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Ollscoil Luimnigh

The Anglo - Irish Truce:
An analysis of its immediate military impact, 8 - 11 July 1921

Pádraig Óg Ó Ruairc

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University of Limerick

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An analysis of its immediate military impact, 8 - 11 July 1921

Pádraig Óg Ó Ruairc

Thesis presented to the University of Limerick for the award of the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Supervisor: Dr. Ruán O'Donnell

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Abstract

This thesis is a study of the dynamics of the Anglo-Irish Truce of 11 July 1921 which brought a formal conclusion to the Irish War of Independence. Although this work explores the origins, character and significance of the agreement, its primary focus is an analysis of the effect the announcement the impending armistice had on the use of lethal violence in the final days and hours of the conflict. It uses empirical data to interrogate existing hypotheses, and test popular theories surrounding the cessation of the Irish Republican Army's military campaign. Furthermore, it examines in detail the hitherto neglected subject of the reaction and responses of the British forces in Ireland to the agreement. This study also establishes the role the advent of the Truce played in fomenting 'Belfast's Bloody Sunday', one of the most intense outbreaks of sectarian violence in modern Irish history. This thesis addresses key questions which are central to understanding the Truce and the conflict as a whole. The new research presented in this study challenges an established historical narrative. The empirical findings make a useful contribution to the development of a more complex and comprehensive history of the Irish revolutionary period.

The research contained in this thesis arrives at a number of defining conclusions. The rank and file of both the IRA and British forces were taken completely unawares by the advent of the ceasefire and, contrary to previous claims; there was no premeditated or concerted national campaign by either side in an attempt to inflict as many fatalities on their enemies as possible immediately before the conflict ended. A handful of provincial IRA units issued orders to launch fresh military offensives after the announcement of the Truce but these had a desultory effect. Contrary to previous claims these units concentrated on regular military operations such as ambushes and barrack attacks rather than so called 'soft targets' such as the execution of civilians and assassinations of members of the British forces. The vast majority of IRA operations which occurred nationally in the final days and hours of the conflict were motivated by local factors rather than national political developments.

Although the IRA continued to use lethal violence right up to the beginning of the Truce, almost all of these attacks were typical of those which had developed during the

conflict and were not specifically motivated by the announcement. The British forces in southern Ireland engaged in similar military operations but, like their enemies, there is no evidence to suggest that these operations were specifically motivated by the impending ceasefire. Only in Belfast, where there was sustained inter-communal violence in the final days of the war, can reaction to the Truce be said to have resulted in an upsurge. Even in that instance, negative loyalist reaction to the ceasefire was just one of a number of contributory causes, amongst which local factors predominated. Ultimately, the use of lethal violence in the immediate pre-Truce period, though often brutal, was largely typical of the conditions which had developed in that conflict. The events and killings in July 1921, often cited as having been conceived as a deliberate reaction to the announcement of the Truce, were infact almost wholly coincidental to the machinations which brought the conflict to a formal end.

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Finally, thanks to my wife Anne Maria for all her encouragement, love and support.

Declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis, submitted in fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, represents my own work.

Pádraig Óg Ó Ruairc

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Key to abbreviations used in the text

ASU	Active Service Unit (of the Irish Republican Army)
DMP	Dublin Metropolitan Police
GAA	Gaelic Athletic Association
GHQ	General Head Quarters (of the Irish Republican Army)
IPP	Irish Parliamentary Party
IRA	Irish Republican Army
IRB	Irish Republican Brotherhood
MP	Member of Parliament
NCO	Non-Commissioned Officer (British Army)
O/C	Officer Commanding
RIC	Royal Irish Constabulary
RAF	Royal Air Force
RFC	Royal Flying Corps
TD	Teachta Dála (member of Dáil Éireann)
USC	Ulster Special Constabulary
UVF	Ulster Volunteer Force
YMCA	Young Mens Christian Association

Chapter One

Introduction

This thesis is a study of the Anglo-Irish Truce; its origins, character, importance, and, principally, the impact it had on the activities of both the Irish Republican Army and British forces in the final days of the Irish War of Independence. This thesis also examines the depiction of the advent of the Truce by historians and the imagery and popular perceptions that have emerged as a result. This will involve an expansion upon traditional views of the Truce and will confront and examine many preconceived notions surrounding the event. The research engages with existing historiographical debates concerning the nature and conduct of the War of Independence. To date no academic study of this subject at a national level has been published, and regional studies have been unduly influenced by the contemporary propaganda and polemics of the conflict. This thesis provides for the first time an accurate in-depth analysis of the military reaction to the announcement of the Truce. It presents new empirical data which should prove valuable to scholars in this field and contribute to our knowledge and understanding of one of the most important conflicts in Irish history.

The dominant narrative of the advent of the Truce is that its announcement triggered a wave of unjustifiable 'eleventh hour' IRA attacks. That these operations were deliberately calculated in an effort to inflict a large number of fatalities before the conflict ended. This narrative further suggests that a large proportion of these attacks were directed against unarmed members of the British forces and loyalist civilians, and were typical of IRA operations which were predominantly of a terrorist, rather than military nature. Furthermore, it is alleged that Protestant civilians were targeted as part of a sectarian anti-Protestant campaign conducted by the IRA, and that this effort was intensified following the announcement of the Truce. This narrative was first formulated and presented in British military accounts of the conflict. The history of the British Army's 6th Division, written in 1922, claimed the IRA exploited the announcement of the Truce as:

> an opportunity for attacking and murdering people when vigilance would obviously be relaxed, and if they could only postpone these murders to the last moment, the murderers could not possibly be punished. They carried out their programme to the letter. A private of the Machine Gun Corps was murdered on July 10th … four unarmed soldiers were kidnapped and murdered in Cork, and a patrol in Castleisland was ambushed, with results more disastrous to the rebels even than to the patrol itself; and finally within fifteen minutes of the Truce, the inhabitants of Killarney, who had never summoned up courage to strike a blow for freedom during the progress of the war, attacked two sergeants of the Royal Fusiliers in the street, one of whom died. Thus was the Truce inaugurated.[1]

Phillips' history of the conflict published in 1923 stated: 'the weekend before the coming of the Truce was one of the bloodiest on record in Ireland.'[2] He laid the blame for this increase in violence at the door of the IRA and cited the killings of 'soft targets' including off-duty soldiers and civilians as proof of this.[3] General Neville Macready, who had commanded the British forces in Ireland, contrasted the morality of the military campaigns waged by the rival forces in the final days and hours of the conflict in his memoirs published in 1924. According to Macready the British forces refrained from hasty and unnecessary last minute military offensives whilst the IRA escalated their military campaign.

> The Truce would begin at 12 noon on 11th July, 1921, until which time the troops, while taking no risks, should abstain as far as possible from unnecessary activity against the rebels, who far from imitating such chivalrous forbearance, continued their campaign of outrage and assassination until the clocks struck twelve on 11th July.[4]

Like Phillips, Macready cited attacks on the British forces, the killings of civilians and the destruction of loyalist homes as proof of an IRA 'campaign of outrage' prompted by the announcement of the Truce.[5]

Accusations that the IRA engaged in unjustified military operations in the dying hours of the conflict were not confined to British and unionist writers. This allegation became a core piece of anti-republican propaganda in the Irish Free State. During the Irish Civil War both sides accused their opponents of being 'eleventh hour warriors' and 'Trucileers' - men who became active IRA volunteers at the time of the Truce, but who had played little or no part in the conflict beforehand. The debates surrounding the

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[1] Anon, 'The Irish rebellion in the 6th divisional area' in *The Irish Sword*, xxvii, no. 107 (Spring, 2010), p. 130.
[2] W. Alison Phillips, *The revolution in Ireland 1906 - 1923* (London, 1923), p. 216.
[3] Phillips, *Revolution in Ireland*, p. 216.
[4] Nevil Macready, *Annals of an active life* (London, 1924), ii, pp 577 - 8.
[5] Macready, *Annals*, ii, p. 578.

acceptance of the Anglo-Irish Treaty were often dominated by the military record of its various protagonists.[6] In his 1924 book *The Victory of Sinn Féin*, Free State polemicist P. S. O'Hegarty condemned the anti-Treaty IRA as 'a terrorist army' of 'Tinpikemen' that had shied away from danger during the War of Independence but sprang into action at the last moment: 'all the young men in all the counties who had kept aloof of the fighting when it was dangerous were now eager to become heroes, and to be able to tell stories about this and that ambush'.[7] Piaras Béaslaí, the former IRA Director of Publicity, in his 1926 biography of Michael Collins, also castigated IRA units which he stated had contributed little to the republican military campaign before 8 July 1921:

> A great many eleventh-hour warriors, in comparatively peaceful parts of the country, hastened to make up arrears by firing shots at the last moment, and there were attacks on the English forces up to within a few minutes of the Truce. These belated exhibitions of prowess, with no military objective, when the danger seemed past, reflected no credit on Irishmen.[8]

Some of the IRA units responsible for these operations later opposed the Treaty and Beaslaí's comments are likely to have been influenced by his pro-Treaty stance. Abusive comments about 'Trucileers' were directed in particular against republicans in Kerry where there had been limited IRA activity prior to the pre-Truce period while there was a significant increase in republican activity in the last days of the war. In October 1933, following an attack on him by Kerry republicans at a Blueshirt rally in Tralee, Eoin O'Duffy taunted his political opponents in the county declaring: 'Kerry's entire record in the Black and Tan struggle consisted in shooting an unfortunate soldier the day of the Truce. To hear such people shouting "up the Republic" would make a dog sick.'[9]

A number of historians have reinforced and reiterated this narrative of republican exploitation of the announcement of the Truce to commit unjustified and morally questionable attacks. In 1959 Richard Bennett claimed in his book *The Black & Tans*, that there was 'a wild flurry of activity' by 'Eleventh hour warriors of the IRA [who] hurried to get their last shots in.' Bennett cited a litany of IRA operations and killings that occurred in the days before the Truce as proof of this claim, and focused in particular on the execution of suspected spies, and attacks on off-duty members of the British forces.

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[6] Pádraig de Búrca and John F. Boyle (eds), *Free State or Republic?* (2nd ed., Dublin, 2002), pp 2, 21, 66; Francis Carthy, (National Archives of Ireland, Bureau of Military History, Witness Statement 1040, pp 27 - 8). [Hereafter NAI, BMH, WS].

[7] P. S. O'Hegarty, *The victory of Sinn Féin* (2nd ed., Dublin, 1998), pp 48, 94, 112.

[8] Piaras Béaslai, *Michael Collins and the making of a new Ireland* (2 vols, Dublin, 1926), ii, p. 248.

[9] T. Ryle Dwyer, *Tans, terror and troubles: Kerry's real fighting story* 1913 - 23 (Cork, 2001), p. 7.

