billets.

In contrast the types of attacks in north Kerry required a few dedicated fighters, and access to enough weapons and ammunition to quickly kill between one and three men at a time. They usually occurred near a barracks. Logistical skill was not necessary, on the same level as the larger attacks, as fewer men had to be looked after and the operations did not require examining an RIC patrol's route but rather when one RIC might leave the barracks. In fact these attacks might only involve watching a barracks and striking when an RIC man emerged.

Table eighteen. Instances of attack/intimidation/interference with civilians by the IRA per Kerry I.R.A battalion, January 1921 to 11th July 1921.

Battalion	Number of instance of attack intimidation/interference with civilians 1921
Tralee	8
Lixnaw	5
Ardfert	4
Listowel	19
Castlegregory	
Dingle	1
Kilorglin	5
Firies	1
Castleisland	1
Killarney	5
Rathmore	1
Kenmare	6
Ballymacelligott	0

Kerry No.3 (did not have a Battalion structure)	1
Total	57

Table nineteen. Instances of IRA interactions with civilians versus with other combatants per battalion area in first six months of 1921 in graph.

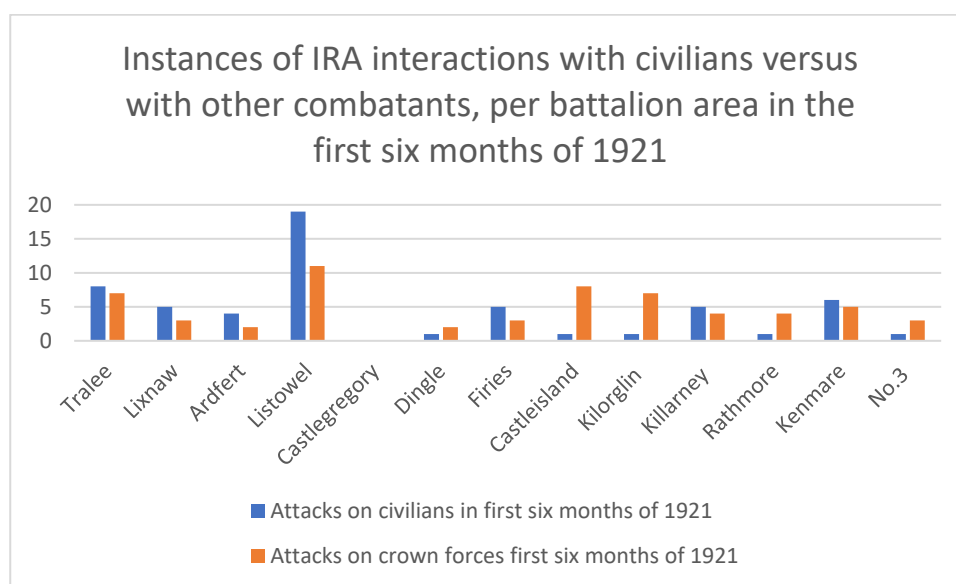


Table twenty. Instances of attack/intimidation/interference with civilians by the IRA per month , January 1921 to 11th July 1921.

Month	Number of irregular IRA actions 1921.
January	2
February	4

March	11
April	15
May	7
June	15
July	4

Table twenty one. Instances of IRA interaction with civilians versus with other combatants in the first six months of 1921 by graph.

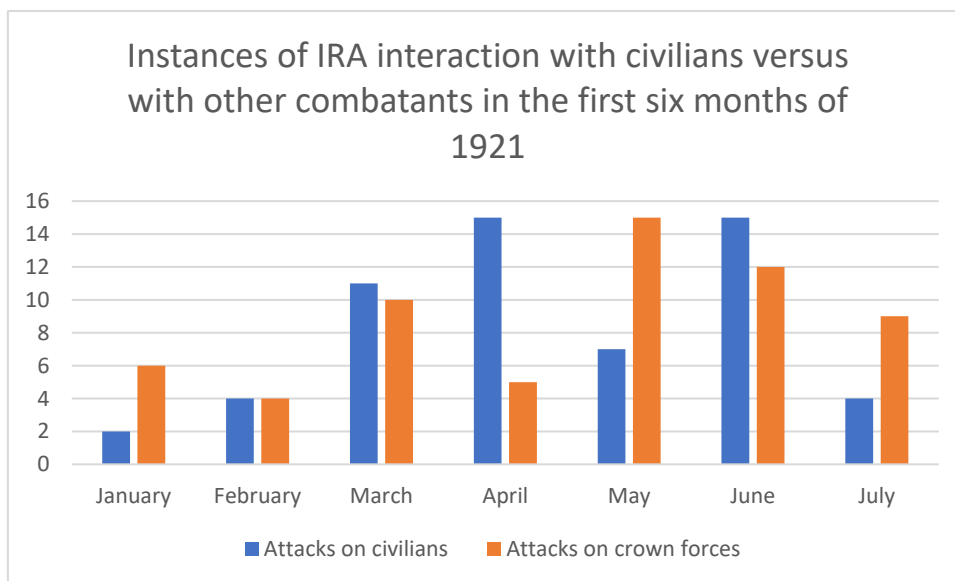


Table twenty two. Forms of attack/interference/intimidation of civilians by IRA January to 11th July 1921, and number of instances.

Attack/interference/intimidation of civilians in first six months of 1921	Number
Seizure of weapon from civilian	-
Shooting of civilians	8 (one not fatal)

Postmen held up	4
Threats made in person	2
Family made leave their home	2
Public notices	
Threatening letters	
Trains held up	17
Destruction/seizure of property	12
Arson	6
Kidnapping	
Mail car held up	2
Private houses raided	1
Courthouse raided	
Assaults	
Landlord threatened	
Girls with hair cut	1

Recorded instances of intimidation took place on fifty seven occasions - a considerable decrease from the eighty four recorded instances in 1920. This reveals that through the arrival of reinforcements and the reprisal policy the conflict had become more militarised – the opposite to the stated intention of these reinforcements. IRA men had to go on the run and could spend less time amongst their communities and actively preventing co-operation or potential co-operation. The advent of the truce in July complicates the issue, and means we must treat these figures with caution. It is possible that if the truce was not called instances of intimidation would have continued and eclipsed the 1920 levels.

Indeed, the frequent cutting of roads can be considered as strictly military as it was mainly an attempt to impeded and frustrate the movements of the crown forces, the annoyance it caused to the civilian population was a secondary concern. But this is not to suggest that somehow the IRA were no longer concerned with civilians they perceived as opponents. As they took on a more military attitude towards their armed opponents they also took on a more lethal approach to those they considered to be their civilian opponents. Intimidation decreased but was replaced by something altogether more deadly.

Spies and informers.

On 5th February Dublin Castle reported that an ex-soldier Michael O'Scanlon was forcibly taken from his home in Tralee, shot and left for dead. O'Scanlon survived the shooting though his condition was described as serious.⁹¹ This was the first instance, in 1921, of what has become easily the most controversial aspect of the IRA's campaign between 1919-1921 – the killing of civilians as spies and informers. The following sections examines the events surrounding each case and particularly tries to show the reasoning behind each execution. I consider this important as many continue to use this issue to validate certain viewpoints. It has been suggested that these killings were unnecessary and were representative of local grudges or sectarianism. Other commentators refute these allegations claiming they were militarily necessary and the IRA only targeted people known to be informers.⁹² The following section hopes to highlight the confusing nature of the issue and the impossibility of reaching definite conclusions. Due, not least, to the conflicting narratives that exist in relation to the events surrounding some of these killings.

In 1921, in response to the brutal counter insurgency campaign the IRA, as has been noted, became more aggressive but this extended to beyond organising more conventional military style confrontations. One aspect of this new aggression was the execution of civilians who were believed to be assisting the crown forces. In April 1921 this new offensive attitude was reflected in *An T-Ólgác*.

All the people of Ireland must be taught that having created the republic by their freely given votes they must in this war for national existence be prepared to place themselves and their possessions ungrudgingly at its disposal. All who preach a different doctrine, all who endeavour by word or deed to weaken or impede the soldiers of Ireland in their duty to their country are acting the parts of traitors to their country who in time of war are helping and encouraging the enemy. It is a war between Ireland and England; Ireland is fighting for her life; and all who are not with her soldiers in the fight are consciously acting the part of enemies of Ireland.⁹³

In 1921 a far more sinister environment seems to have developed. In west Cork John L. Sullivan recalled the feeling of the time 'At that time every stranger was under observation'.⁹⁴ The threatening notices of 1920 were replaced with bodies labelled 'Spies and informer beware'.

⁹¹ *Cork Examiner*, 12 Feb. 1921.

⁹² For the former view see Hart, *The IRA & its enemies* and the latter see Ó Ruairc, *Truce*,

⁹³ *An T-Ólgác*, 15 Apr. 1921.

⁹⁴ Griffith and O'Grady, *Curious Journey*, p.189.

Brian Hughes has argued that the labels placed on dead spies effectively replaced the threatening letters as the primary form of intimidation of the civilian population and that such killings represented ‘a tacit admission that in some places warnings (threatening notices etc.) had become ineffective’.⁹⁵ Or it could be said instead that things had changed - unlike in 1920 in 1921 the IRA were now fighting for survival. It can also be said that there was a grimly practical aspect to executing civilians. Peter Hart noted in 1998 ‘It was a matter of life and death to the guerrillas... Their survival and the success of their ambushes depended on their opponents not knowing who they were, and therefore upon the support and silence of their communities’.⁹⁶ The British records do note that it was in early 1921 that people began to come forward to offer information to the crown forces on the IRA.⁹⁷ Seemingly, civilians were now actively giving information on the IRA’s movements to the crown forces and logically, from the IRA’s perspective, more extreme measures than threatening notices had to be resorted to stop this and for their own survival.

Again, the crucial element here is the agency of the crown forces. In the summer of 1920 the crown forces in Kerry began to randomly discharge their weapons at civilians, by 1921 they had killed five civilians, by the time of the truce they had killed another four. It was in this environment that the IRA started to kill civilians. By making the killing of civilians seemingly so permissible, and not that unusual, the crown forces had created a situation in which it was logical that the IRA could now also kill civilians. In 1921 a situation had been created where morally ambiguous actions were inevitable. It can be argued that the crown forces had created this situation. In the summer through winter of 1920 their aggressive reprisal policy had forced IRA men to go on the run and form flying columns thus activating previously inactive men and escalating the conflict. By 1921 the crown forces’ killing of civilians had, similarly, activated the IRA into killing civilians. As the previous chapters had shown, in 1920 the IRA rarely actually killed their civilian opponents, the crown forces had created entirely new dynamics. It was another example of the actions of the crown forces creating a totally different set of circumstances than they had set out to achieve.

Like all other aspects of the IRA’s campaign regional discrepancies again come into play. The IRA in Kerry, were not nearly as aggressive on the issue as their colleagues in Cork. According to my figures the I.R.A in Kerry killed a total of nine civilians in Kerry. According to Páidraig Óg Ó Ruairc’s recent figures they killed eight. Neighbouring Cork executed sixty

⁹⁵ Hughes, ‘Defying the I.R.A.’ (Trinity College Dublin, 2014), p 189.

⁹⁶ Hart, *The I.R.A & its enemies*, p.296.

⁹⁷ *The Irish rebellion in the 6th Divisional area*, p.97.

six. Limerick was just behind Kerry at seven.⁹⁸ In terms of looking at the three bordering counties the Cork IRA appear to be the exception to the rule – though the IRA were generally far more aggressive and willing to use violence than any other IRA unit in the whole country.

Eunan O’Halpin’s figures are that ten civilians were executed in Kerry by the IRA, seventy in Cork, seven in Limerick.⁹⁹ Despite the discrepancies Cork is clearly ahead of the rest of Munster and Kerry fits into a pattern reflected in neighbouring Limerick. I am unaware of O’Halpin’s tenth man and will not comment on these figures except on one point. Ó Ruairc in his, otherwise comprehensive, list of civilians executed by the IRA claims eight civilians were executed by the IRA in the county but curiously Patrick Roche is absent together with Cornelius Kelly. One Godfrey Jasper is present though.¹⁰⁰ Ó Ruairc’s source for Jasper is Patrick McKenna’s witness statement. In that statement ‘Jasper’ is described as a ‘Black and Tan’ kidnapped by the Tralee IRA at the end of September who was brought to Ardfert, where he was executed on 29th October.¹⁰¹

Officially G.H.Q instructed all units on potential civilian opponents that ‘no one shall be regarded as enemy of Ireland, whether they may be described locally as Unionist, Orangeman, etc., except they are actively anti-Irish in their actions’.¹⁰² In 1998 Peter Hart’s research presented the idea that people friendly to the police, tramps and ex-servicemen and indeed Protestants were targeted often on groundless suspicions.¹⁰³ In 2012 in *Terror in Ireland* I concluded that in west Cork the IRA were certainly likely to execute ex-servicemen, and indeed Protestants, but in most cases they had grounds to believe their victims were active spies.¹⁰⁴ If we move on to Kerry again the IRA were likely to execute either tramps or ex-servicemen.

Paul Taylor in *Heroes or traitors. Experiences of southern Irish soldiers returning from the great war 1919-1939* concluded that ex-servicemen were by no means overrepresented in terms of groups targeted by the IRA and that in all such cases the IRA decision was based on actual suspicions rather than for simply being ex-servicemen.¹⁰⁵ My own research indicates that the IRA did target ex – servicemen, but in IRA documentation it appears they did have suspicions

⁹⁸ Ó Ruairc, *Truce*, pp.100-104

⁹⁹ Eunan O’Halpin, ‘Problematic killings during the war of independence and its aftermath: civilian spies and informers’ in James Kelly and Mary Anne Lyons (eds), *Death and dying in Ireland, Britain and Europe* (Kildare, 2013), pp. 328-329.

¹⁰⁰ Ó Ruairc, *Truce*, p. 102.

¹⁰¹ Patrick McKenna, BMH, WS, 1205.

¹⁰² General Order, No. 26, 26 Jun. 1921, NLI, MS 33, 913(17).

¹⁰³ Hart, *The I.R.A & its enemies*, pp.295-315.

¹⁰⁴ See Thomas Earls FitzGerald, ‘The execution of spies and informers in west Cork, 1921’ in David Fitzpatrick (ed) *Terror in Ireland 1916-1923* (Dublin, 2012).

¹⁰⁵ Taylor, *Heroes or traitors*, pp 75-88.

of the people they targeted. The IRA were not going to kill someone simply for being an ex-servicemen or for being a protestant, and no scholar has quite made this assessment. Hart for instance argued in the context of increasing violence the IRA acted on suspicions, and were simply more likely to target certain groups.¹⁰⁶

The issue with Taylor's work is that his conclusions are substantiated primarily through the BMH and the ICG files – without reference to either contemporary newspapers or contemporary IRA or crown forces documentation. Both the Bureau and ICG were set up to validate republican and unionist views of history and were set up after the events being recorded and allowed for flights of fancy, exaggeration – making them highly unsuitable as source on which to create a quantitative based analysis. He is correct in his assertion that the IRA tended to target people based on actual suspicion rather than for simply being an ex-servicemen but his problematic methodological approach means his findings can be, by no means, treated as definitive.

But to return to County Kerry, it will be seen in the first three cases that it is difficult to ascertain whether the victims were actually informers. The first civilian killed in Kerry by the IRA, since Cornelius Kelly in Cahirdaniel in March 1920, was Patrick Roche. On the evening of the 1st March RIC pensioner Patrick Roche was killed at his home in Causeway.¹⁰⁷ Information on Roche is hard to come by, except in Michael Pierce's of Ballyheigue's Bureau Statement. Pierce recalled that the IRA were laying an ambush for the RIC in Causeway on 4th November 1920. They particularly wanted to kill a Sergeant McGrath who had previously threatened to burn down the house of every IRA man in the village. The IRA party had assembled to attack a number of RIC men as they were just outside their barracks, when Patrick Roche discovered their position and he warned the RIC men on the street who quickly retreated into their barracks, British troops, in fact, quickly assembled and drove the IRA party out of the town. Roche was shot, on his front step, that March.¹⁰⁸ Information on Roche, as said, is hard to come by, but in the available testimony Roche seems to have assisted the crown forces. Roche, in other source material, apparently, had also supplied the barracks in Causeway with milk and vegetables, and according to *The Kerryman* this was why he was killed.¹⁰⁹

On 21st March the dead body of Martin Daly, aged sixty, was found, near Tralee. Daly had been given a summons to attend a Sinn Féin court which he handed over to the military. *The*

¹⁰⁶ Hart, *The I.R.A & its enemies*, p. 303.

¹⁰⁷ Weekly Summary, Week ended 27 Feb. - 6 Mar. 1921, TCD BL/CO 904/150.