Bennett wrote that these were typical of the IRA's military campaign which had 'relapsed into a moral anarchy unconnected with any political or social or practical end other than the muzzle of a gun.'[10] J. Anthony Gaughan described the final attacks on the British forces in Kerry as an 'arrogant gesture'.[11] Charles Townshend stated that the Truce was 'preceded by one of the bloodiest weekends in the conflict, with the IRA killing some 20 people in the last 36 hours.'[12] Joseph M. Curran attributed a propaganda and political role to the apparent escalation in IRA violence immediately prior to the ceasefire. 'On July 8 Macready ordered his troops to abstain from unnecessary activity in view of the Truce agreement. The IRA, on the other hand, kept up its attacks until the last moment to demonstrate its capacity and willingness to carry on the fight.'[13] Tim Pat Coogan claimed that the IRA committed 'cold-blooded' killings after the Truce's announcement: 'the IRA kept up the offensive to within minutes of that noontide. On some it had a galvanic effect. Knowing that retribution could not occur after the 11th, many literally eleventh-hour warriors now took the field.'[14]

Maryann Valiulis claimed that bloodlust was to be found on both sides in the final days of the war, but suggested that the republicans were primarily responsible, having provoked the British forces through a series of unwarranted and gratuitous killings:

> Neither side … would let the hostilities cease without one last burst of violence before the Truce came into effect, the IRA received word that the British forces would attempt one final action … The reason for the contemplated action by the British forces was that six soldiers were captured and shot on about 9 July 1921. In addition, records indicate that 11 spies were executed by the IRA just prior to the advent of the Truce.[15]

Peter Hart stated that local IRA units had advance knowledge of the Truce and this led to an increase in republican violence that was deliberately calculated to inflict fatalities on the British forces and to kill loyalist civilians and other 'soft targets':

> The first eleven days in July did bring a last-minute upsurge in political activity … this was partly a product of the

[10] Richard Bennett, *The Black and Tans* (5th ed., London, 1970), p. 186.
[11] J. Anthony Gaughan, *Listowel and its vicinity* (Kildare, 1973), p. 394.
[12] Charles Townshend, *The British campaign in Ireland 1919 - 1921: the development of political and military policies* (London, 1975), p. 198.
[13] Joseph M. Curran, *The birth of the Irish Free State 1921 - 1923* (Alabama, 1980), p. 61.
[14] Tim Pat Coogan, *Michael Collins* (London, 1991), pp 216 - 7.
[15] Maryann Valiulis, *Portrait of a revolutionary: General Richard Mulcahy and the founding of the Irish Free State* (Dublin, 1992), p. 78.

> impending Truce, allowing IRA units outside Dublin to wreak maximum havoc in the knowledge that they would soon be immune from retaliation … Civilian targets, in fact, offered the only remaining untapped market for IRA operations in early 1921, which guerrillas were already beginning to exploit when the Truce mercifully intervened.[16]

Hart further claimed that anti-Protestant violence perpetrated by the IRA continually increased until the ceasefire took effect on 11 July 1921.[17] According to Hart, the IRA engaged in a spate of unwarranted killings after the Truce was announced: 'many guerrilla units had made a point of killing as many enemies as possible up until the last minute (twenty people in the last thirty six hours)'.[18] Most recently, Marie Coleman suggested that IRA volunteers who knew the Truce was imminent were spurred to commit attacks on civilians which may have had conscious sectarian intent. Coleman cites the executions of the Pearson brothers, two Protestant farmers at Coolacrease, Co. Offaly, as a possible example of this and suggests that their killers were motivated by 'the desire of the hitherto inactive Offaly Brigade to record a success before the Truce.'[19]

This popular myth of unjustifiable 'last minute' republican killings has effectively become the standard historical narrative of the Truce. Through repetition, this narrative eventually became exaggerated and incorporated into an increasingly melodramatic and factually inaccurate history. For example, the historian Fr. Pat Twohig wrote in effusive terms about the lamentable fate of the last Black and Tan killed during the War of Independence. 'A Black and Tan was shot dead in Enniskerry, Co. Wicklow one hour after the cessation of hostilities. One feels regret even a twinge of remorse, at such an occurrence. A mother's son, I mean to say, and already a non-combatant, walking the street alone, savouring the new sensation of peace.'[20] However this incident is entirely illusory. No members of the RIC were killed in Wicklow the day the Truce began.

The repetition and promotion of this narrative may have been part of a wider political and ideological debate about 'Revisionism' and the legitimacy of physical force republicanism. In the 1930's in a series of essays categorized as 'Historical Revisions' in the academic journal *Irish Historical Studies* Theodore William Moody and Robert Dudley Edwards set out to challenge misconceptions about modern Irish history which

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[16] Peter Hart, *The IRA at war 1916 - 1923* (Oxford, 2003), pp 71 - 2, 75.
[17] Hart, *IRA at war*, p. 233.
[18] Peter Hart, *Mick: The real Michael Collins* (London, 2005), p. 277.
[19] Marie Coleman, *The Irish revolution 1916 - 1923* (New York, 2014), p. 94.
[20] Pat Twohig, *Green tears for Hecuba* (Cork,1994), pp 335 - 6.

they felt were being exploited for political ends.[21] This effort by Moody, Edwards and later academic historians took on a new significance following the outbreak of paramilitary violence in Northern Ireland in the late 1960's. The 'official' version of Irish history in the southern Irish state which held that the 1916 Rising and Irish War of independence were the culmination of Irish national aspirations became problematic given the use of lethal violence by republican paramilitaries. Critics of these academics alleged that 'Revisionism' was driven by an ideological agenda that was hostile to Irish republicanism, and it was claimed existed to serve the 'history needs of the [political] establishment'. These allegations were strongly contested by academic historians but the ensuing debate, brought what was until then a complex and arcane debate amongst historians to public attention. The debate on these issues was conducted in overtly political and moral terms in newspaper articles, radio and television with politicians and polemecists such as Conor Cruise O'Brien featuring prominently.[22]

Elements of this academic debate have been reproduced in the print media by a number of newspaper columnists, political activists and polemicists most notably Eoghan Harris and Kevin Myers. Harris, a self-described 'revisionist', has produced a number of television pieces and articles which are critical of the IRA's conduct during the War of Independence and allege that republican violence in that period had a strong sectarian intent. He has insisted that 'the first duty of academic historians is to protect past victims of the IRA who no longer have a voice'.[23] Harris has also made the specific claim that republican 'bloodlust' led to an increase in IRA violence after the announcement of the Anglo-Irish Truce.[24] Kevin Myers has made similar claims in his newspaper columns which regularily feature the War of Independence as a topic. In particular Myers has frequently repeated the claim that the IRA exploited the announcement of the Truce as an oppourtunity to indulge in sectarian killings and attacks on 'soft targets'. In an article in the *Irish Times*, Myers alleged that: 'The conference in the Mansion House in Dublin, where the details of the ceasefire were being hammered out, gave three days notice of the

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[21] *Irish Historical Studies, I (1938 – 9), pp 1 -3.*

[22] Ciaran Brady, *"Constructive and instrumental": The dilemma of Ireland's first "New Historians"* in Ciaran Brady (ed.) *Interpreting Irish History: the debate on historical Revisionism (Dublin, 1994), pp 3 – 31;* M. A. G. Ó Tuathaigh, *Irish Historical "Revisionism": State of the art or ideological project?, Ibid*, pp 306 – 26.

[23] Although it is often seen as a pejorative title, Harris describes himself as a 'revisionist' in Jude Collins (ed.) *Whose past is it anyway?: the Ulster Covenant, the Easter Rising & the Battle of the Somme (Dublin, 2012),* p.14, *Sunday Independent*, 17 July 2011.

[24] *Sunday Independent*, 31 March 2013.

Truce. Those days were filled with bloodshed as killers embarked upon a once-in-a-lifetime Summer Sale of murder, guaranteed without legal consequence.'[25] Claims by these polemecists cannot be treated with the same weight as serious academic research by historians, however their specific claims about pre-Truce killings by the IRA will be examined as they sometimes mimic the conclusions reached by serious scholars and reflect the existing narrative of pre-Truce violence which is recurrurent in scholarly work.

This thesis will examine all these claims in detail to establish their veracity. The methodology employed is that of an empirical study; analysing events using a thematic framework. Comparison with other actions and periods of the War of Independence are used to provide possible qualifications. Statistical evidence is presented throughout in both tabular and chart formats as appropriate. This work is based on original archival research employing newspapers, military and police reports, census data, military pension applications and veteran testimony drawing on both Irish and British accounts. The study also makes use of recently released sources such as the Irish Military Service Pension applications which were not available to previous historians. Furthermore extensive use is made throughout of veteran testimony recorded in the Ernie O'Malley Military Notebooks, which, because of difficulties in transcription, have often been neglected by scholars.[26] Like the veteran testimony recorded by the Bureau of Military History, which is also used throughout, the testimony of O'Malley's interviewees was recorded in the late 1940s and early 1950s and can be subject to inaccurate memory, personal bias and retrospective justification. However these collections offer an invaluable insight into IRA activity and, in many cases, such as the execution of alleged spies, are the only first-hand accounts available. Frequent use has also been made of contemporary witness testimony from Irish loyalists contained in the British Governments Compensation (Ireland) Commission and Irish Grants Committee. Testimony from members of the British forces contained in the British military inquests, British regimental histories and archives are also employed.

The established narrative of the Truce outlined above is examined thematically in the following six chapters. Chapter Two examines briefly the political and military

[25] *Irish Times*, 27 August 1994.

[26] Bryce Evans dismissed the testimony of hundreds of War of Independence veterans collected by O'Malley as 'a series of illegible notes scribbled by Ernie O'Malley in later life.' Bryce Evans, *Sean Lemass: democratic dictator* (Dublin, 2011), p. 16.

origins of the Truce, its form and implications. It explores whether combatants in the conflict had prior knowledge of the ceasefire and examines the orders issued by the IRA leadership to the rank and file following the announcement of the Truce. The execution by the IRA of civilians alleged to be spies and informers is examined in Chapter Three along with the allegation that there was a sectarian aspect to several of these killings. Chapter Four explores the killing of so-called 'soft targets'; unarmed or off-duty members of the British forces assassinated by the IRA following the announcement of the Truce. Chapter Five examines IRA attacks on active British troops, patrols and garrisons during the same time period. To date the local examinations of the military impact of the Truce in the established narrative has focused on the IRA and the assumed an increase in republican violence whilst little attention has been paid to the actions of the British forces in the same period. To address this imbalance, the response by members of the British forces to the announcement of the Truce and the resultant fatalities are examined in Chapter Six. Events in Belfast, where a third of fatalities nationally occurred between the time the Truce was announced and its implementation, will be examined in Chapter Seven.

Chapter Two

The political and military origins of the Truce and its transmission to combatants

(I) *Introduction*

A huge volume of historical work is available detailing the successful negotiations which led to the Anglo-Irish Treaty. By comparison, little has been written about the peace initiatives which brought to an end the War of Independence by negotiating the Anglo-Irish Truce. An examination of the political and military machinations which ultimately led to the armistice is necessary, in this instance, to provide context to the central subject of this thesis. Even after both sides had come to recognise that a military cessation was necessary, there was a long and protracted debate between them as to exactly what format this agreement should take. Republicans were keen to exact the maximum propaganda value from any agreement with the British and were thus keen to secure a bi-lateral, formal military armistice which bestowed belligerent military status upon the IRA and tacit political recognition of Dáil Éireann. Furthermore, the seperatists were determined to ensure that a ceasefire would not involve any major concessions on their part regarding the surrender of IRA arms or amnesty for wanted IRA leaders. By contrast, the British attempted, but failed, to force the IRA to accept an informal truce that included punative military conditions tantamount to a military surrender, thus denying Dáil Éireann, Sinn Féin and the IRA the propaganda coup and legitimacy they would gain as parties to a formal agreement. Many of the claims about the IRA's military campaign in the final stages of the conflict, which are central to this thesis have mistakenly attributed a degree of foresight to republican combatants that simply did not exist. They mistakenly assumed prior knowledge of the ceasefire on the part of IRA volunteers and were overly hasty in projecting this as a motivation onto the final violent acts of the conflict. Many of these commentators also failed to comprehend the type of armistice that had been agreed and did not fully understand its terms and conditions. An understanding of the genesis of the Truce is crucial in any attempt to assess the validity of the claims which have been made about the violence which occurred after the ceasefire was announced. Without

understanding the origins of the Truce and how it was formulated, historians cannot hope to fully understand its immediate military impact.

(II) *Early Peace Initiatives*

The official position of the British Government during the conflict was that the IRA was a 'murder gang' and that the insurrection was an illegal attempt by a criminal conspiracy to overthrow the legitimate British administration in Ireland through terrorism. Some members of the British Government even postulated that the IRA was the puppet of an international conspiracy led by Bolshevik Russia which sought to destroy the British Empire.[1] The public maintenance of this position ensured that the British Government could not openly encourage any contact with Irish Republicans. In 1918 the British cabinet had insisted that: 'as a preliminary to proceeding with the Government policy … of the grant of self-Government to Ireland, it was first necessary that the new Irish administration should restore respect for government, enforce the law and, above all, put down with a stern hand the Irish-German conspiracy which appears to be widespread in Ireland.'[2] Furthermore, the British cabinet's 'Irish Situation Committee' recommended: 'no person serving under the Irish Government should in any circumstance be permitted to hold communication with Sinn Féin, except on the basis of the Government's expressed policy, viz: the repression of crime and the determination to carry through the Government of Ireland Bill on its present main lines.'[3]

Despite this official stance, the British authorities maintained clandestine contact with members of Sinn Féin throughout the conflict. In March 1920 Alfred Davies, a Conservative MP, wrote to Art O'Brien, Sinn Féin's representative in London, stating that the majority of MPs favoured a political settlement for Ireland, and offered to arrange a meeting between the Sinn Féin leader, Arthur Griffith, and British Prime

[1] Sir Hamar Greenwood in David M Leeson, *The Black and Tans: British police and auxiliaries in the Irish War of Independence* (Oxford, 2011) p. 221; Sir Hamar Greenwood's comments in *London Illustrated News*, 29 January 1921.
[2] Keith Middlemas (ed.) *Thomas Jones' Whitehall diary: Volume III Ireland 1918 - 1925* (London, 1971), p. 9.
[3] Irish Situation Committee: Note by Mr. Long, 29 July 1920, (National Archives United Kingdom, Cabinet Papers 24/110, CP 1703). [Hereafter NAUK, CAB].

Minister David Lloyd George.[4] In July of that year Lord Curzon, the British Foreign Secretary, advised the British cabinet that: 'you must negotiate with Sinn Féin. We shall be driven to dominion Home Rule [in southern Ireland] sooner or later.'[5] The same month, Sir Charles Russell, the English barrister and baronet, was approached by Lloyd George, and tasked with contacting Sinn Féin to begin negotiations. Lloyd George indicated to Russell that a negotiated peace was possible on condition that Michael Collins, and other members of the IRA's leadership were not involved.[6] Two months later a meeting was arranged between Griffith and Sir John Anderson, the Joint Under Secretary for Ireland. The meeting was aborted at the last moment, apparently because Griffith insisted that the British would first have to recognise Dáil Éireann. Though disappointed by this outcome, Mark Sturgis, the most senior British civil servant seconded to the British Administration in Dublin Castle, interpreted this development as a sign of discord within the republican ranks: 'It looks as if the pressure on the quiet side of Sinn Féin to break away from the gunmen is increasing.'[7] The Attorney General was less optimistic: 'the bad element in Sinn Féin would seize on any new statement made by the government [as a weakness] and any Sinn Feiners negotiating would be shot.'[8]

The first peace initiative to specifically raise the prospect of a cessation between the IRA and the British forces came from Brigadier-General George K. Cockerill, a Conservative MP, who suggested in October 1920 that an immediate cessation between the IRA and the British forces should precede a public meeting of Dáil Éireann held with British approval.[9] Responding to this call, Patrick Moylett, an IRB member and judge in the Sinn Féin courts, met Cockerill and a number of other influential British politicians including C. J. Phillips, from the British Foreign Office and Herbert Fisher, the Minister for Education.[10] Although Moylett was a member of Sinn Féin and an associate of Griffith, he was acting entirely on his own initiative.[11] Immediately after Terence

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[4] Davies to O'Brien, 19 March 1920 (National Library of Ireland, Art O'Brien Papers, MS 8427). [Hereafter NLI, AOBP].

[5] Paul Bew, *Ireland: the politics of enmity 1789 - 2006*, (Oxford, 2007), p. 401.

[6] O'Brien to Collins, 8 July, 19 August 1920 (NLI, AOBP, MS 8430).

[7] Michael Hopkinson (ed.) *The last days of Dublin Castle: the Sturgis diaries* (Dublin, 1999), p. 46.

[8] Middlemas (ed.) *Jones' Whitehall diary*, p. 27

[9] Michael Hopkinson, *The Irish War of Independence* (Dublin, 2002), p. 180. Cockerill's letter had been written in September but had been withheld by *The Times* because of its coincidence with the final stages of Mac Swiney's hunger strike, *Ibid*, p. 180.

[10] Dominic Price, *The flame and the candle: war in Mayo 1919 - 1924* (Cork, 2012), p. 171; Patrick Moylett (NAI, BMH, WS 767, pp 51- 2).

[11] Moylett (NAI, BMH, WS 767, p. 53).

MacSwiney, the Mayor of Cork, died on hunger strike at Brixton Prison, Moylett was summoned to Downing Street for an additional meeting with Phillips who asked if, the British Government held a conference with Sinn Féin, would the IRA respond by declaring a ceasefire?[12] Phillips proposed an informal truce to Moylett as a precursor to formal negotiations.[13] Moylett forwarded this proposal to Griffith, who responded in writing with the following proposals:

> (1) The Dáil Éireann should be allowed to meet on the distinct understanding that-
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> (a) Attacks on the police and soldiers instantly cease.
>
> (b) At the meeting no reference be made to the existence of any "Irish Republic". From the point of view of the British Government the meeting would merely be that of representatives of Ireland referred to by the Prime Minister in his speech in Parliament on the eve of recess (22 August).
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> (2) The only "business" of the meeting would be to receive and answer an invitation from the British Government to nominate representatives to a conference called by the British Government for a settlement of the whole Irish question. Sinn Féin's idea of a conference is that it would consist of one or two members representing Ulster, one or two representing Sinn Féin and (say) five others representing England, Scotland Wales and possibly the two Dominions specially interested in the Irish Question viz, Canada and Australia.[14]

Whilst secret negotiations with Griffith continued via Moylett, in public the British Government engaged in a bout of sabre rattling. Lloyd George made a speech at the Guildhall in London on 9 November stating: 'We have murder by the throat, we had to reorganise the police. When the government was ready we struck the terrorists and now the terrorists are complaining of terror.'[15] The hard-line rhetoric and public inflexibility masking private negotiations frustrated Collins who asked: 'I wonder what these people with their hypocritical good intentions and good wishes say to L. George's speech yesterday? So much for the peace feelers.'[16]

Moylett and Griffith's willingness to negotiate a ceasefire gave their British counterparts the impression that the republicans were willing to sue for peace at any cost. This impression, as much as any desire to be perceived as taking a hard-line stance on Ireland, may have influenced the triumphalist tone of the Prime Minister's speech.

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[12] Dave Hannigan, *Terence MacSwiney: The hunger strike that rocked an empire* (Dublin, 2010), p. 77; Moylett (NAI, BMH, WS 767, pp 59 - 60).

[13] Moylett (NAI, BMH, WS 767, p 66).

[14] Lloyd George, (Parliamentary Archives, Lloyd George Papers F/91/7/7-24, 19 November 1920. 102/7/6). [Hereafter PA, LGP]

[15] Ernest McCall, *The auxiliaries Tudor's toughs: A study of the Auxiliary Division Royal Irish Constabulary 1920 - 1922* (Newtownards, 2010), p. 62.

[16] J. B. E. Hittle, *Michael Collins and the Anglo-Irish War* (Washington DC, 2011), p. 183.

Griffith's willingness to negotiate convinced Phillips that British measures to crush the insurrection and restore order were bearing fruit. On 19 November he conveyed this impression to Lloyd George:

> I got a very clear impression (on evidence too long to quote here at length) that the Sinn Féin leaders realise quite well the hopelessness of their attempts to carry on the struggle on present lines and are seeking a plan by which they may at the same time end the present crisis, save their own faces as far as possible and checkmate the extremist section among their followers.[17]

Within days of Phillips' letter, the IRA scored a series of decisive victories that completely undermined this impression.

In a series of coordinated attacks on 21 November, the IRA killed twelve suspected British intelligence agents and two members of the RIC Auxiliary Division in Dublin.[18] A few hours later in reprisal for these attacks members of the British forces opened fire at a football match at Croke Park killing fourteen civilians. That night two senior IRA officers and a civilian were killed by members of the RIC Auxiliary Division at Dublin Castle.[19] According to Moylett Bloody Sunday gave a new impetus to the negotiations: 'The week following the 21st November I had conferences every day with Phillips. That week … I spent every day in Downing St. and we discussed the question of a settlement in detail from every angle.' [20] Phillips assured Moylett that if Dáil Éireann used its influence to get the IRA to suspend their military campaign for a week, it would enable Lloyd George to propose a peace settlement in the House of Commons.[21]

Moylett assured the British that Dáil Éireann could secure a week long IRA ceasefire. In return he sought a commitment from the British that the Black and Tans and RIC Auxiliaries would be confined to barracks once the cessation began. The proposed truce was intended as a temporary, informal arrangement to facilitate political negotiations. [22] This effort to secure a truce was soon frustrated by the arrest of Griffith,

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[17] C. J. Phillips to Lloyd George 19 November 1920, (PA, LGP, LG/F/91/7/7 - 24).
[18] Hart, *Mick*, p. 242. A thirteenth British intelligence officer, Hugh Montgomery, who was mortally wounded on Bloody Sunday died in December 1920. http://www.dublin-fusiliers.com/cairo-gang/montgomery.html (accessed 17 August 2014).
[19] Peter Cottrell, *The war for Ireland 1913 - 1923* (Oxford, 2009), p. 97.
[20] Moylett (NAI, BMH, WS 767, p. 68).
[21] Moylett (NAI, BMH, WS 767, p. 68).
[22] Moylett (NAI, BMH, WS 767, p. 70).

and another Sinn Féin TD, Eoin Mac Neill.[23] A further complication emerged when the British insisted that leading members of the IRA would not be immune from prosecution during the proposed truce. 'They wished to exempt Mick Collins, Dan Breen and one or two others. The truce would not cover these men, meaning that they were reserved for subsequent persecution.'[24] Moylett's talks with the British faltered on this issue, and were soon superseded by other developments. He was informed by Phillips that discussions with him were being suspended in order to concentrate on negotiations with Archbishop Clune of Perth, which had came about as a result of 'Bloody Sunday' and the intensification of the IRA's military campaign in November 1920.[25]

November 1920: Military developments, Roger Sweetman's appeal and the 'Peace Resolution'

On 28 November 1920 the Cork No. 3 Brigade IRA ambushed a patrol of RIC Auxiliaries at Kilmichael. Sixteen members of the patrol were killed in the ambush. A seventeenth initially escaped but was captured and killed shortly afterwards.[26] This was an unprecedented development.[27] Apart from the large number of fatalities, the fact that sixteen of the dead were ex-military officers from England and Scotland would have made an additional impact in Britain, as the majority of 'British' fatalities in Ireland prior to this had been Irish RIC constables. The Kilmichael ambush brought the British Government to the realisation that their adversaries were capable of inflicting heavy losses on the British forces. Lloyd George observed 'The last attack of the rebels seemed …to partake of a different character from the proceeding operations. The others were

[23] Hopkinson (ed.) *Sturgis diaries*, pp 82, 84.
[24] Moylett (NAI, BMH, WS 767, p. 71).
[25] Moylett (NAI, BMH, WS 767, p. 72).
[26] Richard Abbott, *Police casualties in Ireland 1919 - 1922* (Cork, 2000), p. 157.
[27] The Kilmichael ambush has recently been the subject of scholarly dispute. In particular it has been questioned whether Tom Barry, the IRA officer who led the attack, committed a war crime by ordering his men to 'Take no prisoners' following an apparent 'False surrender' on the part of the RIC Auxiliaries. Barry was a former British soldier who had served in Mesopotamia during the First World War. His actions at Kilmichael reflected his British Army training which dictated that soldiers did not have to accept an enemy's 'surrender' until it had been established that the surrender was genuine. For example General Sir Lancelot Kiggell issued an order in June 1916 that: 'In the case of apparent surrender, it lies with the enemy to prove his intention beyond the possibility of misunderstanding, before the surrender can be accepted as genuine.' Niall Ferguson, *The pity of war: explaining World War One* (New York, 1999), pp 385 - 6.

assassinations. This last was a military operation.'[28] By coincidence, on the same date as the Kilmichael ambush, the IRA carried out coordinated acts of industrial sabotage in several British cities. In Liverpool and Boole alone, IRA operations caused £250,000 worth of damage.[29] The British public and press feared these attacks were the beginning of an IRA campaign in Britain. Bloody Sunday, and the Kilmichael ambush and the campaign of sabotage in England generated significant press coverage in the British media.[30] The unprecedented scale of these attacks coupled with the state funerals at Westminster Abbey afforded to six of the British officers killed on Bloody Sunday ensured that the IRA's military campaign received optimum coverage in the British press. Sturgis, who was in London at the time, was struck by the public reaction:

> One thing is very sure. We can no longer complain of lack of interest on this side … Liverpool and the murders have made a tremendous difference in the tone. Everyone is talking of Shinn murder plots and the press is unanimous as far as I have seen it. Even the Times wishes us God speed in smashing the murder gang.[31]

These dramatic events were immediately followed by a glut of new attempts to secure a truce.