¹⁰⁸ Michael Pierce, BMH, WS, 1190.

¹⁰⁹ Gaughan, *Listowel and its vicinity*, p. 388.

Kerryman printed a military inquest into his death which described how he was taken from his house by members of the IRA, who were followed by his sister who offered them money to leave her brother alone. Ms Daly then went to a neighbour for help, the neighbour said he would not dare leave the house. Martin Daly was found in a field, with his hands tied behind his back, with a label attached to his clothes stating 'Informers beware'.¹¹⁰ Only one IRA man, John J. Walsh, chose to discuss Daly. Walsh recalled that Daly 'was drinking and associating with the Tans in Farranfore. He was court-martialled and ordered to leave the country at once, which he did'.¹¹¹ Perhaps Walsh was unaware the Daly was in fact executed or perhaps he felt Daly should not have been shot and decided to put a positive spin on the story? Unfortunately it is hard to answer such questions but it can be safely said that Daly was executed and not forced to leave.

Daly seems to have associated with the crown forces and handed a republican document over to them but he does not appear to have actually informed on the IRA. His involvement with the crown forces seems to have sealed his fate. This was not uncommon. For instance in west Cork Matthew Sweetnam and William Connell, protestant farmers from Skibbereen, were killed for having given 'evidence against a party recently for collection for the IRA arms fund'.¹¹² With the two farmers and Daly none can be described as having been a threat to an IRA military operation, but do reveal the even fairly innocent involvement with the crown forces was no longer tolerated. They, in fact, rather appear as revenge killings. Likewise Roche's killing appears also to have been a revenge killing. If Pierce's statement is to be believed he actively impeded an IRA operation. His killing does appear to have been in revenge, but also from the IRA's perspective he had set a precedent and could have impeded further operations. His killing, from that perspective, was grimly logical. But again the source material in relation to Roche is limited making it hard to make concrete judgements.

The next civilian killed was one Sandy or Sardy Nagle and the I.R.A were also not particularly forthcoming about the reasons for his execution. On the 28th March 1921, the *Cork Examiner*, reported that 'an unknown man apparently a tramp aged 30 was found dead near Kenmare County Kerry'.¹¹³ Johnny O'Connor recalled that, while operating with the Kerry No.2 Flying Column, before the Headford Ambush 'an itinerant, who was known locally as a spy, had left the neighbourhood and was on his way to Killarney'. Allman and McEllistrim,

¹¹⁰ *The Kerryman*, 16 Apr. 1921.

¹¹¹ John J. Walsh, BMH, WS, 1002.

¹¹² Earls FitzGerald, 'The execution of 'Spies and Informer'', in Fitzpatrick (ed) *Terror in Ireland*, pp. 186-187.

¹¹³ *Cork Examiner*, 28 Marc. 1921.

fearing he would reveal information about the column, and their plans for the ambush at Headford, to the crown Forces in Killarney, had him arrested.¹¹⁴

On 16th April Mulcahy wrote to Humphry Murphy, Brigade O/C Kerry No.2 about the incident asking ‘what exactly was this case?’¹¹⁵ Tom Daly, Brigade Adjutant, wrote back saying

Barraduff Company had an ex-soldier of whom they were suspicious. They handed him over to the Flying Column. The Comdt questioned him, he admitted that he was receiving 8/- a week from Captain O’Sullivan, Killarney to track down “wanted men”. He also gave the names of 4 men in Killarney who are on the same job. He was executed on the 24th inst.¹¹⁶

If Daly’s version of events is true then he appears to have been a paid spy – but it is also equally possible Daly may have embellished the story to get Mulcahy off his back.

O’Connor told Ernie O’Malley that he was kept in a shed for five days, and after the ambush he was executed. His body was left on the Kenmare to Kilgarvan road.¹¹⁷ John Joe Rice, then Vice O/C of the Kerry No.2 Brigade recalled that before the ambush Nagle was ‘prowling around and asking questions’.¹¹⁸ Jack Keogh, who worked undercover as an IRA intelligence agent in Killarney felt differently recalling that ‘Sardy Nagle should never have been shot. He was a harmless ould devil’.¹¹⁹

Nagle is an example of the IRA, under pressure, executing a civilian who they believed posed a threat to a vital operation. Very little evidence is offered in relation to actual reasoning behind his execution other than that he was ‘prowling around’, it is possible that Nagle’s killing was almost a knee jerk reaction to a tense situation and suspicion alone warranted execution.

Andy Cooney, later told Ernie O’Malley, that ‘I was terribly strict about the shooting of spies’.¹²⁰ Cooney was at the height of his influence in Kerry at this stage, and if this statement to O’Malley is correct he, presumably, would have gone through the correct procedure before Nagle was killed. But Cooney does not seem to have been consulted.

The IRA, in Kerry, it must be said, did not always use lethal force against people they suspected of spying. On 19th March Thomas Boyle and Thomas Boyle Jnr were taken from their

¹¹⁴ John O’Connor, BMH, WS, 1181.

¹¹⁵ C/S to O/C Kerry No.2 Brigade, 16 Apr. 1921, UCDA/P7/A/38.

¹¹⁶ Brigade Adjutant Kerry No.2 Brigade to C/S, 30 Apr. 1921, UCDA/PA/7/38.

¹¹⁷ O’Malley, *The men will talk to me. Kerry interviews*, p. 219.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid*, p. 306.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid*, p. 277.

¹²⁰ *Ibid*, p. 173.

home at Leaha, near Castleisland, by men with revolvers.¹²¹ Johnny O'Connor recalled that while serving in the Column responsible for the Headford ambush 'On the night of the 19th March a section of the column visited a house owned by people named Boyle, in the townland of Leaha (near Castleisland) , who were known to be giving information to the enemy. Father and son were taken prisoner, and later ordered to leave the country, which they did'.¹²² Contemporary documentation supports O'Connor's testimony. *The Manchester Guardian* reported that Thomas Boyle and his son were kidnapped on 19th March.¹²³ In his claim for compensation Mr Thomas Boyle, a protestant, claimed following the kidnapping his land and livestock were seized, and it was this that caused him to leave the country for Canada rather than the actual threats.¹²⁴

Similarly, Daniel Healy, recalled that when the Listry Company were arranging an ambush at Beaufort Bridge, a Dr Scargill saw them moving into position and according to Healy went into Killarney to warn the British military. The British military quickly enveloped the ambush position but the company managed to withdraw without any casualties. In response Scargill's home, Lehard House, was raided 'stripped of its furniture'. Dr Scargill had sought refuge in the military barracks in Killarney. The furniture was subsequently 'distributed around the district'.¹²⁵ Interestingly, Scragill, in IRA testimony, seems to have been an informer but was not executed. Again, it may have come down to discrepancies between local IRA commanders on whether to tackle the issue aggressively or not. Also Scargill seems to have found safety in the military barracks and was harder to target. There was also a reluctance to kill women suspected of informing. For instance it came up during the truce that a Ms Dunkin, who lived in the Kenmare area, had her bicycle taken by the IRA during the conflict, and make calls for its return. The local IRA, who were called on to make a justification, described Ms Dunkin as an 'alien' who had 'habitually' entertained the crown forces and supplied them 'with information she had to give'.¹²⁶ If this is true this women does appear, by the IRA's own admission to have been an informer, but they only chose to punish her by taking her pony.

Tadhg Kennedy, the Director of Intelligence for the Kerry No.1 Brigade, later maintained to the Bureau of Military History, that like Cooney, he was equally careful about the execution of

¹²¹ *The Kerryman*, 26 Mar. 1921.

¹²² O'Connor, BMH, WS, 1181.

¹²³ *The Manchester Guardian*, 26 Mar. 1921.

¹²⁴ Conor Joy, *Conflicting voices from the kingdom, Kerry protestants and the Irish revolution 1916-1923* (MA thesis, TCD, 2015), p. 57.

¹²⁵ Daniel Healy, BMH, WS, 1067.

¹²⁶ Adj 3rd Batt Kerry No. 2 to O/C Kerry No.2, 28 Nov. 1921, UCDA/P64/5/15.

spies and the need for irrefutable proof before taking action. Kennedy maintained the IRA in Kerry had a rigid system to follow before taking action

In the vast majority of cases I found that there was no foundation for the accusations...In all cases where there was definite, the file was sent to the Director of Intelligence, GHQ, and where he were (sic) satisfied that was no doubts about the case orders were issued that the person should be dealt with and these orders were sent to the Brigade O/C who saw that they were carried out. Every care was taken that there should be no miscarriage of justice and after the war it was found that...every case were justified. I don't know of any cases in which... the sentences were unjust. In fact I know of some cases who got the benefit of the doubt and I found afterwards were guilty.¹²⁷

Kennedy, reveals a military professionalism that is in stark contrast to the attitude of the IRA in west Cork where Tom Barry never sought sanction from GHQ over informers.¹²⁸

Table twenty three. Name, date, location of civilians killed by the IRA in County Kerry 1920-1921 together with whether they had previous service in the crown forces.

Name.	Date.	Location.	Previous service in the crown forces.
Cornelius Kelly	16 th March 1920	Cahirdaniel	No
Patrick Roche	1 st March 1921	Causeway	RICpensioner
Martin Daly	21 st March 1921	Tralee	No
Sandy/Sardy Nagle	28 th March 1921	Kenmare	No
John 'Boxer' Mahony	6 th April 1921	Tralee	Ex-British Army
Sir Arthur Vicars	14 th April 1921	Kilmorna	Ex-British Army
Michael O'Sullivan	4 th May 1921	Rathmore	Ex-British Army
John Fitzgerald	7 th June 1921	Tralee	Ex-British Army
James Kane	14 th June 1921	Listowel	RICpensioner

William Mullins remembered members of Fianna Eireann in Tralee taking an active role in discovering information on potential spies. 'These young lads under their O/C Michael

¹²⁷ Tadhg Kennedy, BMH, WS, 1413.

¹²⁸ Barry, *Guerrilla days in Ireland*, p. 106.

O'Leary, were a terrible thorn to the British. They were so young and inconspicuous that they were able to go into hotels, cloakrooms at local dances and search the overcoats of military officers and later Black and Tans and Auxiliaries getting many small arms and letters that gave us much valuable information both of a military nature and at a time disclosing to us the source of information detrimental to our forces which had been supplied to the British by their spies'. On the spies Mullins remembered

In the subsequent years by this means the guilt of a number of these people was established beyond doubt. We found that they were a source of terrible danger to our men, living amongst us as they were, and fraternising, too, with Volunteers' relatives and friends. A number of them had to be tried and shot as spies in the Brigade area. We had to take into custody some men from Tralee district against whom we had very grave suspicion at first and absolute proof eventually of acting as spies for the British. Three were arrested and tried, and when proof of their guilt was brought home to them in a fair trial, they cried for mercy, but they had been and still were such a source of grave danger to our forces that in each case the court ordered that they be shot. The sentence was carried out on each of these three men, but through circumstances one of them was not killed outright; he recovered, lost no time in emigrating to England, and he died there a few years afterwards. The fourth man was shot was shot in the licenced premises of Knightly's, Lower Castle Street. The premises were burned the following day by the British as a reprisal. A few more were suspected and proof was being collected and traps set, but the Truce came and saved them. Suspicion was not sufficient grounds to take a life, so we had no spy shot without absolute proof or guilt. Those few whom the truce saved still live, some among us, and little do they know how near they were to the same fate of all spies who are caught.¹²⁹

Mullins' comments reflects Hart's conclusion that the execution of civilians needs to be seen in the context of the IRA fighting for survival and the need for the viability of their operations not to be impeded. The three Mullins was referring to were John O'Mahony, Denis O'Loughlin - who was a member of the crown forces - and John Fitzgerald, all from Tralee – all available evidence would suggest these men were active informers.

¹²⁹ William Mullins, BMH, WS, 801.

The R.I.C reported that on the '6th April John O'Mahony an ex-soldier was found shot by the roadside near Tralee. He was suspected of giving information'.¹³⁰ According to *The Kerryman* his body was found on the 7th April. O'Mahony was a native of Tralee, a shoemaker and lived in Moyderwell. The deceased had served in the recent war and had worked in Belfast before returning to Tralee. His body was found with the notice 'spies beware'.¹³¹ According to Kennedy all three were part of a spy ring set up by O'Mahony. Kennedy told O'Malley 'they brought a fellow here from Belfast gaol, Boxer O'Mahony a warder to organise the ex-servicemen. Dave Nelligan copied the information and it was sent out to us. We had evidence for Boxer had money to distribute and there was a dispute about the division of money in Tralee'.¹³²

Under orders from Paddy Cahill, O'Mahony was taken from a pub in Tralee and kept in captivity.¹³³ According to Kennedy he was interrogated and 'was told if he gave the names of the other men who were spies his case might be considered...We got the other names and then we shot him. Then we shot them'.¹³⁴

The two other men were Denis O'Laughlin and John Fitzgerald. According to Tralee IRA Officer Patrick Garvey shortly after the execution of O'Mahony more orders came from Cahill to execute O'Laughlin. 'O'Laughlin had a short time previously joined the Tans...O'Laughlin was executed in the public house of a man named Knightly in Castle street, Tralee'. The military subsequently burned Knightly's.¹³⁵ On 23rd April the *Cork Examiner* reported O'Laughlin was employed as a cook in the Auxiliary barracks.¹³⁶ Though he is remembered as spy by the Kerry IRA, due to the fact that he was serving with the Auxiliaries, for me, this excludes him from being considered to have been a civilian spy – accordingly he is not included in my list.

In early June the RIC reported that 'an ex-soldier was found shot dead at Ballybeggan with a label attached to his clothes marked "tried and convicted and executed by the IRA"'.¹³⁷ On 8th June the *Cork Examiner*, reported that, the dead man was John Fitzgerald aged 23 and was found dead in a field the day before.¹³⁸

According to Patrick Garvey that while in Tralee gaol in the spring

¹³⁰ IG, MR, Apr. 1921. CO 904/115.

¹³¹ *The Kerryman*, 9 Apr. 1921.

¹³² O'Malley, *The men will talk to me. Kerry interviews*, p. 86.

¹³³ Patrick Garvey, BMH, WS, 1011.

¹³⁴ O'Malley, *The men will talk to me. Kerry interviews*, p. 86.

¹³⁵ Patrick Garvey, BMH, WS, 1011.

¹³⁶ *Cork Examiner*, 23 Apr. 1921.

¹³⁷ IG, MR, June 1921, TCD BL/CO 904/115.

¹³⁸ *Cork Examiner*, 8 Jun. 1921.

I met one of our men, named George Nagle who had been arrested sometime earlier. Nagle informed me that an ex-British soldier named John Fitzgerald had pointed him (Nagle) to the Tans as an IRA man. Apart from this our scouts had him under observation and we were aware that he had been helping the Tans for some time. Nagle's story was the first definite proof we had of Fitzgerald's activities. I reported the matter to the battalion commandant Michael Doyle and the Brigade O/C. An order came from the Brigade O/C to shoot him. I conveyed the order to the battalion Flying Column.¹³⁹

T. Ryle Dwyer notes that John 'Cousy' Fitzgerald had been a member of the Irish Volunteers and then National Volunteers and went on into the British Army, and had received a great fanfare in Tralee when he left for the front in 1915, in a ceremony attended by nationalist MP Tom O'Donnell.¹⁴⁰ Whatever else, Fitzgerald came back to a changed Ireland. According to Tadhg Kennedy, men under the command of John Joe Sheehy were responsible for the shootings of O'Laughlin, O'Mahony and Fitzgerald.¹⁴¹

In the cases of these three, most of the evidence is from republican sources but most of the given testimony given by separate individuals gives a notably similar narrative. But again it is hard to offer a definite assessment. However, the IRA in Tralee were the only units in the entire county to have developed a serious intelligence collecting structure. The activities of O'Leary in the Fianna, together with the statements given by both Mullins and Kennedy seem to suggest the existence of fairly tight knit intelligence operation. John Borgonovo has noted that in Cork city the IRA developed a particularly perceptive intelligence operation engaged in constant surveillance of potential civilian spies, and the sheer scale of information the Cork IRA's intelligence collected 'must be considered' when considering who was executed.¹⁴² In Tralee the IRA's intelligence structure was not as great as of that in Cork city but was a good deal more considerable than that in the rest of the county. In Tralee a cohesive or unified narrative emerges of a spy ring being set up and it having three core members. Kennedy, Mullins and Garvey all also mention how material was carefully collected on all three before they were shot. However, curiously no one in the IRA gave testimony to any of these three men actually impeding an IRA operation. The killing of Fitzgerald, for instance, like Roche appears to have

¹³⁹ Patrick Garvey, BMH, WS, 1011.