Some Sinn Féin politicians were disturbed by the violence of the IRA's military campaign. The most prominent of these was Roger Sweetman, Sinn Féin TD for North Wexford. In the immediate aftermath of Bloody Sunday and the Kilmichael ambush Sweetman wrote a letter to several newspapers appealing for peace and an IRA ceasefire.[32] Sweetman had expressed serious reservations about the morality of the use of military force by republicans. His attempts to negotiate a ceasefire appear to have been based on a moral objection to the growing level and intensity the IRA's military campaign. Sweetman's appeal was made without the approval of either Dáil Éireann or consultation with the IRA's leadership. Nonetheless it was significant because it was the first time that a member of Dáil Éireann had publicly called for an end to hostilities as a precursor to peace negotiations. This development was noted by the British, and Phillips

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[28] Middlemas (ed.) *Jones' Whitehall diary*, p. 41.
[29] Hopkinson, *War of Independence*, p. 148.
[30] Tim Pat Coogan (ed.) Anon, *An officer's wife in Ireland* (London, 1994), p. 73.
[31] Hopkinson (ed.) *Sturgis diaries*, p. 85.
[32] Hopkinson, *War of Independence*, p. 181.

questioned Moylett regarding it.[33] Shortly afterwards, Sweetman resigned as a TD in protest at the nature of the IRA's continuing military campaign.[34] Moylett and others in Sinn Féin regarded Sweetman's appeal as premature, damaging and counter-productive.[35]

Following quick on Sweetman's appeal came the 'Peace Resolution', tabled at a special meeting of Galway County Council on 3 December 1920. The meeting had been called to discuss the council's finances.[36] Owing to the number of councillors wanted by the British Forces, only six of the council's thirty members attended. Since a quorum of eight was not present, the meeting was therefore unofficial at which no binding council business could be conducted.[37] A discussion of the political situation in Ireland ensued during which Councillor James Haverty, an IRA officer, read the following proposal for peace negotiations.[38]

> That we, the members of Galway County Council, assembled on December 3, 1920, view with sorrow and grief the shootings, burnings, reprisals and counter-reprisals now taking place all over England and Ireland by armed forces of the British Empire on one hand and armed forces of the Irish Republic on the other. That we believe this unfortunate state of affairs is detrimental to the interests of both countries in such a crisis in world affairs. We, therefore, as adherents of Dáil Éireann, request that body to appoint three delegates to negotiate a truce.
>
> We further request the British Government to appoint three more delegates who will have power to arrange a truce and preliminary terms of peace so that an end may be brought to the unfortunate strife by a peace honourable to both countries. That we consider the initiative lies with the British government who should withdraw the ban on the meeting of Dáil Éireann for the purpose of appointing delegates. That we further consider that if either side refuses to accede to proposals such as these, the world will hold it responsible for any further shootings or burnings that may take place. [39]

Haverty's proposal was widely reported in the local, national and international press.[40] Reacting to these press reports the acting chairwoman of the council, Alice Cashel, called a meeting of the full council to repudiate the 'Peace Resolution'. However her arrest, along with that of several other councilors, intercepted en-route to this meeting, made this

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[33] Moylett (NAI, BMH, WS 767, p. 70).
[34] Royal Irish Academy, *The dictionary of Irish biography* (Vol. ix, Cambridge 2009), p. 187.
[35] Moylett (NAI, BMH, WS 767, p. 70.)
[36] *Connacht Tribune*, 11 December 1920.
[37] *Connacht Tribune*, 11 December 1920.
[38] Haverty's exact motives for presenting the proposal are unclear. His unpublished memoir is heavily influenced by bitter local rivalries, personal disputes and Civil War politics. Haverty's political career was ruined by the controversy surrounding the 'Peace Resolution' and for decades afterwards he threatened legal action against any historian or veteran who published any account of the 'Peace Resolution' that he objected to. *Memoirs of an ordinary republican*, (IMA, BMH, CD 72); *James Haverty to Bureau Of Military History*, 30 May 1952 (NAI, BMH, CD 72).
[39] *Connacht Tribune*, 11 December 1920.
[40] Thomas Bairead, (NAI, BMH, WS 408, p. 1).

impossible.[41] Regardless of its validity, the 'Peace Resolution' resulted in swift condemnation from other republicans. Councillor Pádraig Kilkelly approached the local IRA leadership asking them to issue a statement denouncing the resolution, and highlighting the fact that the majority of councillors were 'on the run' and had not supported the motion.[42] The IRA in Galway despairingly referred to it as 'The White Feather Resolution', and was 'extremely unhappy with it, and anxious to take action to dispel the rumour that "Galway had been tamed"'.[43] When a copy of the 'Peace Resolution' was circulated to Clare County Council, Michael Brennan, the Council's chairman, and leader of the IRA's East Clare Brigade, burnt it in protest.[44]

The British Government was encouraged by events in Galway, interpreting them as further evidence of a growing split between republican 'moderates' and 'gunmen'. A meeting of the British cabinet held on 6 December found that: 'the Galway County Council's resolution was the first occasion on which a Sinn Féin County Council had condemned the Sinn Fein policy of murder and outrage.'[45] Lloyd George sent a receptive, yet firm, response to the 'Peace Resolution' stating that negotiations could begin once the IRA declared a ceasefire: 'The first necessary preliminary to the re-establishment of normal conditions is that murder and crimes of violence shall cease. It is to that end that the efforts of the Irish executive have been constantly directed, and until it has been attained no progress can be made toward a political settlement.'[46] Those who supported the Galway 'Peace Resolution' had no authority from Dáil Éireann to enter negotiations with the British. Nor did they have the necessary influence with the IRA to compel them to accept British demands for a unilateral ceasefire as a precursor to negotiations. It is therefore unsurprising that the political manoeuvres that grew from the 'Peace Resolution' came to nothing.

The next peace initiative was launched by Fr. Michael O'Flanagan, the acting president of Sinn Féin. Shortly after the 'Peace Resolution' O'Flanagan sent a telegram to Lloyd George seeking terms: 'You state you are willing to make peace at once without

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[41] Alice M. Cashel (NAI, BMH, WS 366, p. 8).
[42] Timothy G. MacMahon (ed.) Pádraic Ó Fathaigh, *Pádraic Ó Fathaigh's War of Independence*: r*ecollections of a Galway Gaelic Leaguer* (Cork, 2000), p. 61.
[43] MacMahon (ed.) *Ó Fathaigh's War of Independence*, p. 61.
[44] Michael Brennan, *The war in Clare 1911 - 1921: personal memoirs of the Irish War of Independence* (Dublin, 1980), p. 65.
[45] Cabinet Conclusions, 6 December 1920 (NAUK CAB 23 / 23, ff. 165 - 6).
[46] Cabinet Conclusions, 8 December 1920 (NAUK CAB 23 / 23, ff. 206 - 7).

waiting till Christmas. Ireland is also willing to make peace. What first step do you propose?'[47] Like Sweetman, O'Flanagan apparently acted on his own impetus and had previously expressed moral reservations about the IRA's military campaign.[48] However his efforts met with more success than Sweetman's, mainly because of his senior position within Sinn Féin and because he was willing to compromise on what Phillips termed 'the full republican attitude.'[49] O'Flanagan was one of the few republican separatists willing to countenance partition on the basis that Ulster Unionists had excluded themselves from the Irish nation and republicans could not 'compel Antrim and Down to love us by force'. He believed that it would be hypocritical for Sinn Féin to condemn British coercion of Ireland whilst attempting to coerce Ulster. Furthermore O'Flanagan was also willing to consider a political settlement based upon dominion status.[50] Whilst relatively few members of Sinn Féin and the IRA were willing to countenance partition, many members of Sinn Féin shared O'Flanagan's attitude toward dominion status and were willing to compromise on the demand for a republic, being committed seperatists seeking Irish independence, rather than idealists wedded to the philosophy and ideals of Irish Republicanism.[51] Collins publicly condemned O'Flanagan's efforts saying: 'We must not allow ourselves to be rushed by these foolish productions or foolish people, who are tumbling over themselves to talk about a truce, when there is no truce.' [52]

Because of O'Flanagan's senior position within Sinn Féin the British apparently believed negotiations with him created a direct link with the republican leadership. Sturgis noted with misguided optimism that O'Flanagan was 'an accredited representative ready to speak as "the man on the bridge" from Dáil Éireann'.[53] He subsequently met Lloyd George to discuss peace proposals, but their focus quickly switched from securing an IRA ceasefire to negotiating a political settlement. The British believed that O'Flanagan was prepared to drop the demand for a republic and accept a

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[47] Dorothy Macardle, *The Irish Republic* (5th ed., London ,1968) p. 380.
[48] *Dictionary of Irish Biography*, Vol. 7, p. 475. [Hereafter *DIB*].
[49] Moylett (NAI, BMH, WS 767, p. 70).
[50] *DIB*, Vol. 7, p. 474
[51] Fearghal McGarry, '1916 and Irish Republicanism: between myth and history' in John Horne and Edward Madigan (eds) *Towards commemoration: Ireland in war and revolution 1912 -1923* (Dublin, 2013), pp 46 - 53.
[52] Hittle, *Collins and the Anglo-Irish War*, p. 183.
[53] Hopkinson (ed.) *Sturgis diaries*, p. 103.

settlement based on the Home Rule Act with additional fiscal powers.[54] Talks between O'Flanagan and leading British politicians continued for some time but despite a positive meeting with Carson the negotiations failed to produce any tangible results. The British developed doubts about his credentials and in early 1921 Lloyd George told Sir John Anderson that O'Flanagan represented nobody but himself and that he must deal with someone 'who could deliver the goods.'[55] Consequently Anderson asked O'Flanagan to make contact with de Valera directly concerning negotiations.[56] Michael Collins did not appreciate O'Flanagan's efforts to secure an IRA ceasefire, considering them an unjustified intrusion imposing on the efforts of others who had greater prospects of success. One contemporary recalled that Collins was extremely angry: 'He was very wroth with Father O'Flanagan … He said, "That ruins things for us," and he was not surprised when the negotiations broke down.'[57] Likewise Collins told Jerry Ryan, an IRA officer from Tipperary, that the priests' meddling had prevented a political settlement being reached: 'only for Fr. Flanagan and the Galway County Council we would have a good settlement, but not a republic'. [58]

Archbishop Clune's negotiations with the British Government

Despite the glut of peace initiatives that began in November and December 1920, the only endevour with a realistic prospect of success was that headed by Patrick Clune - the Archbishop of Perth.[59] Clune had a personal interest in Irish affairs because his nephew, Conor Clune, had been killed by RIC Auxiliaries on Bloody Sunday.[60] Furthermore, Clune was a native of Clare, and witnessed the widespread reprisals following the Rineen

[54] Hopkinson (ed.) *Sturgis diaries*, p. 108.
[55] Middlemas (ed.) *Jones' Whitehall diary*, p. 52
[56] Middlemas (ed.) *Jones' Whitehall diary*, p. 52
[57] Hart, *Mick*, pp 270 - 1.
[58] Jerry Ryan, (O'Fiaich Library, Louis O'Kane Papers, IV B 05). [Hereafter LOKP].
[59] Clune was a monarchist and a supporter of Home Rule. He had supported the British war effort during the First World War and been an advocate of conscription for Australia whilst serving as Catholic chaplin to the Australian forces. DIB, Vol 2, pp 602 - 3.
[60] There had been previous attempts by the hierarchy of the Catholic church to intervene in an attempt to halt the IRA's military campaign. Archbishop John Gilmartin of Tuam, attempted to prevent the IRA acting in his diocese. The archbishop declared a 'Truce of God' in his diocese following an IRA ambush at Gallagh, Galway on 19 July 1920. Two RIC Auxiliaries had been killed in the ambush and the centre of Tuam was burned in reprisal. Gilmartin later denounced the IRA men who took part in the Kilroe Ambush as 'murders' and summoned an IRA officer to a meeting in an effort to dissuade him from starting an IRA flying column. For more see: P. Murray, *Oracles of God*: *the Roman Catholic Church and Irish politics* 1922 - 37 (Dublin, 2000), p. 409.

Ambush. During the same period he also held discussions with local republican leaders.[61] Clune was in London en route to Australia in November 1920 when the Irish Parliamentary Party MP, Joe Devlin, offered to arrange an audience for him with Lloyd George.[62] On 1 December the archbishop and his secretary, Rev. J. T. McMahon, met the Prime Minister at the House of Commons. He recounted his experiences of conditions in Ireland, and Lloyd George asked him if he would go to Dublin and meet with the leadership of Sinn Féin to arrange an IRA ceasefire as a precursor to negotiations.[63] The archbishop agreed, and Art O'Brien forwarded a letter written by him to Collins. Collins favoured a truce and wrote to Griffith on 2 December stating: 'My view is that a truce on the terms specified cannot possibly do us any harm. It appears to me that it is distinctly an advance.'[64] Collins was willing to support a ceasefire provided the terms were favourable to the IRA: 'It is too much to expect that Irish physical force could combat successfully English physical force for any length of time if the directors of the latter could get a free hand for ruthlessness.'[65]

Clune returned to Ireland accompanied by Dr. Fogarty, bishop of Killaloe, and held several meetings with Collins in Dublin. He made contact with Andy Cope, the Assistant Under Secretary for Ireland in Dublin Castle. Cope arranged for the clergymen to visit Griffith, MacNeill and Michael Staines, a Sinn Féin TD for Dublin, all of whom were prisoners in Mountjoy Jail. Staines was the most militant of the republican leaders Clune met in Mountjoy. As well as being a TD, and a judge in the Dáil Éireann courts, Staines was, unlike Griffith and MacNeill, an IRA officer and was a veteran of the 1916 Rising.[66] Staines had prior notification from Collins that the archbishop was conducting truce negotiations with the endorsement of the IRA, and would be calling to the prison to meet him.[67] It is likely that Collins wanted Staines, as an IRA officer involved in the negotiations as a precaution against the possibility that Griffith and MacNeill would agree to arrangements that would be unacceptable to the IRA. Griffith also consulted Staines as the representative of the physical force republicans during the negotiations.

[61] Michael Brennan (NAI, BMH, WS 1068, p. 89).
[62] Right. Rev. Monsignor J.T. McMahon (NAI, BMH, WS 362, pp 1 - 4).
[63] McMahon (NAI, BMH, WS 362, p. 1).
[64] Collins to Griffith, 2 December 1920 (National Archives Ireland, Dáil Éireann Papers, 234 A). [Hereafter NAI, DÉ].
[65] Collins to Joe McDonagh, 2 December 1920 (NAI, DÉ 234 A).
[66] Brian Barton, *The secret court martial records of the Easter Rising* (Glouchester 2010), p. 91.
[67] Michael Staines (NAI, BMH, WS 944, p. 16).

Staines recalled Griffith asking him: 'What I want to know is what will the fighting men think about this?' Staines replied: 'the fighting men would be quite happy for a truce, provided there was no surrender of arms.'[68] Bishop Fogarty recalled that the republican leaders at Mountjoy were initially receptive: 'We discussed the proposed truce, which Arthur Griffith welcomed with enthusiasm … Eoin MacNeill … was not so impressed, but was willing to accept it.'[69] Fogarty also claimed that Cope was enthusiastic about the prospects for a ceasefire describing them as 'a splendid opportunity … for a final settlement.'[70] Both Griffith and Collins were prepared to advise Dáil Éireann to agree to a truce, provided the conditions were favourable.[71] Collins provided Clune with a general outline of the terms which would be acceptable to the republicans. These were based on a bilateral truce and a commitment that the entire republican government would be allowed to meet in public: 'If it is understood that the acts of violence (attacks, counter-attacks, reprisals, arrests, pursuits) are called off on both sides, we are agreeable to issue the necessary instructions on our side, it being understood that the entire Dáil shall be free to meet and that its peaceful activities not be interfered with.'[72]

With the initial groundwork for negotiations laid, Clune returned to London for a meeting with Lloyd George on 8 December. The British rejected the initial republican proposals insisting that TDs who were members of the IRA leadership, specifically Collins and Mulcahy, could not attend such a meeting and that the hierarchy of the Catholic Church and the Labour Party would be party to the talks.[73] The 'Peace Resolution' and O'Flanagan's letter had drastically changed the political situation in London by the time Clune returned. Now convinced that the republicans were desperate for a settlement, Lloyd George became increasingly demanding in seeking punitive terms for a truce. In one of his meetings with the archbishop, the British prime minister held aloft a telegram from O'Flanagan and a copy of the 'Peace Resolution' proclaiming 'Dr. Clune this is the white feather and we are going to make these fellows surrender.'[74] The archbishop was 'dismayed' to find Lloyd George's attitude toward negotiations had

[68] Staines (NAI, BMH, WS 944, p. 16).
[69] McMahon. (NAI, BMH, WS 362, p. 1).
[70] McMahon. (NAI, BMH, WS 362, p. 2).
[71] Dr. Fogarty in *Irish Press*, 20 June 1935.
[72] Hittle, *Collins and the Anglo-Irish War*, p. 183
[73] Hopkinson (ed.) *Sturgis diaries*, p. 183.
[74] Coogan, *Michael Collins*, p. 197.

changed. In particular Clune felt that the prime minister had introded new preconditions that the IRA would have to fulfil before a truce could be agreed.[75] At their 8 December meeting, Lloyd George made the demand for the first time that the IRA would be required to surrender their arms as part of any ceasefire arrangement. Clune objected strongly to this knowing it would be unacceptable to the republicans.[76] Having reached this impasse the archbishop returned to Dublin to hold further discussions with the republican leaders in Mountjoy. Two days later Sir Hamar Greenwood publicly offered the Irish republicans an armistice in the House of Commons, on the condition that the IRA would first have to surrender their arms, and turn over members of the republican leadership to the British.[77]

The British cabinet considered Clune's request for a month long ceasefire to facilitate negotiations, on 11 December, and drafted the following response which Anderson was to deliver to the archbishop in Dublin:

> Draft reply to Archbishop Clune.
> Such a request as you make would deserve earnest consideration of H.M. Government if it was made upon the authority of the constitutional representatives of Ireland. We have already stated that we are willing to facilitate a meeting of the Irish Parliamentary representatives for this or any other purpose likely to bring about an end of the present unhappy conditions. The cessation of murderous attacks upon the loyal servants of the Crown would immediately enable constitutional discussions to begin and peace to be restored.
>
> Conditions discussed with Archbishop Clune on Saturday December 11th and given to Sir John Anderson to go back with him to Dublin December 13th, 1920.
>
> 1. All arms, ammunition, uniforms, explosives, in area under martial law to be surrendered to the Government.
> 2. All arms in the rest of Ireland to be handed over to the safe custody of Government, no distinction to be made between the rest of Ireland and Ulster.
> 3. Sinn Fein to order the cessation of all violence in return for which the government to stop reprisals and shop looting, raids, burnings, floggings, execution without court martial (not admitted) and people only to be executed after due court martial.
> 4. Sinn Fein M.P.s (except specific list) to be allowed to assemble.[78]

Following this, Clune sent a telegram to London again asking for a month-long truce. During the cabinet discussion which followed, Lloyd George indicated that there had

[75] McMahon. (NAI, BMH, WS 362, p. 16).
[76] McMahon. (NAI, BMH, WS 362, pp 16 - 24).
[77] Middlemas (ed.) *Jones' Whitehall diary*, p. 44.
[78] Middlemas (ed.) *Jones' Whitehall diary*, pp 45 - 6.

been a shift in public opinion and that the British Government's policies were beginning to win the support of 'the decent public in Ireland'. He cited Dr. Cohalan, the Catholic

Bishop of Cork's, recent condemnation of IRA ambushes in support of this.[79] Clune met Sturgis and Anderson to inform them that the republicans would not agree to a surrender of arms. Anderson encouraged Clune to persevere with his efforts, stating that even if the republicans would not surrender their arms: 'an unofficial truce, a slacking off on both sides might be arranged even without this.'[80] The archbishop responded favourably to Anderson's suggestion and stated that, if such a situation could be created over the Christmas period, it might induce the necessary conditions for a political settlement. Following his meeting with Anderson, Clune again returned to Mountjoy.[81] Griffith rejected the proposals stating: 'there would be no surrender, no matter what frightfulness was used.'[82]

Lloyd George's hardening attitude and his insistence on IRA disarmament as a precondition of the proposed truce had by this time damaged Collins' interest in the peace negotiations since he believed the British were taking advantage of the republicans' willingness to negotiate. On 14 December Collins wrote to Griffith emphasising that the British terms were entirely unacceptable and that it was preferable for the IRA to continue their military campaign rather than submit to punitive terms:

> I am looking at it from an entirely utilitarian point of view. We have clearly demonstrated our willingness to have peace on honourable terms. Lloyd George insists on capitulation. Between them there is no mean; and it is only a waste of time continuing. It may make it appear that we are more anxious than they … Let Lloyd George make no mistake - the IRA is not broken. The events of the week & these days [continued IRA attacks] are more eloquent on that question than all his military advisors.[83]

Cope held another meeting with Clune on 17 December. This meeting coincided with a

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[79] Middlemas (ed.) *Jones' Whitehall diary*, p. 45. The bishop's decree was published as a letter in the *Cork Examiner*: 'Dear Sir - Kindly give me space to publish and thus promulgate the following decree: DECREE OF BISHOP OF CORK IN REFERENCE TO AMBUSHES, KIDNAPPING AND MURDER Beside the guilt involved in these acts by reason of their opposition to the law of God, anyone who shall within these spaces of Cork, organise or take part in an ambush or kidnapping or otherwise be guilty of murder or attempted murder shall incur by the very fact the censure of excommunication. (Signed) Daniel Cohalan, Bishop of Cork. (Witness) Patrick Cannon Sexton, Farranferris, Cork.' *Cork Examiner,* 12 December 1920. [Emphasis in the original].

[80] Hopkinson (ed.) *Sturgis diaries*, p. 91.

[81] Hopkinson (ed.) *Sturgis diaries*, p. 91.

[82] Griffith to Collins 13 December 1920 quoted in Beaslai, *Collins and the making of a new Ireland*, Vol. II, pp 123 - 5.