¹⁴⁰ Dwyer, *Tans, terror and troubles*, p. 318.

¹⁴¹ Tadhg Kennedy, BMH, WS, 1413.

¹⁴² Borgonovo, *Spies, informers and the 'Anti – Sinn Féin society'*, p. 160.

been a revenge killing. But it was logical to assume that Fitzgerald would inform again – if Garvey's testimony is accurate that is.

Interestingly with the remaining informers killed no unified narrative is apparent and various conflicting stories arise about why they were shot. Part of the reason for this might be that outside of Tralee the IRA in Kerry had a poor intelligence system. Indeed it should be stressed that outside of the Tralee and Dingle areas nowhere else in the county had the IRA actually developed an intelligence system. GHQ bears some responsibility for this as it was only as late as December 1920 when orders were issued for all battalions to have intelligence officers.¹⁴³ The three remaining three were Arthur Vicars, Michael Murphy and James Keane.

The most high profile killing of a civilian occurred in north Kerry. On 16th April *The Kerryman* reported that Sir Arthur Vicars' dead body had been found at his home in Kilmorna. Attached to his body was label declaring 'Traitors beware: We never forget I.R.A'.¹⁴⁴

Vicars had been the keeper of the Irish Crown Jewels but a scandal over their disappearance, in 1907, resulted in his retiring to his country house at Kilmorna, near Listowel. According to Patrick J. McElligott O/C of the Listowel battalion, Vicars would 'make enquiries in regard to the movement of the Flying Column. British officers were constantly being entertained by Vickers at Kilmorna house'. McElligott stressed that while British officers were at Kilmorna House British troops 'went around the locality'. McElligott said after Michael Galvin's death 'during an attack by the Column on one of those military parties (around Kilmorna house) that the column came to the conclusion that Vicars had informed this particular military party of the presence of a section of the column in Kilmorna'.

When McElligott learned that the British Military intended to occupy Kilmorna house he also gave the order that it be burned. According to McElligott the IRA intended to

arrest Vickers and have him tried. He refused to come out, and was running from room to room with a revolver. The house was then set on fire; he rushed out through a side window. As he rushed on to the lawn, he was shot dead by two of our men, he was not taken prisoner. There was no form of trial in the circumstances.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴³ Townshend, 'The Irish Republican Army and the development of guerrilla warfare', in *The English historical review*, (Spring, 1979), p.326.

¹⁴⁴ *The Kerryman*, 16 Apr.1921.

¹⁴⁵ Patrick J. McElligott, BMH, WS, 1013.

McElligott was not present and the account given by James Costello, captain of the Duagh Company, who was present at the killing, is significantly different. Costello recalled that shortly after the death of Galvin orders came from McElligott to burn Kilmorna house and have Vicars arrested and shot 'for being a spy and assisting the enemy generally'. Costello recalled that on 10th April twelve men of the Duagh Company mobilised with paraffin to burn Kilmorna house. They arrived at the house and were informed by a servant called Murphy that Vicars was not at home. Costello decided to postpone the operation until the next day.

The next day, Volunteers of the Duagh Company again mobilised but no one would answer when they knocked at the front door of the house, which they found had been barred. Costello and his men broke in and Vicars was found;

In an underground passage which led from the basement of the house for half a mile. He was taken out to the lawn and questioned about various items of information which he had passed to the enemy. He refused to say anything except that he had no information. Eventually two of our men shot him where he stood.

After Vicars was shot, according to Costello, the house was then burned.¹⁴⁶ Interestingly the servant 'Murphy' also provided the Bureau of Military History with his version of events. Michael Murphy was a local man who had served in the RIC and with the British Army for four years in France. On returning to north Kerry he became Vicars' valet. According to Murphy the trouble began when

On 14th April a party of Military from Listowel...came on a fishing trip to Kilmorna. They fished in the river Feale which runs through the area. They did not visit the 'Great House' as it was called nor did they meet with Vickers. As they were returning to Listowel they were ambushed by a party of IRA One soldier was killed, and two were wounded. The I.R.A had one man name Galvin killed. It would appear that the IRA were of the opinion that Vickers had entertained the military and also warned them of the impending ambush. This, in my opinion could not be correct, otherwise the military would not have cycled into the ambush position. I could not understand why Vickers was shot, he was a thorough gentleman who mixed freely with the tenants on the estate.

¹⁴⁶ James Costello, BMH, WS, 1091.

Murphy does not mention the IRA calling the day before the burning but claims that on waking up he found the house on fire. He went to inform Vicars, who dressed immediately and then

went downstairs and left the house by the main entrance. He had gone about 150 yards from the front door when he ran into a second party of the IRA who held him up and shot him on the spot... I do not believe he was a spy or got the benefit of a fair trial.

Interestingly, Murphy went on to join the I.R.A and fought on the Free State side in the Civil War.¹⁴⁷

George Cunningham, Vicars' steward was interviewed by the *Cork Examiner* about the shooting and maintained that on the morning of the shooting he was with Vicars in his bedroom discussing agricultural matters, when at 10.15 in the morning Lady Vicars rushed in saying the house was surrounded. Cunningham tried to secure some of Vicars' valuables and was subsequently apprehended. In his account Vicars' was taken prisoner by the I.R.A on the Terrace Steps of the house and shot shortly after.¹⁴⁸

The only other evidence of Vicars actually informing is from another IRA man not present at the execution. Thomas Carmody, of the north Kerry flying column, mentions that in January 1921 when the column was passing through the Duagh area they were watched by Vicars. The next day the Column observed a party of Black and Tans searching the Duagh area 'we concluded that Vicars had sent word to the Tans of our movements on the previous day after he had seen us'.¹⁴⁹ This seems reasonable enough but is not mentioned as a motivation behind the killing by either McElligott or Costello.

Vicars seems to have been associating with the crown forces but it is unclear whether he actually gave information. McElligott's claims cannot be substantiated, the British Army would hardly have deliberately moved into an IRA ambush position. It may be the case that Vicars' killing was in revenge for Galvin. More than anyone else Vicars can be said to be representative of the old order in Ireland, and it is understandable that he was seen a spy. Whether he was or not cannot be verified.

But the discrepancies in the testimony are interesting. McElligott stressed that Vicars had brought down British troops on the IRA resulting in the death of an IRA man, in his account he does not mention any intention of actually killing Vicars. By firing on IRA men Vicars' after

¹⁴⁷ Michael Murphy, BMH, WS, 1081.

¹⁴⁸ *Cork Examiner*, 20 Apr. 1921.

¹⁴⁹ Thomas Carmody, BMH, WS, 996.

they move in on Kilmorna, in McElligott's narrative therefore loses the status of civilian and becomes an active threat to the IRA. In Costello's narrative Vicars does not shoot at IRA men, the IRA intended to kill him all along which they eventually do. Murphy and Cunningham's testimony roughly correlate with that given by Costello, and it is important to stress that all three were present while McElligott was not. McElligott's version of events is such that Vicars becomes an armed and dangerous opponent whose killing was entirely justified. But this sequence of events, which are not corroborated by people who were actually there, would suggest that McElligott may have been lying. His statement being elsewhere so full of self-aggrandisement and pomposity. For instance, he suggests that after his being appointed Commandant of the Listowel Battalion, following the death of his brother Robert, 'I had to carry the entire responsibility for the Listowel area' and that he found it difficult to convince men under his command to take an active part in the fight.¹⁵⁰ As stated above, the north Kerry IRA never did not achieve any large scale ambushes but they did maintain consistent armed opposition of a small scale nature, making McElligott's assertions absurd. And this should be remembered when considering his take on the killing of Vicars. And though he does seem to have associated with the crown forces it is difficult to ascertain whether he gave them information – again it seems illogical that he would have led them into an actual ambush. His background and class makes it hard to believe he would have been intimate enough with the IRA to have been in a position to have given information on them. Like Roche and Fitzgerald, his killing has the feeling of a revenge killing.

With the next killing, there was also no consistent narrative from the IRA as to what happened. The police noted 'a particular brutal crime was committed near Rathmore on the 3rd/4th May a harmless ballad singer over 70 years of age was murdered to bait a trap for the police'.¹⁵¹ On the 6th May the *Cork Examiner* reported that the man was named Michael O'Sullivan who was a street singer and an ex-soldier.¹⁵² In most other accounts he is called Thomas or Tom O'Sullivan. According to *The good old IRA* pamphlet, produced by Provisional Sinn Féin in 1985, O'Sullivan had no connection with the British Army, except that his son had been killed in the British Army in the war and the father was receiving a pension on account of this.¹⁵³

Manus Moynihan, who was captain of the Rathmore Company of the IRA, told the Bureau of Military History, that a Fred Crowley, whose brother Eddie was in the IRA, had recently

¹⁵⁰ Patrick J. McElligott, BMH, WS, 1013.

¹⁵¹ IG, MR, May 1921, TCD BL/CO 904/115.

¹⁵² *Cork Examiner*, 6 May 1921.

¹⁵³ *The good old IRA Tan war operations* (Sinn Féin publicity department, 1985), p.48.

been arrested by the Black and Tans in Killarney. 'On being released he told us that he saw an old man coming in and out to the Tans. He had recognised him as Thomas O'Sullivan, a travelling man. Thomas O'Sullivan was known as 'old Tom'. I don't know where old Tom came from.' According to Moynihan O'Sullivan was picked up by the IRA just across from Rathmore, in north Cork, and at the same time two British army deserters were picked up near Rathmore. 'They (the deserters) were brought to the place where old Tom was being held. Old Tom was questioned but he would give no information. But the two deserters when brought face to face with old Tom identified him as a man who was brought in and out to the Tans'.

Moynihan then arranged for a trial of Old Tom, two weeks later, that was presided over by Humphry Murphy O/C Kerry No.2, Dennis Reen O/C Rathmore Battalion and Jerome O'Riordan O/C Kerry No.3

After hearing evidence of Eddie Crowley and the two deserters the court found Old Tom guilty and he was sentenced to be shot. The prisoner was left in my custody and I was given discretion as to where and when he was to be shot. After thinking things over I decided that when I executed Old Tom I would use his body as bait in an attempt to draw some of the police out of Rathmore barracks... On the night of 3rd May 1921 I sent one of my men...to the presbytery in Rathmore for a priest to give Old Tom spiritual consolation.

The next day Old Tom's body was laid out on display, labelled a spy, on the Bog Road outside Rathmore – this would result in the Rathmore ambush. According to Moynihan the two deserters were eventually sent on to the Barraduff Company, where they were executed. Moynihan did not know why they were executed.¹⁵⁴ Denis Prendville, who was in Thomas McEllistirm's Column that was then operating in the Kerry No.2 area also said that the idea to use O'Sullivan's body as bait was Moynihan's idea.¹⁵⁵

Andy Cooney recalled a different series of events leading to O'Sullivan's execution. Cooney, told Ernie O'Malley, that when he and Humphry Murphy were passing through the Rathmore area, after a meeting of the 1st Southern Division, the local I.R.A informed them that they had three prisoners; two British Army deserters and a tramp.

The deserters said

¹⁵⁴ Manus Moynihan, BMH, WS, 1066.

¹⁵⁵ Denis Prendville, BMH, WS, 1106.

They could give information about a spy in Killarney who used to come to bottom of the garden in the International Hotel.

‘How could we believe that’ we asked ‘or how could they prove it’?

We’ll recognise this man anywhere by his voice’ they said ‘and he’s a tramp’.

Cooney then related how the two British deserters were brought into a room and kept under a blanket. Then he and Murphy questioned three men not including O’Sullivan. The deserters said none of the three was the man in question. Then when Cooney and Murphy interviewed O’Sullivan they said he was the man they were looking for.

Cooney said O’Sullivan was ‘a local tramp...he was tried and sentenced to death’. Cooney then said he came up with the idea to use O’Sullivan’s body as bait. Cooney apparently shared the idea with Murphy and the two, together with Denis Reen, planned the Rathmore ambush.¹⁵⁶

Curiously, Cooney is not mentioned in Moynihan’s account, and Moynihan is not mentioned in Cooney’s account. John Jones, from the north Cork Flying Column, in a different story again, said the Rathmore ambush was planned by the O/C of the Rathmore Battalion – not the company captain - and nine men from the north Cork Flying Column.¹⁵⁷

In terms of contemporary IRA documentation Moynihan wrote on 24th May ‘on the night of 29th April we court-martialled a spy and found him guilty. The Bde comdt was present at court-martial and after ratifying sentence he advised us to make an ambush out of his execution’.¹⁵⁸ This would suggest Humphry Murphy was responsible for the Rathmore ambush and the decision to use O’Sullivan’s body.

Regardless of who was responsible for the idea, O’Sullivan almost becomes a bystander with no say in regards to his fate. The use of his body as ‘bait’ also reveals that the IRA were capable of a startling brutality.

On 14th June 1921 the RIC reported that the dead body of James Keane, fishery inspector for the Listowel district, at Bunygaragh, near Listowel, with a label attached to him declaring he was a ‘convicted spy’.¹⁵⁹ North Kerry IRA officer and Flying Column member Denis Quille would later tell Ernie O’Malley that when General Cummins was killed in the Clonbanin ambush in March 1921, a document was found on him signed by Keane giving the names of

¹⁵⁶ O’Malley, *The men will talk to me. The Kerry interviews*, pp. 173-174

¹⁵⁷ John Jones, BMH, WS, 759.

¹⁵⁸ O/C Rathmore Company to O/C Kerry No.2 Brigade, 24 May 1921, UCDA/P7/A/18.

¹⁵⁹ IG, MR, Jun. 1921, TCD BL/CO 904/115.

those involved in the shooting of D.I. Tobias O'Sullivan, in Listowel, in January.¹⁶⁰ Thomas Pelican, of Listowel, in his Bureau of Military History Statement, also maintained the same story about a document being captured at Clonbanin. Pelican carried out the execution – it was authorised by Patrick McElligott.¹⁶¹

McElligott also recalled that Keane 'had been seen going to the people in the town (Listowel) and the country making enquiries as to the movement of the Flying Column'.¹⁶² The R.I.C., however, believed that Keane was executed because he was due to prosecute 25 cases of poaching at the next session of the Listowel district court.¹⁶³ But the claim about a document being taken from General Cummins' body also needs to be considered.

The Clonbanin ambush 5th March, on the Killarney - Mallow road, was a joint venture of Sean Moylan's Flying Column and the Kerry No.2 Column. The I.R.A attacked two Lorries containing regular British Army troops, the fight lasted well over an hour and resulted in the death of General Cummins. However, the IRA unable to deal with the fire power of a machine gun in one of the Lorries had to withdraw. In all the testimony by those involved in the ambush, no one recalled taking a document from Cummins.¹⁶⁴ Indeed, how could a document have been taken when the British retained the field and the IRA retreated?

Interestingly, not all those involved in the execution of Keane were aware of the story. Brian O'Grady, of Ballylongford, did not know why Keane was executed and believed it to be tragic and unnecessary. Brian O'Grady fetched a priest before the execution, O'Grady was asked by the priest why Keane was being executed to which he replied 'I don't know, Father, the order has come from GHQ and that is all we know of the matter'. In a long passage O'Grady remembers a fondness developing between Keane and his captors, O'Grady recalled what a beautiful evening it was and the IRA party saying a decade of the Rosary with Kane before his execution, and Kane told his captors they were 'decent men' O'Grady and Denis Quille remorsefully both agreed they had killed a good man and and 'blessed the man who discovered tobacco'.¹⁶⁵

James' daughter Elizabeth would subsequently appeal for compensation from the British Government. She maintained throughout 1921 'we (the Keane family) were refused provisions

¹⁶⁰ O'Malley, *The men will talk to me. The Kerry interviews*, p.44.

¹⁶¹ Thomas Pelican, BMH, WS, 1109.

¹⁶² Patrick J. McElligott, BMH, WS, 1013.

¹⁶³ IG, MR, Jun. 1921, CO 904/115.

¹⁶⁴ Thomas McEllistram, BMH, W.S, 828, Sean Moylan, BMH, WS, 838, Denis Prendville, BMH, WS, 1066, Thomas Culhane, BMH WS, 838, Daniel Coakley, BMH, WS,1406, Cornelius Meany, BMH, WS, 787.

¹⁶⁵ Brian O'Grady, BMH, WS, 1390.

in certain houses in the town because we were loyal subjects to the British crown... After our father's death people whom we looked on as our friends turned their backs on us and at one particular social entertainment (the first I attended in the town after our father's death) I was the only girl ignored'. She was subsequently shunned at work, and could find no other employment in the town.¹⁶⁶ Interestingly, according to J.A Gaughan, in his 1973 work, *Listowel and its vicinity* Keane had in fact testified in court against Edward Carmody and John Carroll who were found guilty of shooting D.I. O'Sullivan in January 1921.¹⁶⁷ This is not mentioned in any, available, IRA documentation, rather surprisingly as it is information that works in the IRA's favour.