[83] Collins to Griffith, 14 December 1920, (NAI, DÉ 2/234B).

communiqué from London which reiterated that 'no truce is possible without disarmament.' Clune reported this to Griffith and the republican leaders at Mountjoy who again rejected this demand. Clune complained that the British Government had 'jumped a step' and were laying down terms for a formal peace agreement whilst he was merely trying to arrange an informal military truce. The circular argument about the surrender of arms continued. Sturgis seemed excited at the possibility of a breakthrough when he heard that the archbishop had received from Collins a written assurance stating the IRA would abide fully by the terms of arrangement.[84]

On 21 December Clune met with Lloyd George and Andrew Bonar Law, the British Conservative leader, in London. The archbishop appealed to them to drop their demand for a surrender of IRA arms. Clune submitted to them the following proposals, drafted by Griffith and endorsed by Collins, which stated that if the British pledged to ensure their forces complied with the terms of the proposed truce, Dáil Éireann would give the same undertaking regarding the IRA:

> The British Government undertakes that during the truce, no raids, arrests, pursuits, burnings, shootings, lootings, demolitions, courtsmartial or other acts of violence will be carried out by its forces, and there will be no enforcement of the terms of martial law proclamations. We on our side undertake to use all possible means to ensure that no acts whatever of violence will occur on our side during the period of the truce.
>
> The British Government, on their part, and we on ours, will use our best efforts to bring about the conditions above mentioned, with the object of creating an atmosphere favourable to the meeting together of the representative of the Irish People, with a view to the bringing about of a permanent peace.[85]

On Christmas Eve Lloyd George informed the British cabinet that he had held further discussions with Clune, and that the archbishop had informed him that Collins desired peace, and was in earnest about a truce, but that the IRA would never surrender its arms, and that Clune had enquired whether this condition could be rescinded.[86] When considering this request the British cabinet enquired about the current military situation in Ireland and was informed that IRA arms had already been surrendered in some districts where the British forces 'had at last definitely established the upper hand'. Consequently, the British military advised the British cabinet against anything which might prejudice this favourable military situation. The cabinet decided not to change the demand for a

[84] Hopkinson (ed.) *Sturgis diaries*, p. 94.
[85] Middlemas (ed.) *Jones' Whitehall diary*, p. 47.
[86] Middlemas (ed.) *Jones' Whitehall diary*, p. 47.

surrender of IRA arms and reflected on whether 'it would not be wiser to postpone any further approaches towards Sinn Fein until the Government of Ireland Act has been brought into operation [in the summer of 1921].'[87]

Lloyd George's private discussions with Clune continued but the issue of IRA arms continued to be the main stumbling block. On 28 December Clune outlined his final proposals for a truce to begin on New Year's Eve. These were: '(1.) Cessation of hostilities - acts of aggression and activities on both sides for the period of one month in order to create a peaceful atmosphere. (2) The meeting of Dáil Éireann to discuss among themselves or with plenipotentiaries of the Government the final settlement of the Irish Question.'[88] Meanwhile members of the British cabinet met with their military advisors to discuss the possibility of a truce. The British military insisted that they could crush the IRA within six weeks. Greenwood assured the Prime Minister: 'The SF cause and organisation is breaking up. Clune and everyone else admits this … there is no need of hurry in settlement. We can in due course and on our own good terms settle this Irish Question for good.'[89] Macready emphasised that there was a danger that an armistice would lead to a strengthening and reorganisation of the IRA. Sir Henry Wilson, Chief of the Imperial General Staff, stated that a truce with the IRA 'would be absolutely fatal.' Whilst other members of the Cabinet spoke in favour of a compromise, the majority supported a continuation of the war.[90] Accepting these military assurances the British Government rejected the republican proposals for a truce. On New Year's Eve, Lloyd George's private secretary Philip Kerr, citing the precedent of the surrender of arms by the Boers at the conclusion of the Boer War, informed Archbishop Clune that the surrender of arms by the IRA remained an essential precondition to any proposed truce.[91] This brought a swift end to these negotiations and, following this, the British cabinet did not seriously consider the prospect of a truce again until the cabinet meetings of late April and early May 1921.[92]

The Government of Ireland Act had been passed through the British Parliament in

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[87] Middlemas (ed.) *Jones' Whitehall diary*, p. 47 - 8.
[88] McMahon. (NAI, BMH, WS 362, p. 24).
[89] Greenwood to Lloyd George, n/d December 1921, (PA, LGP LG/F/19/2/31).
[90] Hopkinson, *War of Independence*, p. 184.
[91] Hopkinson, *War of Independence*, p. 184.
[92] Middlemas (ed.) *Jones' Whitehall diary*, pp 57 - 67.

December 1920. This was due to come into effect in May 1921, by which time it was envisaged that Northern Ireland would have come into existence with its own functioning government. This scenario would effectively have resolved the 'Ulster question' to the satisfaction of the Conservatives and the Ulster Unionists in the British government. If this political situation was successfully implemented and the extremely optimistic predictions of the British Government's military advisors came to pass then Lloyd George would have enjoyed a much greater deal of freedom to negotiate with Sinn Féin concerning the future of 'Southern Ireland' by May of 1921. This optimistic political and military forecast was undoubtedly a factor in the British decision to end negotiations. Lloyd George's secretary spelled this out to Clune in late December 1920 when terminating the truce negotiations, stating:

> the [British] Government had come to the conclusion that it was better to see the thing through as was done in the American and South African wars unless meanwhile the Sinn Féiners surrender their arms and publicly announce the abandonment of violent measures: that the government felt sanguine that the new Home Rule Bill when studied and understood would be worked, in fact they felt sanguine that within six months all would be working in harmony for Ireland.[93]

The negotiations came so close to success that one of the principal negotiators on the republican side, Michael Collins, told his comrade Liam Deasy they 'nearly had a truce' but that this had been made impossible by General Macready.[94] Clune's shuttle diplomacy came so close to success that Asquith later described it as: 'the big missed opportunity'.[95]

The British cabinet divided, March - May 1921

Following the failure of the peace initiatives launched in December 1920 the British government did not consider the need to negotiate a truce again until 8 March 1921 when Lord Midleton, leader of the Southern Unionists, raised the issue at a British cabinet meeting. This was unsurprising given the overwhelmingly positive security reports that

[93] McMahon. (NAI, BMH, WS 362, p. 27).
[94] Liam Deasy, (University College Dublin Archives, Ernie O'Malley Notebooks, P17b / 086). [Hereafter UCDA, EOMN].
[95] Hopkinson (ed.) *Sturgis diaries*, p. 193.

Lloyd George received in the interim from Ireland which stressed that a British victory was imminent. In February 1921, Lloyd George was told by Sir Henry Tudor, the Inspector General of the RIC, that as well as a noticeable increase in RIC recruits, RIC morale was strengthened, the public were increasingly more fearful of the force with the result that it received greater assistance from the civilian population as a consequence of major change in public opinion in favour of the British authorities.[96] However, Midleton poured scorn on the prospect of an impending victory, pointing out that the rate of republican violence had tripled in the previous seven months.[97] He suggested that prominent Irish businessmen and senior Catholic clergymen should be approached to act as intermediaries. Lloyd George rejected Midleton's proposal citing the favourable reports he had received from military commanders in Ireland which suggested that the British forces would soon inflict such heavy losses on the IRA that the republican military campaign would grind to a halt before any elections were held under the Government of Ireland Act:

> We are told by our Military Advisors that by May we should have the rebellion sufficiently under control to justify going on with the elections … Macready's view was that progress was certainly being made, but the situation was bad at the moment because the desperate men were being driven to the hills. He was confident that they could be subdued, but would not give a date.[98]

Despite the prime minister's assurances that a military victory would soon make the need for a truce redundant, Thomas Jones was far more sceptical of the claims made by British military advisors. Jones wrote to Bonar Law on 24 April predicting the forthcoming elections would result in a republican landslide in Southern Ireland necessitating either an armistice with the IRA or the imposition of Crown Colony Government:

> In the south the Sinn Feiners will be returned without contests. They will refuse to take the oath and the government will have to decide whether to try some sort of Truce or Constituent Assembly or Crown Colony. Meanwhile no General will name a date when murder will cease and the Chief Secretary has dropped his optimism of six months ago and now talks of pacification in years rather than months.[99]

At this time there were an increasing number of calls from influential persons in Britain

[96] Middlemas (ed.) *Jones' Whitehall diary*, p. 51.
[97] Middlemas (ed.) *Jones' Whitehall diary*, p. 54.
[98] Middlemas (ed.) *Jones' Whitehall diary*, p. 54.
[99] Jones to Bonar Law, 24 April 1921, cited in Middlemas (ed.) *Jones' Whitehall diary*, p. 55.

seeking an end to the conflict. In April, Brigadier-General Francis Crozier, the former head of the RIC Auxiliary Division, wrote a letter to *The Times* calling for a truce in Ireland. A few days later the Bishop of Chelmsford and a group of senior clergymen called for the war to end. Both appeals were rejected by Lloyd George.[100]

At the following cabinet meeting on 27 April, Sir Hamar Greenwood concurred with Jones prediction that Sinn Féin candidates would sweep the elections and questioned Macready and Tudor's claims that the British forces would regain control of the situation within three to four months. He stated bluntly that the British forces had failed 'in breaking the terror' and that a continuation of the conflict 'was not going to solve the Irish question'. Greenwood now believed that the only solution was for the British government to negotiate with Sinn Féin and the best way to achieve this was by agreeing a military cessation with the IRA as a precursor to negotiations. He attached two preconditions to his proposal; that Dáil Éireann would have to drop its demand for an Irish Republic and that the unionist position in Northern Ireland would not be affected. Greenwood stressed that a British government offer to negotiate should be made in public and the military settlement should be 'a truce - not a surrender'.[101] Edwin Montagu, the Secretary for India, backed Greenwood's proposal, but insisted that there should be no amnesty for wanted IRA members. Furthermore, Montagu suggested that the British should offer more generous terms than they had previously and would have to drop their demand that the IRA surrender its arms.[102]

Sir Arthur Boscawen, Conservative Minister for Agriculture, was hostile to the idea of a truce because of the status that a formal agreement would confer on the IRA: 'I dislike the word truce, which implies they [the IRA] are belligerents whereas they are really murderers.' The Cabinet's discussion on Greenwood and Montagu's proposal for negotiations was dominated by Sinn Féin's demand for an Irish Republic; the members of the Cabinet were at that stage willing to offer political and fiscal autonomy but all were agreed that the demand for a republic was out of the question. Lloyd George suggested that there was a rift within Sinn Féin between de Valera who was thought to be a pragmatic moderate willing to negotiate, and Collins who was depicted as a gun wielding

[100] Middlemas (ed.) *Jones' Whitehall diary*, p. 53 - 5.
[101] Middlemas (ed.) *Jones' Whitehall diary*, p. 57.
[102] Middlemas (ed.) *Jones' Whitehall diary*, p. 58.

fanatic who would never concede the demand for a republic. Furthermore he stated that if the British made a public offer of a truce, it would be interpreted as a sign of weakness and used by Sinn Féin 'as a base for further demands'. Lloyd George rejected an appeal for an armistice citing the latest military report of General Strickland, commander of the British 6th Division in Ireland, and reiterating his belief that the IRA were 'gradually being beaten'. He claimed that a ceasefire would be a mistake from a military standpoint as it would give the IRA 'breathing space' and, furthermore, that such an offer on the part of the British would be seen as a sign of weakness. The proposal for a truce before the elections was rejected.[103]

(III) *The failure of the Government of Ireland Act, political crisis and the British need to end hostilities*

The Government of Ireland Act came into effect on 3 May 1921 and elections were due to be held for both the Northern and Southern Irish parliaments created by the act on 24 May. With these elections looming the British cabinet met again on 12 May. Several cabinet members were in favour of negotiating a truce with the IRA prior to the elections but realised that there was by then not enough time to arrange this before the poll.[104] The meeting was entirely dominated by debate over whether or not an armistice was necessary. Furthermore there was much agonising over what terms should be offered in any potential peace maneuver. The same issues which had arisen in the Clune negotiations re-emerged. The question of an amnesty for wanted IRA personnel was problematic. The Viceroy, Lord Fitz Alan, declared that the idea of Michael Collins' involvement in negotiations to arrange a truce was wholly unacceptable.[105] Edward Shortt, the Chief Secretary for Ireland, was adamant that there should be no formal offer of a truce and proposed that the military campaign should continue until the IRA were forced to seek terms from the British: 'Nothing will so buck up the IRA as that we should offer a truce they have not asked for … I am against a *public* offer of truce. If they *first*

[103] Middlemas (ed.) *Jones' Whitehall diary*, pp 60 - 1
[104] Thomas Jones to Bonar Law, 24 April 1921, cited in: Middlemas (ed.) *Jones' Whitehall diary*, p. 65.
[105] Middlemas (ed.) *Jones' Whitehall diary*, p. 70.

say "We'll stop murder," that's a different story.'[106] Determined that any arrangement would not confer belligerent status upon the IRA, Lloyd George stated that: '[a] "Truce" is rejected by everybody'… 'because they [the IRA] are not an honorable enemy and they have no rights'.[107] At the conclusion of the meeting Chamberlain gave his impressions of the favourable military situation in Ireland declaring that: 'The position of the Crown forces is stronger and is improving every day. To a large extent the offer of the so-called truce would be a confession of failure'. The Liberal cabinet ministers were more sceptical and Dr. Christopher Addison, the Minister for Health, declared: 'The statement the IRA is nearly broken does not carry much weight with me. Such prophecies have been made before.' When a vote was forced on this issue opinion on the advisability of arranging an immediate truce between the IRA and British forces was divided strictly along party political lines. Consequently the proposal for a truce was defeated with the nine Conservatives voting against, and the five Liberals being in favour.[108]

As expected the elections held on 22 May to appoint representatives to the new Northern and Southern Irish Parliaments resulted in a Unionist victory in the north-eastern six counties which formed the newly created political entity of 'Northern Ireland'. Forty of the available fifty-two seats there were won by Unionist candidates.[109] Over thirty Sinn Féin and Irish Parliamentry Party candidates stood for election in Northern Ireland, winning six seats each.[110] In stark contrast, the 'elections' to the Southern parliament resulted in a republican landslide. Not a single seat was contested with 124 Sinn Féin candidates, and four Unionists, returned unopposed.[111] Just three days later the IRA's Dublin Brigade launched a daring daylight operation in Dublin city, destroying the Custom House. The building was home to a number of British governmental departments for Ireland including the Irish Local Government Board, Inland Revenue, the Estate Duty Control Office and the Stamp Office. The fire that gutted the interior of the building also destroyed legal documents being prepared for the new Northern Ireland Parliament. The event made international newspaper headlines, and proved a major embarrassment to the

[106] Middlemas (ed.) *Jones' Whitehall diary*, p. 66. [Emphasis in the original].
[107] Thomas Jones to Bonar Law, 24 April 1921, cited in: Middlemas (ed.) *Jones' Whitehall diary*, p. 65.
[108] Hopkinson, *War of Independence*, p. 193.
[109] Alan F. Parkinson, *Belfast's unholy war* (Dublin, 2004), p. 125.
[110] Parkinson, *Unholy war*, p. 121.
[111] Hopkinson, *War of Independence*, p. 193.

British Government and its armed forces in Ireland. Sinn Féin's election success had effectively ensured that the plan to establish a Southern parliament was unworkable. The timetable for the implementation of the Government of Ireland Act required that the Southern parliament would be established by 14 July.[112] The British cabinet met again on 2 June and decided that, if the act could not be implemented by mid-July, Crown Colony Government would be declared and martial law enforced throughout the twenty-six counties of Southern Ireland. This would be accompanied by an increase in the number of British troops stationed in Ireland and a military surge against the IRA.[113]

However by this stage Britain's military and political policies in Ireland were met with increasing local and international opposition. The British forces had the capacity to absorb the losses inflicted on them by the IRA, but as long as the war continued and British casualties mounted so did British public opposition to the conflict. During the First World War Lloyd George told the editor of *The Guardian*: 'If people really knew [what was happening] the war would be stopped tomorrow… But of course they don't and they can't know. The correspondents don't write, and the censorship would not pass, the truth.'[114] The problem for the British government was that the British public knew what was happening in the Ireland of 1921. Journalists wrote freely about British reprisals and conditions in Ireland and the censor was powerless to stop them from printing this information. British journalists such as Hugh Martin and Wilfrid Ewart were able to record with authority events in Ireland including British reprisals and assassinations and their reports were serialised in British newspapers.[115] Furthermore photojournalism had become an important part of the press and was used to record the aftermath of British reprisals.[116] The intense press coverage of events in Ireland exposed British methods and tactics which were normally obscured by distance, indifference and ignorance, at a time when it was assumed by the British public that British colonial policing and military campaigns were conducted for the noblest motives and at the

[112] Hopkinson, *War of Independence*, p. 193.
[113] Hopkinson, *War of Independence*, p. 194.
[114] Philip Knightly, *The first casualty: the war correspondent as hero, propagandist and myth maker* (London, 1982), p. 93.
[115] Hugh Martin, *Ireland in insurrection: an Englishman's record of fact* (London, 1921); Wilfrid Ewart, *A journey in Ireland 1921* (London, 1922).
[116] Barry Keane, *Massacre in West Cork: the Dunmanway and Ballygroman killings* (Cork, 2014), p. 32.

highest moral standards.[117] The fact that some of the conflict's major events including the hunger strike of Terence MacSwiney, his funeral procession, the burning of dockyards and factories in Boole, Liverpool and Manchester and the funerals of British officers killed in the Kilmichael Ambush and Bloody Sunday attacks occurred in Britain heightened the British public's consciousness of what was happening in Ireland.[118]

Developments in Ireland were relayed to London within a few hours and the opposition in the House of Commons (composed of Labour, Asquith Liberals and a handful of Irish nationalist MPs) used this information to great effect. Government ministers frequently had to reply to opposition questions without full knowledge of the facts and were frequently embarrassed when a more accurate and detailed version of events emerged subsequently.[119] Hamar Greenwood reported that press reports from Ireland caused dismay in the British cabinet: 'A sensational Press upsets their nerves & makes them impatient, first clamorous for stern measures and then screams itself into hysterics when it sees what stern measures mean in practice.'[120]

The republicans also proved particularly adept at propaganda and soliciting international sympathy for their cause. Their propaganda organ, *The Irish Bulletin* was produced five times weekly in several languages and became increasingly popular in India, Egypt and other restless British territories. Excerpts were even published in influential British newspapers including *The Times* of London.[121] By June 1921 the republicans had established official press bureaus in several European capitals including Berlin, Madrid, Paris and Rome. These ensured that British reprisals in Ireland were widely reported in the international press.[122] Whilst de Valera's tour of the United States ultimately failed in its objective to secure American recognition for the Irish Republic, it succeeded in rallying the Irish-American populace who purchased several million dollars' worth of Republican Bonds, effectively bankrolling the Irish Republican political and military campaigns. De Valera's trip also garnered significant political and media

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[117] Maurice Walsh, *The news from Ireland: foreign correspondents and the Irish revolution* (London, 2008), p. 101.
[118] Walsh, *News from Ireland*, p. 183.
[119] Keane, *Massacre in West Cork* (Cork, 2014), pp 31 - 32.
[120] Robert B. Self (ed.) *The Austin Chamberlain letters: the correspondence of Sir Austin Chamberlain with his sisters Hilda and Ida 1916 -1937*, Vol. V (Cambridge, 1995), pp 138 -139.
[121] Marie Coleman, *The Irish Revolution 1916 - 1923* (New York, 2014), p. 52.
[122] Coleman, *Irish revolution*, p. 54.

attention for events in Ireland.[123] By May 1921 republican influence extended far beyond Europe and the Irish Diaspora in America. The republicans had established consulates in several Commonwealth countries including Australia, New Zealand and Canada as well as the United States and several South American countries including Chile and Argentina. One of the most successful republican diplomatic initiatives was South Africa where the republican envoys enlisted the sympathies of Jan Smuts, the South African premier. At the Commonwealth Conference in May 1921, Smuts publicly expressed his opposition to British policy in Ireland making a direct appeal to Lloyd George to negotiate with the Irish Republicans by offering them dominion status.

The actions of the British forces were eroding the support of loyalists in southern Ireland for British rule. During the conflict members the British military and British RIC recruits never fully grasped who their enemy was. On the one hand they claimed that the IRA had little or no popular support and held sway over the local populace through terrorism. On the other, British troops purportedly charged with 'the restoration of order in Ireland' readily destroyed private homes and businesses, and killed Irish civilians on the assumption that most Irish civilians were in league with the enemy and should suffer communal punishment through reprisals to atone for IRA activity. This mindset was probably best expressed by Major Bernard-Law Montgomery:

> We were not … [in] close contact with the loyalists … we did not appreciate their suffering … Personally, my whole attention was given to defeating the rebels and it never bothered me a bit how many houses were burned. I think I regarded all civilians as "Shinners", and I never had any dealings with any of them.[124]

The fact that Montgomery was stationed in Cork, which had a very large and significant loyalist population, shows that the British forces' approach to the civilian population in the most active rebel areas was frequently ham-fisted and counter-productive. Many neutral civilians, supporters of Home Rule and even moderate Southern Unionists were driven to support militant republicanism as a result of indiscriminate reprisals carried out by the British forces. One unionist recalled that: 'With the rebels … you had known where you stood, whereas the Black and Tans … did not know a unionist from a

[123] Coleman, *Irish revolution*, p. 51.
[124] William Sheehan, *British voices*, p. 151.

republican and hardly bothered to make the distinction.'[125] 'The O'Conor Don', a prominent unionist landowner, reacted to reprisals by stating: 'Tell Mr. Lloyd George, if the Government don't turn these damned Black and Tans out of the country we'll soon all be damned republicans.'[126]

The prospect of continuing a long and costly war with the IRA and further major political embarrassment on both domestic and international fronts was partially responsible for convincing the British government that a military truce with the IRA and political negotiations with Sinn Féin were necessary.[127] Balfour's Unionist opposition to any settlement with the republicans weakened as the conflict wore on: 'Naturally we should wish to end this uphill, sordid, unchivalrous, loathsome conflict - we are sick of it!'[128] Churchill, who had previously championed the Black and Tans and defended their reprisals, was advising that it was: 'Of great public interest to get a respite in Ireland [because events there were damaging] the interests of this country all over the world; we are getting an odious reputation; poisoning our relations with the United States.'[129] Lloyd George later described the situation in Ireland as 'a feud that was costly and embarrassing to us, a feud that brought no credit, no honour and no strength'.[130]

The Empire, international commitments and British military difficulties in Ireland

The British Army was in crisis at the time, due to a shortage of manpower caused by Britain's international military commitments and an increased demand for troops to quell insurgencies throughout the Empire. The demand for manpower was unprecedented in peacetime never before had British military resources been stretched so thinly across such wide global commitments.[131] The end of the First World War was followed by a rapid reduction in the size of the British military. In the twelve months following the end of that conflict the strength of the British Army was reduced from 3,779,825 men to

[125] Brian Inglis, *West Briton* (London, 1962), p. 31.
[126] Bennett, *Black and Tans*, p. 70.
[127] Coleman, *Irish revolution*, p. 50.
[128] Middlemas (ed.) *Jones' Whitehall diary*, p. 66.
[129] Middlemas (ed.) *Jones' Whitehall diary*, p. 69.
[130] William G. Fitzgerald, *The voice of Ireland*: a *survey of the race & nation from all angles* (London, 1925), p. 5.
[131] Keith Jeffery, *The British Army and the crisis of empire 1918 - 1922* (Manchester, 1984), p. 52.