In the cases of Keane, O'Sullivan and Vicars no unified narrative emerges. In the cases of Keane and Vicars IRA members seem to have concocted stories to justify their executions. In relation to Keane several people told the same factually inaccurate claim about Clonbanin. While McElligott's claim that Vicars seemingly led a British military party into an IRA ambush verges on absurd. There seems to be an acceptance that two deserters identified O'Sullivan and he appears to have been spotted around the barracks in Killarney – but he becomes almost a bystander in the narrative or as an object to be used. Which perhaps goes beyond the questions of right man or wrong man leads into other issues.

The killings of informers, in Kerry, was not part of some sectarian war. It was also not indicative of long standing grudges or local malice. Rather it showed that certain civilians were seen to pose a real threat to safety of the IRA – more drastic measures were needed than the threatening notices of 1920. The policy also seems to have worked as the 6th Division's report noted that as a result of these shootings information from civilians became 'very hard to obtain'.¹⁶⁸ But there are some other questions? The historical narrative has focused entirely on whether these killings were justified or not. But this poses another question - did some people slip by?

Some evidence does seem to suggest that they were targeting the wrong people. John Lynch, from Lixnaw, recalled that the north Kerry Flying Column formed in January 1921 'from the first day we mobilised, the Tans were hot on our trail. It was evident that they were well informed of our movements and that the person supplying the information was someone in close touch with the IRA'.¹⁶⁹ Lynch's comments seem to suggest that an informer existed within

¹⁶⁶ Elizabeth Keane, County of Kerry, TNA/CO 762/100/15.

¹⁶⁷ Gaughan, *Listowel and its vicinity*, p. 383.

¹⁶⁸ The Irish rebellion in the 6th Divisional area, p. 97.

¹⁶⁹ John Lynch, BMH, WS, 967.

the IRA or from someone associated with them, suggesting that there were more informers in north Kerry than just simply Keane and Vicars. Lynch also suggests that the dreaded ‘informers’ might have actually been closer to the IRA than they were aware. Could they have even been getting the wrong people? Keane and Vicars certainly seemed to have had few associations with the north Kerry IRA Thomas Pelican, notably from north Kerry, in his Witness Statement remembered that the Listowel IRA had in fact detected two informers. Maurice Enright-Egan, from Ballylongford was, in fact, caught carrying letters from him addressed to the Black and Tans in Listowel, and also carried correspondence between the Sergeant of the RIC in Ballylongford and the Head Constable in Listowel. But curiously Enright-Egan was only warned that he would be shot if he continued to work for the R.I.C.

Pelican also discovered that a Mrs Wallace also from Ballylongford was sending written messages to the RIC about the whereabouts of north Kerry IRA men. Pelican, and his comrades were surprised, because Wallace’s husband was then serving six months in prison for IRA activities. Wallace was arrested by the IRA in an unspecified date in the winter-spring of 1921 and kept in custody until the announcement of the Truce. When questioned about why she had become an informer ‘she told me that the Tans had promised her that they would have her husband released if she delivered these letters for them’.¹⁷⁰ Was Mrs Wallace an exception or perhaps did personal interests drive people to inform? Pelican was ‘surprised’ Wallace was an informer because of her links to the IRA but perhaps this was more common?

Actual documentation on British Intelligence on the Kerry IRA is, unfortunately, limited. But what is available suggests a keen awareness of the IRA’s movements. The Auxiliaries in Tralee knew that Volunteers from Ballymacelligott had participated in the Headford Ambush and that the Commandant of the Listowel Battalion disliked road cutting. These two facts would suggest the Auxiliaries had an informer close to if not in the IRA. The fact that they knew Ballymacelligott Volunteers, Cronin and McEllistrim, were at Headford might even suggest that the informer was close to these two.

A rigorous analysis of all available documentation does suggest that those informing on the IRA were closer to the IRA than has previously been suggested. They did have grounds to suspect those they actually shot as informers – but these people almost invariably did not have links to the IRA and were usually ex-servicemen. If they had suspicions of ex-servicemen they tended to act on them but if they had suspicions on people, proverbially ‘closer to home’ they tended not to act on them. This must be taken into account when considering who they actually

¹⁷⁰ Thomas Pelican, BMH, WS, 1109.

targeted. It can, and should be suggested, that this is evidence that perhaps prejudice against ex-servicemen was real and that the IRA were more willing to see ex-servicemen believed to be acting suspiciously more than any other group. This certainly appears to have been the case in Kerry.

What these killings do tell us is that as 1921 saw the IRA increase their military campaign in Kerry, it also saw a more brutal approach to dealing with potential civilian informers. In a similar fashion to how girls who had their hair cut were meant to be seen by other women, the signs 'Spies and informers beware' were also meant to be seen. Real dead bodies were now displayed as the cost for assisting the crown forces. And it seems to have worked. Nevil Macready believed that this policy scared away the people working for the crown forces.

The executions of informers represented a point of no return for the IRA men involved. John O'Riordan recalled that John Joe Sheehy got an, unnamed IRA man, to shoot 'Boxer' Mahony. The Volunteer in question was known to have discussed IRA matters with non-members and 'generally talked too much about IRA activities' and 'so having carried out the execution himself he would have to remain silent about it'.¹⁷¹ Headford, Lispole and Castlemaine showed a willingness to act and wage a guerrilla war but the killing of informers was also a process of brutal bonding, bringing the perpetrators together with a further sense of desperate purpose that it was hard to turn away from. In the spring of 1922 Eamon de Valera, during his controversial speeches on the Treaty, reflected 'men and women were shot for helping the enemy, and there would be no justification for the shooting of these if the Republic did not exist'.¹⁷² De Valera felt, quite reasonably, that as so many otherwise unpalatable deeds had been done to defend the Republic, it would be immoral to abandon it. The IRA in Kerry, almost, universally rejected the Treaty – it could be argued that the killing of informers showed how far these people would go to defend the Republic, the civil war showed how there was no backing down for these people.

Though I would argue that these killings were not driven by a desire for private gain, it was quite possible after the conflict for the IRA to attempt to profit from what the dead had left behind. In west Cork the IRA would take over land that had been owned by informers they had killed, and on a number of occasions prevent people from attempting to buy the land from the relatives of the dead informers.¹⁷³ Something similar seems to have occurred in Kerry. A Mrs K. O'Connor made attempts to purchase land that had belonged to Martin Daly, Humphry

¹⁷¹ John O'Riordan, BMH, WS, 1117.

¹⁷² Townshend, *The republic*, p. 361.

¹⁷³ Earls FitzGerald, 'The execution of 'spies and informers'', in Fitzpatrick (ed), *Terror in Ireland*, p. 191.

Murphy, however, got in touch and told her she was not to buy the land.¹⁷⁴ Unfortunately, from the period of the Truce into the civil war Murphy, and other IRA leaders in the county, would let similarly unpleasant actions occur at a distressing level.

Truce and Civil war

The narrative of subsequent events might appear clear. The truce resulted in the Treaty, the Treaty resulted in a split in Sinn Féin and the IRA, and the split resulted in civil war. In Kerry the civil war was particularly bitter, as the IRA put up the fiercest resistance, in the whole country, to prevent the Free State coming into operation.

Before the crown forces left ongoing tension fist fights and brawls took place between the two sides but lethal violence was not resorted to.¹⁷⁵ During the truce and civil war IRA interference with civilians seemed to reach new levels. The Chief of Republican police noted that ‘the commandeering of houses and contents, and in some cases the slaughtering of cattle has become a very frequent occurrence throughout the country. It is suspected that the Army is responsible’.¹⁷⁶

It is hard to quantify these events let alone account for their occurrence. The documentation studied, so far, would appear to suggest that the attacks and intimidation seemed to rise after December 1921 – the obvious inference being that the departure of the crown forces inspired this. In early February the British administration began to physically withdraw from southern Ireland leaving the IRA as the only effective group in a position to administer law and order. Unfortunately, none of the previous ardour for policing was displayed and actions that could have been prevented by the IRA occurred. Perhaps, the most notable occurrence was the murder of 13 protestants in west Cork in April 1922. These killings did not occur in a vacuum but were part of a more general process of a declining stability across Ireland. The late Michael Hopkinson, in his seminal 1988 work *Green against green. The Irish civil war*, highlighted the political chaos of the spring of 1922 in which the provisional government was striving to function and the IRA were united in rejection to the Anglo-Irish Treaty but were divided as to how to proceed.¹⁷⁷ Just before the outbreak of the civil war there were even two separate branches of the anti-Treaty IRA – the more conciliatory majority Executive under Lynch, and

¹⁷⁴ Adj. Kerry No.2 to O/C Kerry No.2, N/D but probably early 1922, UCDA/P64/18/32.

¹⁷⁵ See for instance the papers of Captain Daniel Mulvihill, who was appointed Chief Liaison officer between the IRA and the crown forces in Kerry, UCDA/P/64. These papers also give the examples of the crown forces continued small acts of aggression against the civilian population in Kerry.

¹⁷⁶ Chief of Police to M/D, 19 Sept. 1921, UCDA/PA/7/31.

¹⁷⁷ Michael Hopkinson, *Green against green. The Irish civil war* (Dublin, 1988), p. 68.

the hard-line splinter group based in the Four Courts.¹⁷⁸ In this context of a divided and directionless leadership, together with the ongoing sectarian conflict in Northern Ireland, it was almost inevitable that IRA men, with no one really in a position to stop them, began to act out against perceived opponents. Probably, on the understanding that with the crown forces gone they would not be punished.

However, it should be said that by no means should all these attacks be attributed to the IRA. The compensation claims usually maintain that their tormentors were ‘republicans’, but these people were by no means in a position to unequivocally prove this was true. It was expedient to claim their attackers were ‘republicans’ as money was given out on the basis of the victims having suffered on account of loyalty, rather than for being the victims of strictly apolitical crime. And as so many of the attacks can be seen as being inspired by a desire for private gain it can also be argued that the attackers were not in the IRA and were simply taking advantage of the lawless situation.

Also, with the British gone there was clearly a sense that some of the elements of Ireland under the Union would be changed – particularly in relation to landlords. The Free State did effectively oppose any substantial social change, in relation to landownership or the division of the land. The Free State was firmly in favour of maintaining ‘law and order’, however, interestingly Emmett Dalton as O/C of Free State troops in Cork, complained to his superiors that officers under his command were calling for ‘hunting all the old ascendancy out of the country and dividing up their estates amongst the despoiled relatives now alive’.¹⁷⁹ Presumably the feelings expressed by Dalton’s officers were representative of a broader feeling within nationalist Ireland of what independence would actually mean. It is more than possible that sentiments such as these can help explain some of the attacks that occurred in the truce and civil war period.

But this is not to say that many of the attacks were clearly the work of the IRA. From an initial examination of compensation files, from Kerry, it appears that, like in 1920-21, business people with links to the crown forces continued to bear the brunt of the IRA aggression. Cissie O’Carroll, who ran a restaurant next to the barracks in Ballybunion, maintained that her premises was attacked a grand total of 65 times between 26th December 1921 and May 1923, on account, according to her solicitor in Listowel, of ‘because prior to the truce they (the Carroll

¹⁷⁸ Townshend, *The republic*, pp. 403-404.

¹⁷⁹ Intelligence report on Cork, G.O.C Cork to C/S, Adjt General, Director of organisation and Director of intelligence, 18 Nov. 1922, UCDA/P17a/164.

family) continued to be on friendly terms with the British forces'.¹⁸⁰ Similarly, Ms Bridget Daly who ran a hotel in Tralee, on Nelson's street now Ashe Street, in which the crown forces stayed and which was described as 'practically headquarter for the R.I.C.', said her boarders were approached by the IRA and told to leave the premises. 'Nightly lodgers have been followed to my door and spoken to and often they came back took their overcoats + cases and went away'.¹⁸¹ Louisa Herlihy, found that her licenced premises in Listowel was used as a barracks by IRA men' from April to June 1922 during which time she had to supply them with food, drink and cigarettes. She believed it was on account of her father being an English official and as her sister was married to an officer in the British army.¹⁸²

Also in north Kerry, David O'Sullivan an auctioneer and coal and seed merchant in Ballylongford who had a friendly relationship with 'loyalists and police' and found from the Truce on 'determined efforts' were made to boycott him, owing to his having business contracts with the British army, and all his customers were threatened not to have any dealings with him and by 1922 he had to close his auction business down.¹⁸³ The IRA also demanded supplies from people they disliked. Samuel Greany, a Protestant farmer from near Kilgarvan, maintained between 1919-21 he had to loan the IRA his horse on several occasions and hand over a particularly 'fat sheep' and 'give subscriptions in money' but when the Free State was established 'it was worse again'. The fences on his land were perpetually torn down and throughout 1922-1923 he had to feed IRA men. Greany felt this was all on account of his having two brothers in the RIC and because he was 'a member of the Church of Ireland'.¹⁸⁴ Instances of intimidation could also be more extreme and violent. Minnie Cody, who worked in a shop in Ballylongford and had 'served the crown forces with food stuffs' and was generally 'friendly' with the crown forces, said that 'after the crown forces left (in the Spring of 1922) I was dragged from a dance in Ballylongford and beaten and warned to leave the district and called a British spy'.¹⁸⁵

Besides attacking those with associations with the crown forces, the old distaste for the RIC that developed in 1920 continued to persist. The primary target in this period, predictably were members of the disbanded RIC returning to their homes in Kerry. When Timothy Daly, who served with the RIC in Clifden, returned to Tralee in April 1922 'the Sinn Feiners ordered me

¹⁸⁰ Cissie O'Carroll, County of Kerry, TNA/CO 762/171/19.

¹⁸¹ Bridget Daly, County of Kerry, TNA/CO 762/100/19.

¹⁸² Louisa Herlihy, County of Kerry, TNA/CO 762/195/10.

¹⁸³ David O'Sullivan, County of Kerry, TNA/CO 762/162/15.

¹⁸⁴ Samuel Greany, County of Kerry, TNA/CO 762/162/10.

¹⁸⁵ Minnie Cody, County of Kerry, TNA/CO 762/170/17.

to leave the town'. Again like in the previous two years the families of RIC men were rarely immune from coming under the IRA's interest. Daly's family, moved from Clifften in June and came to Tralee before moving on to Canada but the family were refused any lodgings in Tralee.¹⁸⁶ Samuel Noble, left the RIC in July 1920 and moved to Dingle but by April 1922 he was receiving threatening letters demanding he 'clear out' at once or be shot. Noble and his family left for London, he felt he was threatened because of his service in the RIC and his wife being English and his being a protestant.¹⁸⁷ Robert Frizzel, who was an RIC pensioner from outside of Tralee, went into the barracks in the town every month to collect his pension. In March 1922 'rebels' came to his home and took his bicycle and in May his house was raided and a pony and trap and harness were taken, and that July sheep belonging to him were taken. Frizzel believed the IRA considered him to be a spy due to his visits to the barracks.¹⁸⁸

But beyond the almost traditional attacking of people associated with the crown forces or of RICmen back in Kerry, a new form of intimidation developed that had not yet occurred in the county. William Blennerhasset, of Ballymacelligott, maintained that he was kidnapped on 5th July 1921, in his account, for continuing to deal with the British legal system. He was again kidnapped in November 1921 by 'Republicans' and forced to hand over 27 acres, under threat of death, to his captors for £40. His cattle were subsequently seized. Blennerhasset maintained he could no longer get any labourers to work his lands and this was on account of his 'allegiance to the British Government'.¹⁸⁹

The Blennerhasset family, one of the Protestant land owning families in the county, seemed, to come under special attention. The Blennerhassetts maintained their tormentors were republicans. Major Arthur Blennerhasset was taken from his home, in Ballyseedy, on the evening of 24th February 1922 and told he would be shot, though he was released in the morning. His daughter Sheila recounted that this was one of a number of raids by armed and masked men who maintained they were 'a Flying Column' and 'we were told that they were the men who had murdered Sir Arthur Vicars'. The raids on their house were so frequent that Sheila felt 'we never knew when we could have a peaceful night'. After the kidnapping Mr Blennerhasset decamped to Dublin, where he became unwell. The raiders returned and beat up the Blennerhasset's steward and told Sheila 'we want to get all of you out of the country'. Arthur Blennerhasset maintained he was persecuted because of his having served in the British

¹⁸⁶ Timothy Daly, County of Kerry, TNA/CO 762/126/1.

¹⁸⁷ Samuel Noble, County of Kerry, TNA/CO 762/120/7.

¹⁸⁸ Robert Frizzel, County of Kerry, TNA/CO 762/130/1.

¹⁸⁹ William Blennerhasset, County of Kerry, TNA/CO 762/187/6.

army.¹⁹⁰ Blennerhasset had also complained, directly to Minister for Home affairs Austin Stack that in April 1921 his house had been raided and two horses, a harness and saddle and a ford car was taken – and the items were only returned in September 1921 but the car was never returned, and that three beds were taken away.¹⁹¹ The Brigade Adjutant for Kerry No.1 would maintain that the beds were handed over willingly and that they were returned shortly after Blennerhasset had complained to Stack.¹⁹²

The Blennerhassetts, of Beaufort, also fell victim to persecution. William Blennerhasset, of Beaufort,¹⁹³ his wife and seven children were made to leave their home in May 1922 by ‘republican armed bands’ who seized their land and ‘notices were posted in the neighbourhood warning people against talking to them – similar again to 1920-21. William’s brother Thomas, also from Beaufort, took the family in. Thomas Blennerhasset and his family had also previously been driven from their home, in May 1922, by agrarian agitators. However, an IRA party led by Commandant Allman, in fact had reinstated them and had driven off a Mr John Murphy and James and Philip Scully.¹⁹⁴

On 21st 1922 December Thomas’ house was raided and both families barricaded themselves in the upstairs, while the raiders set the house alight. One of Thomas’ sons escaped via a window and managed to fetch a ladder to save those left inside but not before the children were ‘half suffocated’. Both families were then reduced to living in the out-house as the man they had employed as a contractor to rebuild the house gave up the job ‘owing to threats of personal violence’. Thomas Blennerhasset maintained he was persecuted because of his loyalty to the crown ‘and it was hoped to get rid of me so that my land could be seized’.¹⁹⁵ In a sad reversal of roles in May the IRA had helped protect the Blennerhassetts but by December ‘anti-Treatyites’ according to the *Freeman’s Journal* were involved in the attack.¹⁹⁶

The case of the Blennerhassetts, particularly in Ballyseedy and Beaufort seem to raise the uncomfortable question of sectarianism or ethnic cleansing, as was shown earlier many people maintained they were attacked on account of their being protestants. Similarly, one Albert Christian had his Kenmare shop raided was told by the raiders that they intended to drive all protestants out of the country.¹⁹⁷ As Gemma Clarke has recently noted in relation to the civil

¹⁹⁰ Arthur Blennerhasset, County of Kerry, TNA/CO 762/55/12.

¹⁹¹ Arthur Blennerhasset to Minister for Home Affairs, 13 Sept. 1921, UCDA/ P7/A/31.

¹⁹² Divisional Adjutant 1st Southern Division to C/S, 8 Dec. 1921, UCDA P7/A/31.

¹⁹³ Joy, *Conflicting voices from the kingdom*, p.69.

¹⁹⁴ Tom Doyle, *The civil war in Kerry* (Cork, 2008), p.92-102.

¹⁹⁵ Thomas Blennerhasset, County of Kerry, TNA/CO 762/47/12.

¹⁹⁶ Doyle, *The civil war in Kerry*, pp.236-237.

¹⁹⁷ Joy, *Conflicting voices from the kingdom*, p.57.

war period ‘the unavoidable trend that emerges is one of minority (i.e. southern protestant) persecution’.¹⁹⁸ Clark describes Protestants as being ‘convenient symbols of the old regime’ and such instances were attempts to ‘degrade a known enemy and homogenise the local community’.¹⁹⁹ Sheila Blennerhassett and Albert Christian claimed IRA men involved in attacks on them expressed a desire to clear out all Protestants. This would seemingly conform with Clark’s assertions. The sentiments expressed were clearly part of a mood that would result in the killings in west Cork in the spring of 1922. It is not possible here to provide an in-depth response to some of these issues. It does appear that protestant people were frequently targeted, but Catholics with associations with the crown forces were too. And it is noticeable that the protestants who were targeted also mentioned their own connections to the crown forces. This would seem to conform to the findings of previous chapters that people were targeted by republicans for association with the crown forces. Regardless of how strong the sectarian aspect was these attacks must have caused huge feelings of insecurity for more isolated protestant families. The IRA, or indeed anyone else, in Kerry were not interested in a protestant purge but, in Brian Hughes’ terms, these attacks would have ‘created an atmosphere of terror well beyond the reality’.²⁰⁰

A disturbing aspect is the IRA leadership, in Kerry, seemingly encouraging such intimidation. Arthur Blennerhassett went to see the IRA’s chief liaison officer Emmet Dalton, in Dublin, about his troubles. Dalton wrote to the IRA in Kerry that the case should be investigated regardless of Blennerhassett’s unionism. Dalton also wrote that it would be ‘ridiculous if the perpetrators could not be traced’.²⁰¹ Dalton’s letter has a complaining tone and seems to suggest that the Kerry IRA could deal with the situation if they were so inclined, this feeling is reinforced by the fact Dalton does not seem to have got a reply – or to qualify I have been unable to find a reply in the course of this research project. Margaret Duncan, a protestant lady living on her own just outside of Kenmare, found that in the Spring of 1922 her home was subject to constant raids and her windows were broken and garden vandalised. Her solicitor writing to Minister of Home affairs on 13th June 1922 felt ‘the fellows in the barracks (the IRA) have looked upon...my client as in sympathy with if not actually concerned (sic)’.²⁰² Similarly a Ms E. Stack, of Ballyconry near Lisselton, found that her land was seized by trespassers in the Spring of 1922 and ‘completely wrecked’ and ‘nothing whatever had been done,

¹⁹⁸ Clark, *Everyday violence in the Irish civil war*, p.198.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid, p.203.

²⁰⁰ Hughes, *Defying the IRA*, p. 128.

²⁰¹ Acting Chief Liaison officer to Captain Daniel Mulvihill, Liaison officer Kerry, 18 Jan. 1921 UCDA/P64/6/10.

²⁰² Mary A. Duncan, Incrana Lodge, Co. Kerry, Raids on house, damage to property etc, NAI/JUS/H5/370.

notwithstanding my repeated reports and complaints... (to) local (republican) authorities' But Stack, interestingly felt that further 'representations to the local authorities would be seen as quite useless', seemingly she believed the IRA were deliberately ignoring her.²⁰³ Michael Cronin's farm outside of Castlemaine was seized in the spring of 1922, his solicitor T. O'Shea, of Killarney, got in touch with Humphry Murphy, then O/C Kerry No.1. O'Shea's account of his dealing with Murphy is telling. O'Shea wrote 'it is absolutely impossible for him (Murphy) to deal with the case in a satisfactory manner. He states that owing to the number of cases of this kind in his Brigade area and the number of men at his disposal, it is absolutely impossible for him to deal with the matter at all'. It was only by the summer of 1923 that Gardaí were able to arrest the trespassers and reinstate Cronin.²⁰⁴ This would seem to suggest that the leadership of the IRA in Kerry were well aware of what was happening in the spring of 1922 but were powerless to stop it. This cannot be reasonably substantiated though. In the spring of 1922 the crown forces had departed from Kerry leaving the IRA in effective charge. They were also now no longer at war, if anything with the threat of the crown forces removed the IRA could have almost been exclusively concerned with protecting civilians and preventing crime.

There is some evidence to suggest that IRA leaders were in fact happy to see these events take place. In the Spring of 1922 a Mr William Stephens, a protestant farmer from Milltown, had his land seized and 'immediately reported to the IRA + IRP at Kilorglin, who did nothing', his livestock were then seized and he again reported to the IRA and IRP 'who again did nothing'. The Catholic Parish Priest Father O'Sullivan took up the case and wrote to the Minister of Home Affairs Eamon Duggan in late May 1922 that 'I myself reported (the matter)...to Brigadier (John Joe) Rice at Killarney. Mr Rice simply said he was powerless to do anything until the Dublin authorities did something first'. Father O'Sullivan wrote 'Stephens feels that he is being simply fooled + he is correct, Active partisans have been entrusted...with police duties, to the terror of the disarmed population... (who were) heartily sick of being policed by criminals'. O'Sullivan wrote another letter, in which he stated, another Protestant farmer called Wheaten had been evicted, and another named O'Neill's foal was killed and that the IRA were 'undoubtedly engaged in the outrages in some cases', and that many Catholics had 'a diabolic hatred of their Protestant neighbours'. Again it was only in the summer of 1923 that thanks to Gardaí the trespassers were driven off Stephens' land.²⁰⁵

²⁰³ E.M Stack, Caragh Lake, Co. Kerry, Damage to property at Ballyconry, NAI/JUS/H5/393.

²⁰⁴ Michael Cronin, Brackhill, Castlemaine, Co. Kerry, Farm seized, NAI/JUS/H5/318.

²⁰⁵ Seizure and damage to property, intimidation of a Mr Stephens, Milltown, Co. Kerry, NAI/JUS/H5/324.

Father O'Sullivan's remarks, together with the experiences of the others discussed, and the generally lacklustre efforts on the part of the IRA with dealing with these problems would suggest that the IRA leadership were willing to turn a blind eye to these issues. Rice claiming he was powerless 'until the Dublin authorities did something first' is particularly perplexing. Rice and his colleagues, in May 1922, had resolutely renounced the authority of the Dublin based Provisional Government, unless he was referring to the anti-Treaty Four Courts executive. The Four Courts executive made no attempt to actually govern Ireland so this seems implausible. Whatever else the lack of action and contempt for those suffering on the part of Murphy and Rice was a far cry from the non-sectarian policing policy the IRA had adopted in 1920.

When conflict erupted again in the summer of 1922 similar type interference/intimidation of civilians began again as reported in the weekly reports of the Kerry Command of the Free State Army. The Free State Army only began to produce reports in the Autumn after they had a relatively firm hold on the countryside and has established command posts at Tralee, Castleisland, Killarney, Rathmore, Listowel and Kenmare. Their weekly reports, rather like the weekly reports and County Inspector's reports by the R.I.C., give the historian the ability to build a sense of the reported actions by the IRA against civilians during the civil war.

In a General Order produced in November it was declared, by the anti – Treaty GHQ, that the process of intimidating business people who supplied the Free State Army was to be systematic and consistent across all the country

All contractors and trades delivering or forwarding supplies to the enemy barracks will be ordered to cease from doing so. Supplies will only be given to the enemy when taken by force. If this order is disobeyed goods will be confiscated on the way to barracks or in stores.²⁰⁶

The IRA seemingly were intent on acting on these warnings. On 12th October, while a Mrs Kavanagh of Turbid near Ardfert was in Tralee, IRA man Paddy Breen approached her and called her a spy for the Free State and took her pony and trap. An IRA notice was posted in an unstated location in the county warning people that the IRA 'intend to summarily deal with all spies in future'.²⁰⁷

²⁰⁶ General Orders to O/C all Battalions, CIVILIAN CO-OPERATION WITH ENEMY, 30 Nov. 1922, NLI, MS 33, 913 (18).

²⁰⁷ Kerry Command, Summary of intelligence received for week ending, 2 Nov. 1922, MAI/CW/OPS/08/06.

Such threats, however, were rarely acted on unlike in 1921. In April 1923 the army reported the one instance of a civilian being executed as spy

The war on the civilian population was advanced another step by the murder of a well-known supporter of the army named O'Shea of Beaufort who was found riddled with bullets on the Caragh Bridge, outside Kilorglin. His hand and feet were tied and he was blindfolded. A label with the inscription "Convicted Spy" was attached to the body.²⁰⁸

As far as I know this was the only instance of an execution of an alleged spy in Kerry during the civil war. In August 1922 the IRA published a general notice that declared they had no 'desire to interfere with individuals holding opinions opposed to them' but that any person conveyed information to the Free State forces 'prejudicial to the safety of our forces will be regarded as spies, and will be liable to the same penalty meted out to informers previous to the truce July 1921'.²⁰⁹ The IRA threatened to kill informers but rarely acted on these threats.

Rather like between 1919-1921 those singled out for intimidation were people with professional or personal links to the Free State. In November shopkeeper Daniel O'Donoghue 'an active Govt' supporter, from Caragh Lake, was kidnapped and had his shop looted by the IRA on account of his having recently got together a group of people to repair a bridge the IRA had recently broken. Similarly in Milltown a shopkeeper named Murphy was kidnapped and had his shop looted as the IRA suspected he had given information to the Free State.²¹⁰

On 16th December the home of Patrick O'Connor, near Castleisland was raided by the IRA and among other things ten cows were taken together with boots, other clothing, a bicycle and bacon together with £36.10.²¹¹ Patrick 'Old Pats' O'Connor earlier in the year had got into an argument with I.R.A men Paddy Buckley and John Daly, on the same day Free State troops arrived on patrol near O'Connor's farm in Clounsharoon. Daly and Buckley concluded O'Connor had summoned them. O'Connor was subsequently captured interrogated. Following on from this a large sum of money was demanded from him. O'Connor refused to pay and his home was subsequently was looted. O'Connor's son Paddy Pats seeing his family financially ruined and seeking vengeance joined the Free State army in Castleisland the next day, his local knowledge quickly meant he was made an intelligence officer.²¹² The raid on O'Connor's home

²⁰⁸ KC, GWR, 3 Apr. 1923, MAI/CW/OPS/08/08.

²⁰⁹ Irish Republican Army, Public Notice, 28 Aug. 1922, UCDA/P69/25.

²¹⁰ KC, GWR., 1 Dec. 1922, MAI/CW/OPS/08/06.

²¹¹ Department of military statistics, Kerry Command, Operations report, 23 Dec. 1922, MAI/CW/OPS/08/02.

²¹² Dwyer, *Tans, terror and troubles*, p.367 and O'Connor *Tomorrow was another day*, pp. 87-89.

would ultimately culminate in the tragedies of Knocknagoshel, Ballyseedy, Countess Bridge and Cahirciveen.

On 21st December between Ardfert and Ballyheigue a post man was held up and asked if he was carrying any letters to or from National Army troops.²¹³ On 7th January 1923 ‘a well-known supporter of the Government’ received a letter stating ‘eight prominent (civilian) Free Staters’ from Tralee would be executed in the event of four ‘Irregulars’ being executed. On 15th January Ballycarty house outside of Tralee was burnt, its former occupier Father Trant was described as ‘staunch supporter of the Government’. 35 tons of hay belonging to Father Trant were also burned. On 20th January a hay shed, the property of John Surgue of Rathanny was burned, Surgue had a relative who was an officer in the National Army.²¹⁴ Similarly, in November 1922 a house at Headford the property of a family called Moynihan, whose son was a Lieutenant in the Free State Army. The army concluded it was a reprisal on account of an IRA man having recently been shot dead nearby.²¹⁵

In March 1923 Cornelius Hannafin, who worked for the G.S.W.R in Kilorglin, was kidnapped and accused of being a Free State spy before being rescued by Free State troops.²¹⁶ Michael Cooper, who fought with the IRA in 1919-21 in the Scartaglin area, joined the Free State Army and attempted to organise and recruit men into the Free State army in the summer of 1922 but after being threatened and beaten by the IRA he resigned from the Army in August 1922. Cooper maintained in a compensation claim that since that time ‘I was under IRA observation all the time after being kidnapped. I could not go to Mass, to town, or to market. I was branded as a spie (sic) and endured severe persecution’.²¹⁷

Such instances extended beyond the formal end of the conflict in May. In July 1923 a servant at the Glencar Hotel was ordered to leave the district. The IRA had told him that ‘he was a spy for the National Army’. Similarly, in July a man named O’Brien was set upon by the IRA outside of Castlemaine and ‘accused’ of being a spy, his hands were tied behind his back and he was left on the road until he was found.²¹⁸ As late as October, the house of Patrick Flynn from the Kenmare area was raided. Flynn was accused of giving information to the Free State Army. Flynn was warned that there would be ‘serious consequences if anything similar

²¹³ Department of military statistics, KC, Operations report, 23 Dec. 1922, MAI/CW/OPS/08/02.

²¹⁴ Department of military statistics, KC, Operations report, 20 Jan. 1923, MAI/CW/OPS/08/02.

²¹⁵ KC, Economic reports, 17 Nov. 1922, MAI/CW/OPS/08/14.

²¹⁶ KC, GWR. 10 Apr. 1923, MAI/CW/OPS/08/07.

²¹⁷ Michael Cooper, 24 SP, 125.

²¹⁸ KC, GWR, 27 Jul. 1923, MAI/CW/OPS/08/07.

happened again'.²¹⁹ Like in the previous conflict combatants home on leave were also targeted Volunteer O'Sullivan, stationed in Cahirciveen but home on leave in Barraduff, had his home raided at the end of May 1923 and was deprived of his uniform.²²⁰

Some seemingly innocent request could have menacing undertones. In October a Mr Coffey, who ran a Cinema in Tralee, received 'a politely written request' from Humphry Murphy to 'close' the cinema until the republican hunger strikes in Free State prisons came to an end. Coffey refused and was granted military protection.²²¹

In some respects the IRA's campaign, in Kerry, in 1922-23 bore similarities to the 1919-21 conflict, such as a reluctance to engage in wholesale arson. . In November 'a fine mansion belonging to an English doctor' was burned outside of Kenmare, reflecting a broader pattern of arson across Ireland, during the civil war, but which, like in 1919-21, was not commonly practiced by the IRA Kerry units, who were otherwise the most aggressive in the whole country.²²² In the major act of arson in the county in September 1922 Dereen House, the property of Lord Lansdowne near Kenmare, was burned. The Marquiss of Lansdowne would maintain that the burning was part of a series of actions 'occurring throughout Kerry and directed exclusively against the loyalist class'.²²³ Two other large houses had been burned the previous month, Ardfert Abbey was burned prevent it being used by the Free State Army, Derryquinn Castle near Sneem was also burned in August. Agadhoe House was burned in October.²²⁴

The information just provided is not meant as a final word on IRA intimidation and interactions with civilians in county Kerry in the truce and civil war. It has attempted to show that the IRA did continue to attack and intimidate civilians they believed to be actively opposing them, and through such acts of violence and threats to dissuade others from doing so as well. Lethal violence was not as common. This cannot be treated as evidence of a higher degree of compassion on the part of the IRA The leadership probably concluded that Free State propaganda would profit from the killings, and the public at large would not tolerate the killings of civilians loyal to a government led by Irishmen, imperfect though it was. If anything the IRA not attempting to stop acts of intimidation, as said, seems to show a decreasing social conscience or desire to assist civilians. It should be noted that the IRA in Kerry engaged in most

²¹⁹ KC, GWR, 4 Oct. 1923, MAI/CW/OPS/08/07.

²²⁰ KC, GWR, 6 Jun. 1923, MAI/CW/OPS/08/08.

²²¹ KC, GWR, 26 Oct. 1923, MAI/CW/OPS/08/07.

²²² KC, Summary of intelligence recorded for week ending 10 Nov. 1922, MA/CW/OPS/08/04.

²²³ Joy, *Conflicting voices from the kingdom*, p. 75.

²²⁴ *Ibid*, p.76.

of their police work before any serious levels of violence had occurred in the county. The sad conclusion is that the violence these men experienced coarsened these men and made them less considerate, making acts of intimidation and violence more common place.

Conclusion.

In 1921 the dynamics of the conflict in County Kerry changed again – with a universal increase in intensity on the part of the IRA – ambushes on a large scale with more casualties took place and civilians deemed to be opponents were no longer threatened, boycotted or assaulted they were now shot. GHQ's criticism of Kerry might not have been entirely warranted but in terms of organisational efficiency the county was still miles behind, its nearest neighbour, Cork. This new found aggression is clearly evident after November. The logical conclusion would be that the reprisal policy further radicalised the IRA in Kerry and made them more willing to take lives.

What is curious is that in 1920 it appears that a major preoccupation for the IRA was preventing civilian – RIC interactions. By 1921 the crown forces succeeded in driving the more active men into an 'on the run' existence and the conflict became, in some respects, more militarised and accordingly the IRA paid less attention to civilians. The executions of civilians as informers showed that perceived civilians opponents would be treated in a more brutal fashion – and also a continued concern with civilians and, importantly, how they were acting. But the fact that the IRA went from non-lethal to lethal forms of violence shows how post November 1920 all aspects of the conflict had changed. No longer able to police their communities and operate in the open the 'on the run' members of the IRA began to consistently attack their armed opponents – though some of the credit for this must go to the successful intervention of an organiser from GHQ in the form of Andy Cooney. However, again it must be stressed that the entire dynamics changed with the arrival of the British reinforcements and how they galvanised the conflict.

The members who remained at home also managed to impede the crown forces through constant road cutting and the raiding of the mails. The incessant nature of the latter two activities also reveals that all elements of the IRA were to use Townshend's phrase 'still in business' and frustrating the crown forces even if not actually killing their opponents.

Civilians remained a fixture in the minds of the IRA though, and the killing of civilians by the IRA in 1921 is a crucial element in this regard. The conflicting narratives and the creation of fictional damning evidence around so many of the killings certainly muddy the waters but what is curious is that a feeling seems to have existed amongst all those who were some way

connected with the killings was that they were justified. I would contend that in much of the writing around these killings there lacks a certain degree of empathy or compassion, but what is evident is a pedantic obsession with whether these people had ‘informed’ or not. Interestingly, beyond the comments of Jack Keogh and Brian O’Grady, there appears to have been little in the way of compassion from the IRA about these people. Perhaps conflict had made them callous, but it is curious to note that the killings of spies and informers in 1921 soon evolved into continued persecution in the truce and civil war period. As said, what is presented here is by no means the final word on the matter, but clearly some elements are, at this stage, clearly apparent. For instance the leadership of the IRA’s disregard, in 1921-23, for what some of their men were doing.

Indeed, also it could be argued that this feeling extended to the almost constant cutting of roads and raiding of mails in 1921. These actions may appear innocuous next to the ambushes and shooting but they also prevented civilians from travelling to conduct their own affairs. The images of all the material in a letter bag ‘being censored by the IRA’ denied people of a right to privacy, and rather like the prevention of emigration, seemed to show the IRA involving themselves in every aspect of civilians lives’. These methods can, of course, be interpreted as necessary methods to protect the IRA’s operations. It is curious to note, however, that the endemic road breaking and raiding of the mail occurred after November 1920.

This would all seem to suggest that the catalyst period of November 1920 onwards in which lethal violence became more common, somehow made these men more callous and created a feeling that civilians were expendable or not worthy of protecting, any more. It is notable that after November 1920 there were no more attempts at serious policing of the community, and from December 1921 there were more opportunities to develop policing than in the spring and summer of 1920. If we go back to the first chapter it is also noticeable that much of the vitriol towards civilians appeared in the civil war period. Without wishing to personalise too much it is interesting that Humphry Murphy, who showed such a disregard for attacks on civilians, whilst at the same period telling the Farmers’ Union in Killarney that he would rather see famine and towns in ruin rather than accept the Treaty. Bill Kissane has recently written that civil war make for uncomfortable area of historical research for its association with fratricide which requires one to ‘twist and suppress aspects of one’s own humanity’, and engage in activities that would otherwise be frowned upon.²²⁵ The level of violence and intimidation meted out to civilians by the IRA before the commencement of the civil war in July 1922, together with their

²²⁵ Kissane, *Nations torn asunder*, p. 6.

primary opponents being Catholic Irishmen in the RIC, would seem to suggest that the 1918-21 conflict was a type of civil war. But other than this, perhaps regardless of whether the conflict amounted to a civil war or not, it clearly had a brutalising effect that made these men engage in activities they otherwise not have done.

The civil war was notable for being most brutal in Kerry. Kissane has written that ‘the intensity of conflict is a reflection of the importance the actors attach to the issues dividing them’.²²⁶ But curiously, despite the violence of anti-Treaty rhetoric and decades long political divide that emerged as a result of the conflict, the civil war was relatively restrained – civilians did suffer but they were rarely the victims of lethal violence – in comparison to the Finnish or Spanish civil wars, which both featured mass indiscriminate killings. Again, this might be due the combatants having shared experiences of the previous conflict or a general unwillingness to fight other Irish men or sense that the conflict was unnecessary.

The Kerry IRA may not have held this view as the Dublin Guard were interpreted as invaders, also no senior figure in the Kerry IRA supported the Treaty. The Kerry IRA had also already developed a poor working relationship with IRA leaders who supported the Treaty like Michael Collins and Richard Mulcahy – but for all this the Kerry IRA were part of a relatively restrained national movement. The Anti-Treaty movement and leadership on the whole though did not take the initiative in the conflict. In fact, for the early stages of the civil war the IRA were better equipped, had more experienced volunteers and control of more territory than the Free State ‘but republicans did little to exploit their resources’.²²⁷ De Valera was to prove the conflict was unnecessary through Fianna Fáil which showed anti-Treaty politics could be constitutional and democratic. De Valera and others, on the anti-Treaty side had been uncomfortable with conflict anyway and did even not want it in the first place. This may explain the relatively restrained nature of the conflict. But despite lethal violence against civilians being rare intimidation and others attacks persisted.

²²⁶ Ibid, p. 44.

²²⁷ Townshend, *The republic*, p. 413.

Conclusion

In April 1921 IRA Chief of Staff, Richard Mulcahy, wrote to the O/C of the Fingal Brigade that 'the cumulative effect of numerous minor operations will give all the desired results'.¹ In 1983 Charles Townshend wrote that the IRA leadership of Michael Collins and Richard Mulcahy both understood that the IRA never had any chance of actually defeating the British garrison in Ireland militarily and that instead of symbolic actions like the Rising of 1916 smaller actions could put enough pressure on the British Government, for the republican movement to eventually extract substantive concessions. Townshend memorably describes this process as 'armed propaganda'.² In early 1921 GHQ produced a memorandum on the IRA's achievements so far; they were costing the British Exchequer a million pounds a week, the British Army could not properly undermine the IRA, a considerable proportion of the population were militarised and constantly striking at the crown forces in some way and thus showing that Britain was not invulnerable.³ All this Mulcahy and Collins believed would have results - and the Treaty was just that. They both believed it was a tangible result though it was at the expense of some of what they had previously stood by. Collins was a practical man and in defending the Treaty of 1921 he maintained that the previous struggle was not about the Republic: 'our real want was...liberation from English occupation'.⁴ Mulcahy too defended the Treaty on the basis of his understanding that the IRA achieved the 'cumulative effect' and extracted those substantive results and 'continued violent activity would be profitless or even counterproductive'.⁵

Collins, himself, seems to have recognised that the actual material military gains of the IRA were few. In April 1922 he commented that at the time of the truce 'In July last there were many parts of Ireland where the British forces could operate without the slightest interference. There were some parts where they could operate with difficulty. There were no parts where they could not operate even by a small concentration of numbers'.⁶ Townshend has also written 'for those of its members [the IRA] who thought in terms of driving the British into the sea, the IRA was still at square one'.⁷ The leadership were aware of this – the fight could not go on indefinitely but they had driven the British to the table. Twenty years earlier, the Boers had

¹ Townshend, *Political violence in Ireland*, p. 361.

² Idem.

³ Townshend, *The republic*, p. 320.

⁴ Ibid, p. xv.

⁵ Townshend, *Political violence in Ireland*, p.361.

⁶ Paul Bew, 'Moderate nationalism and the Irish revolution 1916-1923', *The Historical Journal*, Volume 42, No. 3 (September, 1999), p. 746.

⁷ Townshend, 'The Irish Republican Army and the development of guerrilla warfare', in *The English Historical Review*, (Spring, 1979), p.332.

believed something similar; after the fall of most Boer territory to the British, the leadership felt a protracted guerrilla conflict would eventually result in the British negotiating.⁸

The upshot of this process was an independent, albeit, divided Ireland. And after some years most of the anti-Treaty accepted the legitimacy of the new state. The legacy of the period did live on though, not least in the form of a continued paramilitary presence. IRA leaders in the County John Joe Rice, John Joe Sheehy and other IRA men and women such as Johnny O'Connor, Denis Quille, Mai Dalaigh and Dan Keating went on to support non-constitutional methods and take part in forms of violent Irish republicanism well up into the 1970s and beyond and their successors continue to trouble the inheritors of the traditions of Collins and de Valera.

International comparisons have been made throughout this thesis but it should be noted in terms of actual violence the Irish experience was relatively muted. It was nowhere near as brutal, in a quantitative sense, as Finland's civil war. The brutal process of independence and partition in India and Pakistan has never been fully resolved. The Indian/Pakistan divide evokes far more anger and unwillingness to see separate perspectives or traditions, from both Hindus and Muslims, than events in Ireland. India and Spain make the Irish example appear straightforward. The conflict can be presented in a straightforward manner.

If we take Kerry, as an example or case study, a strictly military chain of events is seemingly evident to provide chronological clarity or explanatory clarity to explain this process. The narrative can be seen as starting with IRA operations, from the Gortalea attack in 1918 to more consistent attacks on barracks in 1920, these attacks were rarely successful but they did provoke an angry response. The arrival of new Black and Tans and Auxiliaries reinforcements and their policy of hunting IRA men prevented the latter from living openly and drove them literally to the hills and into the role of full time guerrillas. Having taken on the role of full time guerrillas the 'on the run' IRA men began to offer a more sustained and violent campaign against the crown forces, though the role of GHQ organiser Andy Cooney as a catalyst for increased action should also be recognised. Ambushes at Headford, Lispole, Castlemaine and Rathmore show increasing military capabilities and willingness to use lethal force. This is also not strictly related to Kerry – Clonbanin, Kilmicheal, Crossbarry, Turreengariv in Cork, Dromkeen in Limerick, Scramouge in Roscommon, Tourmakeady and Carrowkennedy in Mayo – show this was part of a national pattern. This process of increasing militarisation could not have gone on indefinitely but the British government concluded that a settlement was more expedient than ongoing violence. This narrative fits in Collins and Mulcahy's rational exactly.

⁸ Judd and Surridge, *The Boer War*, p. 188.

This thesis accepts the rational of GHQ's analysis – they took a gamble, and from their perspective they won – but the civil war prevented it from being all smooth sailing. But this thesis has shown that this is only half the narrative. If we take Mulcahy's thinking the conflict was entirely intra-combatant, ignoring the vital group in between; civilians. From the outset of this process civilians were also of paramount importance to the IRA's revolution, but this is not evident in Mulcahy's axiom.

In chapter one it was evident that civilians were important in IRA thinking. Some were remembered with fondness, together with the recognition that they always faced civilian opposition. The presence of civilian opposition, therefore in time of revolution and war, justifies measures to prevent these civilians assisting the enemy. The issue of the 'spies and informers' is case in point. Again this seems to fit with a more strictly military understanding of events though relating to survival and security. But there was also a clear moral and nationalist philosophy to the events under scrutiny, beyond an entirely military understanding.

From chapter one it was evident there existed a process of othering and differentiating civilian opponents on moral and cultural levels based on one's position in society: the materialistic publican and merchant, the wives of members of the crown forces and the violent land agitators. In opposition the IRA and its supporters were decent people not too rich or too poor but the embodiment of the plain nation. The policing issue could be understood in a military fashion – the RIC could no longer look after ordinary crime, and the IRA, as an army, and last line of defence from anarchy or lawlessness filled this breach. But there policing also had more aspects than the prevention of crime, for instance, preventing emigration, excessive drinking and the movement of Irish travelling people offers evidence of the IRA having enacted social control and as an attempt to create a morally upright and sinless Ireland. The issue of hair cutting is even greater evidence of this. The public shaming of women and exposing them to public ridicule, reveals an IRA which was willing to use startling cruelty to create cultural or nationalist/ political homogeneity.

The material in chapter five, in essence, revealed the IRA attempting to totally isolate the crown forces and the crucial factor in this was the prevention of civilians from any type of association with the crown forces. The prevention of co-operation with the crown forces was more consistent than actual attacks on the crown forces. Control over civilians was a vital factor in the IRA's revolution. Indeed, I would argue that chapter five reveals that the actions against civilians displayed greater vitriol and aggression than did the attacks on the crown forces. British troops were given tea after the ambush at Annascaul but Mrs Murphy and Mrs Sullivan were told by the Parish priest in Knocknagoshel 'they must go'. There was a clear military point

to the complete isolation of the crown forces extending to their families, in terms of making even the most ordinary things in life hard. It is clear that moral and social issues around homogeneity and betrayal of the nation are also evident. But, for all this, the IRA did not actually kill their civilian opponents, or at least very rarely and probably by accident. The arrival of the Black and Tans and Auxiliaries changed this dynamic.

Chapter two highlighted the confused reactions of the crown forces to the growing crisis. Many in the crown forces were distressed by the rise of Sinn Féin and the IRA and felt civilians had been terrorised into supporting both. But side by side with this feeling of confusion the records of the crown forces displayed contempt for civilians, justifications for indiscriminate violence, together with evasions and downright lying about the levels of violence being implemented against civilians. The crown forces in Ireland were certainly presented with major problems: their opponents did not wear uniforms and utilised guerrilla tactics. How to respond to these problems has always troubled counter-insurgency forces. In the Irish example the response was uncoordinated and chaotic but civilians were the primary victims. The initial attacks were, often, not even in a response to an act of IRA violence but unprovoked assaults and acts of arson on innocent people, seemingly at random. The burning of creameries also produced material suffering for all people regardless of political conviction. And crucially they started to kill civilians.

The crown forces were more consistent with their violence against civilians, used more extreme measures, and was usually more violent than the particular IRA provocation. Often there was not even a provocation. The crown forces were less analytical than the IRA in whom they decided to target, revealing the curious element that their violence was more extreme but not quite as considered as IRA violence against civilians. But it is wrong, however, to characterise the violence implemented by the crown forces as being simply the product of frustration, boredom, drunkenness etc. I would argue that chapter six shows that it was rather part of a historical precedent, evident in the American Civil War and Second Anglo-Boer War, of collective punishment through indiscriminate violence to break insurgency. Violence by the crown forces was bigger and more extreme than the violence of the IRA to demonstrate superiority and absolute power. Civilians were targeted to break IRA morale, and to show the IRA the consequences of their violence. Similarly, the activities of the crown forces resembled those of other contemporary conservative anti-revolutionary movements across Europe, whether White Finnish, White Russian or Italian fascist, that engaged in wholesale violence against innocent people associated with groups who threatened traditional social order. In a complex world where lines were blurred civilians became worthy of victimisation. At its most

extreme these sentiments might even have resulted in the entire nationalist population being rounded up into concentration camps. Importantly, all these factors show, as with the IRA, absolute control over the civilian population was of huge importance to the crown forces too.

The brutality displayed by the crown forces changed the dynamics of the conflict and set new precedents. In response to the brutality of the crown force the IRA, in turn, became more brutal. An aspect of the conflict was how the two sides began to copy the other side's tactics. The crown forces adopted the IRA's hair cutting. Similarly after the crown forces started killing civilians the IRA followed suit.

Variables changed or developed and the levels of violence fluctuated but civilians remained, from 1920 onwards, victims of combatant aggression and in a vulnerable space. Though a civilian was far more likely to be the victim of aggression from the crown forces than from the IRA. Ultimately, Collins and Mulcahy logically believed in what they were doing but this violence against civilians was the result of their 'cumulative' policy. Any understanding of the development of the conflict needs to recognise the centrality to not only the start of the conflict but also to how its progression and shifting nature centred on civilians.

The arrival of new variables changed the dynamics and the participants involved. The final chapter concluded by arguing that violence made the IRA more callous, more willing to use violence and have less of a sense of social responsibility to the civilians around them. This thesis has shown the drastic effect this conflict had on ordinary people. Certainly in all conflicts ordinary people suffer but in Ireland between 1918-21 being a guerrilla conflict with no front lines made it that more intense. The violence that emerged was by no means entirely glorious, and as this thesis has shown, it was civilians who suffered most.

There has long been a sense of awkwardness and unease around the violence of these years, usually termed as revisionism. The birth of revisionism, in particular in regard to the revolutionary period, is hard to pin down. I would contend that it began with John B. Keane, author and playwright, from Listowel. In 1967 Keane published *Letters of a successful TD* the fictional letters of a long-serving backbencher and veteran of the war of independence and anti-Treatyite - Tull MacAdoo. MacAdoo is a Fianna Fáil man and presumably from Kerry. He could be based around the following Fianna Fáil TDs who were Tan and civil war veterans; Tipperary's Dan Breen, Mayo's Michael Kilroy, Cork's Séan Moylan and Kerry's Tom McEllistrim, who spend the rest of his life as the Fianna Fáil TD for north Kerry.

MacAdoo is boorish, corrupt and ignorant and has built much of his reputation around his heroic exploits during the Battle of Glenalee in 1921. MacAdoo's rival Mr Flannery brings up

evidence to show that there never was a Battle of Glenalee. MacAdoo in retaliation say he will make public the fact that Flannery has an illegitimate child living in England. MacAdoo does admit to his daughter that the ‘battle’ amounted to his being involved in the shooting of an unarmed Irish RIC Sergeant, called Dodigan. MacAdoo is haunted by the fact that they left Dodigan to die, and remorsefully admits ‘maybe we should have got him a priest’.⁹ MacAdoo also exaggerates a hunger strike he took part in during the civil war, which, in fact, amounted to little more than refusing food from his Free State captors for an evening.¹⁰ Keane is probably making a larger point that the country should not take so much pride in what was often a brutal and cruel conflict, and that the victims of the conflict, in different circumstances, would be the neighbours and friends of IRA men.

The concept of a revisionist interpretation of the conflict, probably goes back further than the bard of Listowel. In 1924, veteran Sinn Féin activist and supporter of the Treaty, P.S. O’Hegarty published a scathing indictment of the 1919-21 conflict in *The victory of Sinn Féin*. O’Hegarty believed that the idealism of the 1916 Rising had been lost in a love of militarism and contempt for the non – military side of the republican movement. He felt IRA leaders had taken too much power and the the intimidation and murder of civilians, showed that both private property and personal security, of the entire population, were liable to be violated.¹¹ O’Hegarty’s conservatism and misogyny make his book a less reliable source but, I would contend, that this thesis has shown his views on the conflict were substantive as attacks on civilians by the IRA were so common.

More balanced or scholarly reassessments of revolutionary violence in Ireland developed through the 1970s and 1990s. I do consider this study as part being part of a wider chain of research started by Joost Augusteijn and Peter Hart in the late 1990s that seeks to understand the dynamics and local or ground level realities of the conflict. This field of study has been criticised by some as too narrow and lacking political context and even overtly obsessed with issues around death and killing.¹² But all violence is in a way local and all revolutions have ground level consequences – this thesis has shown that violence was due to certain individuals whether in the crown forces or the IRA deciding to take action, and this resulted in escalation of violence on all sides. The initiative of certain guerrilla leaders was crucial to the development

⁹ John B. Keane, *The letters of a successful T.D.* (Cork, 1967), p. 49.

¹⁰ Ibid, pp 20-1.

¹¹ P.S. O’Hegarty, *The victory of Sinn Féin. How it won it and how it used it* (Dublin, 1924), p. 38.

¹² Regan, *Myth and the Irish state*, pp.210-1.

of other guerrilla conflicts, Missouri and South Africa being the examples already stated. But in the brutal Finnish civil war of 1918 revolutionary and counter revolutionary violence has been described as being dependent on ‘local imitative’.¹³ Therefore, I would argue the ‘crisis’ itself was created by a series of local conflicts creating the overall conflict, a conflict over which Michael Collins or Lloyd George had limited ability to control. But the actions covered in this thesis, I believe, reflect the mentality of the combatants as whole, regardless of side. This thesis hopefully reveals the extent of the measures to which the crown forces were prepared to use, measures which disproportionately affected civilians. And on the flipside the extent to which the republican movement was willing to use intimidation to prevent what has been termed ‘internal dissent’ towards their movement,¹⁴ together with the extent to which this intimidation persisted following the British departure from southern Ireland.

The development of British policy in relation to Ireland, at the highest levels, is worthy of constant analysis and reanalysis, but it is to be hoped that this thesis also shows the effects of this policy. As, Mulcahy and Collins bear responsibility for continued violence, British policy, which in fact only exasperated the situation by resulting in increased IRA action, bears equal if not greater culpability.

Interestingly, civilians remained the consistent victims of both. It is hoped that this thesis has shown the extent to which ordinary people suffered, were displaced or intimidated, by all sides, and how this process needs to be considered as an integral part of both the Irish revolutionary and state building process together with the nature of British governance in Ireland.

Primary Sources

National Archives of Ireland, Bishops Street

Department of Justice (H/5 Series)

Dáil Éireann, Department of Local Government (DE/LG/12)

Dáil Éireann papers (DE/2)

Dáil Éireann courts commission (DE CC)

¹³ Pertti Haapala and Marko Tikka, ‘Revolution, civil war and terror in Finland in 1918’ in Robert Gerwarth and John Horne (eds), *War in peace: paramilitary violence in Europe after the Great War* (Oxford, 2012), p.84.

¹⁴ McGarry, *Eoin O’Duffy*, p. 70.

Military Archives, Cathal Brugha barracks, Rathmines

Civil war operations and intelligence reports (MAI, CW/OPS)

Collins papers (MAI, CP)

Truce, liaison and evacuation papers (MA, LE)

National Library of Ireland, Kildare Street, Dublin

Description of life in Kerry during the Civil War (MS, 10)

Piáras Béaslaí papers (MS 33, 913)

Florence O'Donoghue papers (MS, 31)

Sean O'Mahony papers (MS, 44)

Joseph McGarrity papers (MS, 17)

Letters of the late General Liam Lynch 1917-1923 (MS, 36 251)

Niall T. Harrington papers (MS, 40)

Austin Stack papers (MS, 17)

University College Dublin, Archives

Desmond FitzGerald papers (P80)

Captain Daniel Mulvihill papers (P64)

Richard Mulcahy papers (P7)

Ernie O'Malley papers (P17a)

Moss Twomey papers (P69)

National Archives of the United Kingdom, Kew

Colonial office

Irish Grants Committee (CO/762)

War Office

Military courts of inquiry (WO/35)

Trinity College Dublin, Berkeley Library

R.I.C. Inspector General and County Inspector's Monthly reports, January 1918-July 1921
(reels CO/904/105-115)

R.I.C. Weekly reports of outrages, 1920-1921(reels CO/904/148-150)

Kerry County Library Archives, Tralee

Con Casey papers

Thomas Sheehy papers

The Imperial War Museum, London.

Sir General Peter Strickland papers.

Newspapers

The Freeman's Journal

The Kerryman

The Manchester Guardian

The Cork Examiner

An t-Óglách

Online sources

The Bureau of Military history, available at www.bureauofmilitaryhistory.ie

The Military Service (1916-1923) Pensions collection, available at www.militaryarchives.ie/en/collections/online-collections/military-service-pensions-collection

1911 census returns. www.census.nationalarchives.ie/pages/1911

Journals and periodicals

Éire Ireland

History Ireland

Past and Present

English Historical Review

The Feminist Review

The Historical Journal

Irish Historical Studies

The Journal of the Historical Association

Secondary Sources

Abbott, Richard, *Police casualties in Ireland 1919-1922* (Cork, 2000).

Ambrose, Joe, *Sean Treacy and the tan war* (Cork, 2007).

Andrews, C.S., *Dublin made me* (Dublin, 1979).

Augusteijn, Joost, 'Accounting for the emergence of violent activism among Irish revolutionaries, 1916-21', *Irish historical studies*, Volume 35, No. 139, (May, 2007).

Augusteijn, Joost, *From public defiance to guerrilla warfare. The experience of ordinary volunteers in the Irish war of independence* (Dublin, 1996).

Augusteijn, Joost, 'Motivation: why did they fight for Ireland? The motivation of volunteers in the revolution' in Augusteijn, Joost (ed) *The Irish revolution 1913-1923* (New York, 2002).

Augusteijn, Joost (ed), *The memoirs of John M.Regan. A Catholic officer in the RIC and RUC 1909-1948* (Dublin, 2007).

- Barry, Tom, *Guerrilla days in Ireland* (Cork, 1949).
- Bell, J. Boyer, *The secret army. A history of the IRA, 1916-1970* (London, 1970).
- Bennett, Richard, *The Black and Tans* (London, 1959).
- Bew, Paul, 'Moderate nationalism and the Irish revolution 1916-1923', *The historical journal*, Volume 42, No. 3 (September, 1999).
- Bew, Paul, 'Sinn Fein, agrarian radicalism and the war of independence, 1919-1921' in Boyce, D.G., *The revolution in Ireland 1879 -1923* (Dublin, 1988).
- Bielenberg, Andy, 'Exodus': the emigration of southern protestants during the Irish war of independence and the civil war', *Past and present*, (February, 2013), volume 218, issue 1.
- Borgonovo, John, *The dynamics of war and revolution: Cork city 1916-1918* (Cork, 2013)
- Borgonovo, John, *Spies, informers and the 'Anti- Sinn Fein society'. The intelligence war in Cork city 1920-1921* (Dublin, 2007).
- Brady, Conor, *Guardians of the peace* (Dublin, 1974).
- Breen, Dan, *My fight for Irish freedom* (Dublin, 1924).
- Brennan, Michael, *The war in Clare 1911-1921. Personal memories of the Irish war of independence* (Dublin, 1980).
- Brewer, John D, *The Royal Irish constabulary. An oral history* (Belfast, 1990).
- Campbell, Fergus, *Land and politics. Nationalist politics in the west of Ireland 1891-1921* (Oxford, 2005).
- Castell, Albert 'Quantrill's Bushwhackers: A case study in partisan warfare', in Hubbell, John T. (ed), *Battles lost and won. Essays from civil war history* (Connecticut, 1975),
- Clark, Gemma M, *Everyday violence in the Irish civil war* (Cambridge, 2014).
- Clark, Gemma M, 'The fiery campaign: new agendas and ancient enmities in the Irish civil war – a study of arson in three Munster counties' in Griffin, Brian and McWilliams, Ellen (eds) *Irish studies in Britain: new perspectives in history and literature* (Cambridge, 2010).
- Coleman, Marie, *County Longford and the Irish revolution 1910-1923* (Dublin, 2003).

Coleman, Marie ‘Violence against women during the Irish war of Independence’ in Ferriter, Diarmaid and Riordan, Susannah (eds) *Years of turbulence- the Irish revolution and its aftermath. In honour of Michael Laffan* (Dublin, 2015),

Conway, Kieran *Southside provisional. From freedom fighter to the Four Courts* (Dublin, 2014),

Coogan, Tim Pat, *Michael Collins. A biography*, (London, 1990).

Coogan, Tim Pat, *Eamon de Valera. The man who was Ireland* (New York, 1993).

Crozier, F.P., *Impressions and recollections* (London, 1930).

Crozier, F. P., *Ireland forever* (London, 1932).

Crean, Tom, ‘From Petrograd to Bruce’ in Fitzpatrick, David (ed) *Revolution? Ireland 1917-1923* (Dublin, 1990).

Deasy, Liam, *Brother against Brother* (Dublin, 1982).

Deasy, Liam, *Towards Ireland free. The west Cork brigade in the war of independence 1917-21* (Cork, 1973).

Dolan, Anne, ‘The shadow of a great fear’ Terror in revolutionary Ireland, in Fitzpatrick, David (ed), *Terror in Ireland 1916-1923* (Dublin, 2012).

Dolan, Anne, ‘Ending war in a sportsmanlike manner’. The milestone of revolution 1916-1923, in Hachey, Thomas. E (ed) *Turning points in twentieth century Irish history* (Dublin, 2011).

Doyle, Tom, *The civil war in Kerry* (Cork, 2008).

Donnelly, James S. Jr, “Unofficial” British reprisals and IRA provocations, 1919-20. The cases of three Cork towns’, *Éire – Ireland*, Volume 45, Issue 1, (Spring/Summer, 2010).

Dooley, Terence, *The decline of the big house in Ireland. A study of the landed families 1860-1960* (Dublin, 2001).

Dooley, Terence, *‘The land for the people’ the land question in independent Ireland* (Dublin, 2004).

Duff, Douglas, *Sword for hire – The saga of a modern free companion* (London, 1932).

Dwyer, T. Ryle, *Tans, terror and troubles Kerry’s real fighting 1913 - 1923* (Cork, 2001).

Dwyer, T. Ryle, *Michael Collins. The man who won the war* (Cork, 2009).

English, Richard, *Irish freedom. The history of nationalism in Ireland* (London, 2006).

English, Richard, *Armed struggle. A history of the IRA* (London, 2003).

- English, Richard, *Ernie O'Malley IRA intellectual* (Oxford, 1998).
- Enright, Séan, *After the rising. Soldiers, lawyers and trials of the Irish revolution* (Dublin, 2016).
- Fanning, Ronan, *Fatal path. British government and Irish revolution 1910-1922* (Dublin, 2013).
- Farry, Michael, *Sligo 1914-1921. A chronicle of conflict* (Meath, 1992).
- Ferriter, Diarmaid, *A nation not a rabble. The Irish revolution 1913-1923* (London, 2015).
- Ferriter, Diarmaid, *The transformation of Ireland. Ireland 1900-2000* (London, 2005).
- Ferriter, Diarmaid, Riordan, Susannah (eds), *Years of turbulence. The Irish revolution and its aftermath. In honour of Michael Laffan* (Dublin, 2015).
- Figes, Orlando, *Crimea. The last crusade* (London, 2010).
- FitzGerald, Thomas Earls, 'The execution of spies and informers' in west Cork 1921' in Fitzpatrick, David (ed), *Terror in Ireland 1916-1923* (Dublin, 2012).
- Fitzpatrick, David, 'The geography of Irish nationalism, 1910-21', *Past and present*, no 78, (1978).
- Fitzpatrick, David, 'Ireland since 1870' in Foster, R.F. (ed) *The Oxford illustrated history of Ireland* (Oxford, 1989)
- Fitzpatrick, David ' Militarism in Ireland, 1900-1922' in Bartlett, Thomas, Jeffreys, Keith (eds), *A military history of Ireland* (Cambridge, 1996).
- Fitzpatrick, David 'Protestant depopulation and the Irish revolution', in *Irish historical studies*, (November, 2013), volume 34, issue 52.
- Fitzpatrick, David, *The two Ireland's 1912-1939* (Oxford, 1998).
- Fitzpatrick, David, *Harry Boland's Irish revolution* (Cork, 2003)
- Fitzpatrick, David, *Politics and Irish life 1913-1921. Provincial experience of war and revolution* (Cork, 1977).
- Foster, Gavin, *The Irish civil war and society* (London, 2015).
- Foster, R.F, *Modern Ireland 1600-1972* (London, 1988).
- Foster, R.F, *W.B Yeats: A life: II: the arch poet 1915-1939* (Oxford, 2003).
- Foster, R.F, *Vivid faces. The revolutionary generation in Ireland 1890-1923* (London, 2014).
- Foxton, David, *Revolutionary lawyers Sinn Féin courts and Crown courts in Ireland and Britain, 1916-1923* (Dublin, 2008).
- Garvin, Tom, *1922: The birth of Irish democracy* (Dublin, 1996).
- Garvin, Tom, *Irish nationalist revolutionaries 1858-1928* (Oxford, 1987).

Gaughan, J.A., (ed), *The memoirs of Constable Jeremiah Mee R.I.C.* (Dublin, 1975).

Gaughan, J.A., *Listowel and its vicinity* (Cork, 1973).

Gentile, Emilio, 'Paramilitary violence in Italy: The rationale of fascism and the origins of totalitarianism', in Gerwarth, Robert and Horne, John (eds), *War in peace. Paramilitary violence in Europe after the Great War* (Oxford, 2012),

The good old IRA. Tan war operations (Sinn Fein publicity department, Dublin, 1985).

Gerwarth, Robert and Horne, John (eds) *War in peace. Paramilitary violence in Europe after the great war* (Oxford, 2012).

Gerwarth, Robert *The vanquished. Why the First World War failed to end 1917-1923* (London, 2016).

Griffith, Kenneth, O'Grady, Timothy, *Curious journey an oral history of Ireland's unfinished revolution* (Dublin, 1982).

Haapala, Pertti and Tikka, Marko, 'Revolution, civil war and terror in Finland in 1918' in Gerwarth, Robert and Horne, John (eds), *War in peace. Paramilitary violence in Europe after the Great War* (Oxford, 2012),

Hanley, Brian, 'But then they started all this killing': attitudes to the IRA in the Irish Republic since 1969', *Irish historical studies*, Volume 38, No 158, (May, 2013).

Hanley, Brian, *The IRA 1926-1936* (Dublin, 2002).

Hanley, Brian, *The IRA A documentary history 1916-2005* (Dublin, 2010).

Hanley, Brian, 'Terror in twentieth century Ireland', in Fitzpatrick, David (ed), *Terror in Ireland 1916-1923* (Dublin, 2012).

Hanley, Brian, 'The rhetoric of republican legitimacy' in McGarry, Fearghal, (ed) *Republicanism in modern Ireland* (Dublin, 2003).

Harnett, Mossie, *Victory and woe. The west Limerick brigade in the war of independence* (Dublin, 2002)

Harrington, Niall. C, *An episode of the civil Kerry landing August 1922* (Dublin, 1992).

Hart, Peter, 'Definition: defining the Irish revolution' in Augesteijn, Joost (ed) *The Irish revolution 1913-1923* (New York, 2002).

Hart, Peter, *Mick. The real Michael Collins* (London, 2006).

Hart, Peter, *The IRA & its enemies. Violence and community in Cork 1916-1923* (Oxford, 1998).

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

Hart, Peter, 'What did the Easter rising really change?' in Hachey, Thomas. E (ed) *Turning points in twentieth century Irish history* (Dublin, 2011).

Heffernan, Brian, *Freedom and the fifth commandment. Catholic priests and political violence in Ireland 1919-21* (Manchester, 2014).

Hopkinson, Michael, *The Irish war of independence* (Dublin, 2002).

Hopkinson, Michael, *Green against green. A history of the Irish civil war* (Dublin, 1988).

Horgan, Tim, *Dying for the cause. Kerry's republican dead* (Cork, 2015).

Horne, John and Kramer, Alan, *German atrocities 1914. A history of denial* (Yale, 2001).

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

Hughes, Brian, 'Persecuting the peelers', in Fitzpatrick, David (ed), *Terror in Ireland 1916-1923* (Dublin, 2012).

Jackson, Julian, *France. The dark years 1940-1944* (Oxford, 2001).

Jackson, Tabitha, *The Boer war* (London, 1999).

Judd, Denis and Keith Surridge. *The Boer war. A history* (London, 2013).

Kalyas, Stathis N., *The logic of violence in civil war* (Cambridge, 2006).

Kautt, W.H., *Ground truths. British army operations in the Irish war of Independence* (Dublin, 2014).

Keane, Barry, *Massacre in west Cork. The Dunmanway and Ballygorman killings* (Cork, 2014).

Keane, John B, *Letters of a successful T.D.* (Dublin, 1967).

Keegan, John, *The American civil war* (London, 2010).

The Kerryman, Kerry's fighting story 1916-21. Told by the men who made it (Cork, 2009).

The Kerryman, Rebel Cork's fighting story 1916-21. Told by the men who made it (Cork, 2009).

The Kerryman, With the IRA in the fight for freedom 1919 to the truce. The red path of glory (Cork, 2010).

Kissane, Bill, *Explaining Irish democracy* (Dublin, 2002).

Kissane, Bill, *Nations torn asunder: the challenge of civil war* (Oxford, 2016).

Kostonouris, Mary, *Retreat from revolution: the Dáil courts 1920-1924* (Dublin, 1994).

Laffan, Michael, *The resurrection of Ireland: the Sinn Féin party 1916-1923* (Cambridge, 1999).

Leeson, D.M., *The Black and Tans. British Police and Auxiliaries in the Irish war of independence, 1920-1921* (Oxford, 2011).

Leonard, Jane, 'Getting them at last the IRA and ex-servicemen' in Fitzpatrick, David (ed), *Revolution? Ireland 1917-1923* (Dublin, 1990).

Lyons, F.S.L., *Culture and anarchy in Ireland 1890-1939* (Oxford, 1979).

Lyons, F.S.L., *Ireland since the famine* (Glasgow, 1973).

Lynch, Robert *The Northern IRA and the early years of partition 1920-1922* (Dublin, 2003).

Martin, Hugh, *Ireland in insurrection: an Englishman's record of fact* by Hugh Martin (London, 1921)

McCardle, Dorothy, *Tragedies of Kerry* (Dublin, 1924).

McCarthy, John P., *Kevin O'Higgins – builder of the Irish state* (Dublin, 2006).

McCoole, Sinead *Easter widows: seven women who lived in the shadow of the 1916 rising* (Dublin, 2014).

McDermott, Jim, *Northern Divisions, The old IRA and the Belfast pogroms 1920-22* (Belfast, 2001).

McElligott, Richard, *Forging a kingdom: The GAA in Kerry 1884-1934* (Cork, 2013).

MacEoin Uinseain, *The IRA in the twilight years 1923-1948* (Dublin, 1997).

MacEoin, Uinseain, *Survivors* (Dublin, 1980).

MacEvilly, Michael, *A splendid resistance. The life of IRA Chief of Staff Dr Andy Cooney* (Dublin, 2011).

McGarry, Fearghal, *Eoin O'Duffy: a self-made hero* (Oxford, 2005).

McGarry, Fearghal, *The rising Ireland: Easter 1916* (Oxford, 2010).

McGarry, Fearghal 'Violence and the Easter rising', in Fitzpatrick, David (ed), *Terror in Ireland 1916 – 1923* (Dublin, 2012).

Maguire, James and Quinn, James (eds), *Dictionary of Irish biography*, (Cambridge, 2009).

McNiffe, Liam, *A history of the Garda Síochána. A social history of the force 1922-52 with an overview for the years 1952-97* (Dublin, 1997).

McPherson, James, *Battle cry of freedom. The civil war era* (Oxford, 1988)

Macready, Neville, *Annals of an active life. Volume II* (London, 1924).

Meehan, Ciara, *The Cosgrave party. A history of Cumann na nGaedhael 1922-33* (Dublin, 2010).

Mitchell, Arthur, *Revolutionary government in Ireland. Dáil Éireann* (Dublin, 1995).

Mullins, Billy, *Memoirs of Billy Mullins. Veteran of the war of independence* (Tralee, 1983).

Murphy, Gerard, *The year of disappearances. Political killings in Cork, 1921-1922* (Dublin, 2010).

Murphy, Jeremiah, *When youth was mine. A memoir of Kerry 1902-1925* (Dublin, 1998).

O'Callaghan, John, *The republican campaign for independence in Limerick, 1913-1921* (Dublin, 2010).

O'Callaghan, John 'Munster' in Crowley, John, Ó Drisceoil, Donal, Murphy, Mike and Borogonovo, John (eds) *Atlas of the Irish revolution*, (Cork, 2016).

O'Callaghan, John, *For Ireland and freedom. Roscommon's contribution to the fight for independence* (Cork, 2012).

- O'Callaghan, Sean, *The informer* (London, 1998).
- O'Callaghan, Sean, *James Connolly. My search for the man, the myth and his legacy* (London, 2016).
- O'Casey, Sean, *Autobiographies. Volume two* (London, 1963).
- O'Casey, Sean, *Three plays* (London, 1957).
- O'Donnell, Peadar, *The gates flew open. An Irish civil war prison diary* (London, 1932).
- O'Donnell, Ruan, *16 lives: Patrick Pearse* (Dublin, 2016).
- Ó Drisceoil, Donal, *Peadar O'Donnell* (Cork, 2001).
- Ó Gaora, Colm, *On the run. The story of an Irish freedom fighter. A translation of Colm Ó Gaora's Mise by Michael Ó hAodha* (Cork, 2011).
- O'Connor, Eimear, *Sean Keating. Art, politics and building the Irish nation* (Dublin, 2013).
- O'Connor, Frank, *An only child* (New York, 1961).
- O'Connor, Seamus, *Tomorrow was another day. Irreverent memories of an Irish rebel schoolmaster* (Dublin, 1970).
- Ó Faoláin, Séan, *Vive moi! An autobiography* (Boston, 1963).
- O'Halpin, Eunan, 'Counting Terror: Bloody Sunday and the dead of the Irish revolution', in David Fitzpatrick (ed) *Terror in Ireland* (Dublin, 2012).
- O'Halpin, Eunan, *Defending Ireland. The Irish state and its enemies since 1922* (Oxford, 1999).
- O'Halpin, Eunan, 'Problematic killings during the war of independence and its aftermath: civilian spies and informers' in Kelly, James, and Lyons, Mary Ann (eds) *Death and dying in Ireland, Britain and Europe historical perspectives* (Kildare, 2013).
- Ó Heallaithe, Donal, (ed), *Memoirs of an old warrior. Jamie Moynihan's fight for Irish freedom 1916-1923* (Cork, 2014)
- O'Hegarty, P.S., *The victory of Sinn Féin. How it won it and how it used it* (Dublin, 1924).
- O'Malley, Ernie, *On another man's wound* (Dublin, 1936).
- O'Malley, Ernie, *The singing flame* (Dublin, 1978).
- O'Malley, Ernie *The men will talk to me. Kerry interviews by Ernie O'Malley*, Cormac O'Malley and Tim Horgan (eds), (Cork, 2012).
- O'Malley, Ernie *The men will talk to me. Galway interviews by Ernie O'Malley*, Cormac O'Malley and Cormac Ó Comhraí (eds), (Cork, 2013).
- O'Malley, Ernie, *The men will talk to me. West Cork interviews by Ernie O'Malley*, Andy Bielenber, John Borgonovo, Páidraig Óg Ó'Ruairc (eds), (Cork, 2015).
- O'Malley, Ernie, *The men will talk to me. Mayo interviews by Ernie O'Malley*, Cormac O'Malley and Vincent Keane (eds), (Cork, 2014).
- O'Riordan, Thomas, *The price of freedom. The life story of Mick Fitzgerald (Commandant)*

- O/C 1st Battalion Cork No.2 Brigade (Fermoy, N/D).
- Ó Ruairc, Pádraig Óg, *Blood on the banner. The republican struggle in Clare 1913-1923* (Dublin, 2009).
- Ó Ruairc, Pádraig Óg, *Truce. Murder, myth and the last days of the Irish war of independence* (Cork, 2016).
- Ó Súilleabháin, Mícheál, *Where Mountainy men have sown. War and peace in rebel Cork 1916-21* (Cork, 2013).
- Paseta, Senia *Irish nationalist women, 1900-1918* (Cambridge, 2013).
- Pretorius, Fransjohan, *Life on commando during the Anglo-Boer war 1899-1902* (Cape Town, 1999),
- Price, Dominic, *The flame and the candle. War in Mayo 1919-1924* (Cork, 2012).
- Quill, Shirley, *Mike Quill – Himself. A memoir* (Connecticut, 1985).
- John M. Regan, ‘The ‘Bandon Valley massacre’ as a historical problem’ in *The Journal of the historical association*, Volume 97, Issue 325, January 2012
- Regan, J.M., *Myth and the Irish state historical problems and other essays* (Dublin, 2013)
- Regan, J.M., *The Irish counter-revolution, 1921-1936. Treatyite politics and settlement in independent Ireland* (Dublin, 1999).
- Report of the labour commission to Ireland* (London, 1921).
- Rumpf. E, Hepburn, A.C., *Nationalism and socialism in twentieth-century Ireland* (Liverpool, 1977).
- Ryan, Annie, *Comrades. Inside the war of independence* (Dublin, 2007)
- Ryan, Louise, “Drunken Tans” Representations of sex and violence in the Anglo-Irish war (1919-1921), *Feminist review*, Volume 66, (Autumn, 2000)
- Ryan, Louise, ‘In the line of fire’: representations of women and war (1919-1923) through the writings of republican men in Ryan, Louise and Ward, Margaret (eds) *Irish women and nationalism, soldiers, new women and wicked hags* (Dublin, 2004).
- Ryan, Meda, *Tom Barry IRA freedom fighter* (Cork, 2005).
- Sheehan, William, *British voices from the Irish war of independence 1918-1921. The words of the British servicemen who were there* (Cork, 2005).
- Taylor, Paul, *Heroes or traitors. Experiences of southern Irish soldiers returning from the great war 1919-1939* (Manchester, 2015).
- Thomson, Lucinda, ‘Strikes in Galway’ in David Fitzpatrick (ed) *Revolution? Ireland 1917-1923* (Dublin, 1990).
- Townshend, Charles, *Ireland in the 20th century* (London, 1999).
- Townshend, Charles, *Political violence in Ireland. Government and resistance since 1848*

(Oxford, 1983).

Townshend, Charles, *The British campaign in Ireland 1919-1921. The development of political and military policies* (Oxford, 1975).

Townshend, Charles, *The republic. The fight for Irish independence 1918-1923* (London, 2013).

Townshend, Charles 'British policy in Ireland, 1906-1921' in Boyce, D.G., *The revolution in Ireland, 1879-1923* (Dublin, 1988).

Townshend, Charles, 'Historiography: telling the Irish revolution' in Augusteijn, Joost (ed) *The Irish revolution 1913-1923* (New York, 2002).

Townshend, Charles, 'The Irish republican army and the development of guerilla warfare', *English historical review*, Volume 94, (April 1979).

Townshend, Charles, 'The Irish war of independence context and meaning' in Crowe, Catriona (ed) *Guide to the military service (1916-1923) pensions collection* (Dublin, 2014).

Service, Robert, *Lenin. A biography* (London, 2000).

Van Heyningen, Elizabeth, *The concentration camps of the Anglo-Boer war. A social history* (Pretoria, 2013).

Wilson, T.K, *Frontiers of violence: conflict and identity in Ulster and Upper Silesia, 1918-1922* (Oxford, 2010).

Valiulis, Maryann Gialanella, *Portrait of a revolutionary. General Richard Mulcahy and the founding of the Irish state* (Dublin, 1992).

Unpublished Masters and PhD Thesis

Crean, Thomas Nelian, 'The labour movement in Kerry and Limerick 1914-21' (Trinity College Dublin, 1995).

Hughes, Brian, 'Defying the IRA: intimidation, coercion and communities in Ireland 1917-1922' (Trinity College Dublin, 2014).

Joy, Conor, 'Conflicting voices from the kingdom, Kerry protestants and the Irish revolution 1916-1923' (MA thesis, Trinity College Dublin, 2015).