888,952.[132] By November 1920, the number of troops was reduced further to 369,710.[133] In 1922 the total strength of the British Army was just 218,000 men far lower than its pre-war strength in 1914.[134] Whilst the British armed forces were rapidly being reduced, the British Empire was enlarged following the Treaty of Versailles by the addition of former German and Ottoman territories including Palestine and Mesopotamia.[135] In addition to this, the British Army had committed troops to the occupation of the Rhineland and had intervened in the Russian Civil War.[136] In the autumn of 1920 the prospect of rebellion in Egypt resulted in a request for troops to be transferred there from Ireland. This was refused by General Macready on the grounds that any reduction in military strength in Ireland would ultimately result in a British withdrawal.[137] Following the outbreak of rebellion in Mesopotamia in July 1920 the War Office transferred 19 battalions (approx.. 13,300 troops) from the British-Indian Army to bolster the already 50,000 strong British-Indian garrison there.[138] The transfer of such a large number of troops was considered detrimental to security policy in India, but was deemed absolutely necessary because there were no regular British Army reinforcements available. An appeal was made to 'white' British dominions for additional troops but only New Zealand could offer assistance.[139] Although the situation had been at its worst in mid-1920 and improved slowly thereafter, the situation had still not been fully resolved at the time of the Truce. In mid-1921 the British Army still had 20,000 troops stationed in Egypt which was more than three times the number of pre-war troops that had been stationed there in 1914.[140] At the same time the military situation in Palestine began to worsen and was a further drain on limited British military resources.[141]

Social unrest in Britain also required soldiers as an auxiliary force in support of the police. British soldiers had been used to break the Welsh coal miners' strike, industrial unrest and demonstrations by unemployed ex-soldiers were common and fear

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[132] John Pimlott, *The Guinness history of the British Army* (Middlesex, 1993), p. 12.
[133] Monthly Returns of the distribution of the army, (National Archives UK, War Office Papers 73/1134). [Hereafter NAUK, WO]
[134] Pimlott, *History of the British Army*, p. 121.
[135] Jeffery, *Crisis of empire*, p. 1.
[136] William H. Kautt, *Ambushes and armour: the Irish rebellion 1919 - 1921* (Dublin 2010), p. 58.
[137] Jeffery, *Crisis of empire*, p. 28.
[138] Jeffery, *Crisis of empire*, p. 54.
[139] Jeffery, *Crisis of empire*, pp 59 - 60.
[140] Monthly Returns of the distribution of the army (NAUK, WO 73/114).
[141] Jeffery, *Crisis of empire*, pp 127 - 8.

of social upheaval within Britain was considered a real possibility until mid 1921. The availability of a reserve of troops to prevent upheaval on the home front was considered a priority for the Imperial General Staff with Sir Henry Wilson warning Churchill that 'we must secure our base first'.[142] In April of 1921, the threat posed by 'Sinn Feiners, Communists and other dangerous elements' at home was considered so great that the British cabinet sanctioned the transfer of eight battalions (approx 5,600 troops) from operations in Upper Silesia, Malta and Egypt to bolster the level of troops in Britain.[143] In an attempt to address the shortage of troops the age of enlistment was reduced from 18 to 17 years, but the standard of recruits this measure netted was considerably poorer and did not improve a critical shortage in troops with technical skills including wireless operators, motor cyclists, telegraphists and drivers.[144] In July 1920 General Macready complained that 'many [of the soldiers stationed in Ireland] were young and untrained, and if the strain were doubled you would get very near the danger limit.'[145] The shortage of British reinforcements resulted in the deployment of 800 Royal Navy Marines to garrison Irish coastguard stations in May 1920. This was indicative of the shortage of manpower as it was an unprecedented development for naval troops to be committed to on-shore military operations. As the situation deteriorated, the RIC was increasingly used in this role and in June 1921 further two battalions of Royal Marines were trained for deployment in Ireland.[146]

By the summer of 1921 the military situation in Ireland was a huge drain on Britain's increasingly limited military resources which were oversubscribed by global demands for reinforcements. There was always the very real possibility that the longer the IRA's military campaign continued the greater prospect that another, similar, insurrection could erupt in India, Egypt or elsewhere for which insufficient troops would be available.[147] Just as this crisis passed, Sir Henry Wilson commented:

> We have definite evidence of a worldwide conspiracy fomented by all the elements most hostile to British interests - Sinn Feiners and Socialists at our own doors, Russian Bolsheviks, Turkish and Egyptian nationalists and Indian

[142] Jeffery, *Crisis of empire*, p. 12.
[143] Cabinet Papers (NAUK, CAB 23/26/17 - 21); Jeffery, *British Army*, p. 29.
[144] Jeffery, *Crisis of empire*, p. 16.
[145] Middlemas (ed.) *Jones' Whitehall diary*, p. 27.
[146] Cabinet Papers (NAUK, CAB 23/26/47 - 21).
[147] Keith Jeffery, *Crisis of empire*, p. 158.

> seditionists. Up to the present time we have been lucky in not having experienced trouble in more than one theatre at the same time.[148]

Apart from the shortage of manpower, the British forces in Ireland were also beset by a rapid decline in morale. Figures for 1920 and 1921 show that 5 percent of the RIC's total strength (including members of the Auxiliary Division and Black and Tans) had been killed and a further 8 percent wounded in IRA attacks. The conditions of the conflict and the lack of any respite for members of the RIC had a devastating effect on the forces morale. A strong indicator of this was the rapidly increasing rate of suicide amongst members of the force. Prior to the War of Independence, suicide by members of the force was a relatively unknown phenomenon. By 1920 the rate of suicide within the RIC had reached 36.36 per 100,000 compared to an average rate of suicide amongst the civilian population in Britain and Ireland at the time of 5.45 per 100,000. The following year the RIC suicide rate climbed to 88.88 per 100,000. This was a significant increase on an already high rate. Kautt has noted that this is an indicator that the physchological stresses on the RIC during the War of Independence were far greater than those on British military units on the Northwestern Frontier or in Iraq in the same period which had a lower suicide rate.[149] The RIC district inspector for Lurgan, Armagh which was then one of the least disturbed counties reported in January 1921: 'I submit that regular warfare would be less trying than the condition of affairs that prevails at present.'[150]

The situation was little better for British soldiers stationed in Ireland who experienced social isolation, confinement to barracks, low morale and the stresses resulting from the guerrilla conflict. For example, at least four British soldiers stationed in Clare committed suicide. The real figure may be higher as these suicides were euphemistically referred to in the press as 'accidental shootings'.[151] Murder by fellow comrades was not unknown as one Royal Marine stationed in the county was murdered by a comrade at Ballyvaughan Coastguard Station.[152] The rate of desertion amongst

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[148] Memorandum by General Staff, 20 January 1922 (NAUK, CAB 24/132 C.P. 3619).

[149] William Kautt, 'Studying the Irish revolution as military history: ambushes and armour' in *The Irish Sword* Vol. XXVII, No. 108 p. 254.

[150] Application for a bonus for District Inspectors: DI Ryan, Lurgan, County Armagh, 13 January 1921 (NAUK: PRO T 351 / 81).

[151] Private Thomas Sibthorpe, Private John Connelly, Private David L. Hamilton and Private Charles Dailly. Private Dailly's death was reported in the *Nenagh Guardian* on 4 December 1920 as an 'accidental killing' even though he had shot himself through the mouth with a rifle; www.cairogang.com/soldiers-killed/yates/yates.html (accessed 17 August 2014).

[152] www.cairogang.com/soldiers-killed/yates/yates.html (accessed 17 August 2014).

British troops stationed in Ireland is a further indication of just how low their morale was. By 1921 the number of desertions by British soldiers in Ireland (Table 1 - below) was up to seven times greater than their counterparts in Britain.

Table 1 -

Number of British soldiers who deserted in Ireland and Britain, by month, January to July 1921[153]

Month	Total number of deserters	Total number of deserters in Ireland	Total number of deserters in Britain
January 1921	70	43	27
February 1921	56	45	11
March 1921	60	53	7
April 1921	79	61	18
May 1921	74	57	17
June 1921	Unavailable	Unavailable	unavailable
July 1921	56	48	8

By the summer of 1921 Macready was aware of the damage to the morale of British soldiers in Ireland and warned that the stresses on all ranks was 'incomparably greater than … in time of actual war', resulting in a detrimental effect on British military capability in Ireland.[154]

Stagnation of the military conflict, and the impetus for a Truce

Initially the British authorities had held an optimistic view of the military situation in Ireland based on reports that IRA activity was confined to a few counties, the perception that this was manageable and that it was only a matter of time before the British forces restored order. In May 1920 Sir Hamar Greenwood dismissed the IRA as a small band of 'Thugs' hired by Michael Collins with funds from Irish America to cause trouble in Cork, Dublin and Limerick.[155] When the British cabinet sanctioned martial law in Cork, Kerry,

[153] Monthly reports on desertion (NAUK, WO 35 / 172).
[154] Cabinet Papers (NAUK, CAB 24/123 C.P. 2965).
[155] Middlemas (ed.) *Jones' Whitehall diary*, p.17.

Limerick and Tipperary, Lloyd George assured his cabinet colleagues that: 'There have been twelve counties in Ireland in which there has been no murder.'[156] Hamar Greenwood felt confident enough to tell the British cabinet that the IRA in Cork, Galway and Tipperary had fled to the hills in desperation and that most of Ireland was unaffected by violence.[157] As late as April 1921 General Macready advised members of the British cabinet that 'the situation was bad at the moment because the desperate men were being driven into the hills' but British forces would regain control of the situation thereafter. The constant reassurances from senior British officers that the pacification of Ireland was imminent became increasingly hollow as their deadlines for British military victory were constantly breached. Consequently, the British cabinet became increasingly sceptical of such assurances by the summer of 1921.[158] In preparation for the imposition of Crown Colony Government and martial law throughout southern Ireland, the total strength of the British forces in the country was increased by about one-third through the deployment of an additional seventeen infantry battalions between 14 June and 7 July.[159] These reinforcements brought the total strength of British forces in Ireland to approximately 80,000 military, including Royal Flying Corps and Royal Marines, and 15,000 police, including regular RIC, DMP, Black and Tans and members if the RIC Auxiliary Division.

Even with this military surge, the assurances of the British government's military advisors that the British forces were on the brink of victory were sounding increasingly hollow by the summer of 1921. Table 2 illustrates the increasing intensity of the IRA campaign throughout the conflict. This table clearly illustrates that the various military measures enacted by the British including the deployment of the Black and Tans and RIC Auxiliaries, the imposition of martial law, and the policies of executing captured republicans and official reprisals had failed to halt the intensification and spread of the IRA's military campaign. Between 21 January 1919 and 31 May 1921 the IRA had killed approximately 367 members of the various British police forces in Ireland including the Dublin Metropolitan police, regular Royal Irish Constabulary, Black and Tans, RIC

[156] Middlemas (ed.) *Jones' Whitehall diary*, p. 42
[157] Middlemas (ed.) *Jones' Whitehall diary*, p. 51.
[158] Middlemas (ed.) *Jones' Whitehall diary*, pp 54 - 5.
[159] Jeffery, *Crisis of empire*, p. 90.

Auxiliaries and Special Constabulary.[160] In the same period at least 147 members of the British Army, the Royal Marines and the Coastguard were also killed in Ireland.[161] The rate of attrition in the war was slowly increasing in favour of the IRA. In the first five months of 1921 the IRA killed 175 members of the RIC - a total almost equal to the annual figure of RIC fatalities for the year 1920.[162]

In the same period 84 members of the British Army, the British Secret Service, the Royal Marines and Coastguard were killed, far exceeding the annual total of 62 British troops killed in Ireland the previous year.[163] May of 1921 had seen the highest number of casualties inflicted on the British forces in the entire war with 55 members of the RIC and 28 British soldiers killed by the IRA that month alone.[164] The number of reported 'outrages' ie IRA ambushes, attacks on RIC Barracks, sabotage, arson attacks, agrarian violence, defiance of British proclamations etc rose continually. On 6 June Greenwood admitted that there was 'a very marked increase in rebel military activity throughout the whole country'.[165]

Although the IRA's Dublin Brigade was in difficulty, and the IRA nationally were suffering from a shortage of arms and ammunition, analysis of the military situation in the summer of 1921 (see Appendix 2) shows that, although a military stalemate had set in in some parts of the southwest, the IRA nationally were capable of continuing their military campaign for the foreseeable future.

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[160] Abbott gives a figure of 15 RIC fatalities in 1919, 178 in 1920, and 235 in 1921 prior to the Truce. Of the last figure 176 occurred before 1 June 1921. Whilst Abbot's research is the most authoritative published to date, his figures are not absolute. For example Abbot attributes the deaths of Constable John Kearney (died 15 May 1921) and Constable Joseph Bourke (died 30 June 1921) to the IRA when in fact both men were killed by other members of the RIC. I have adjusted Abbot's figures to exclude these two fatalities. Abbott, *Police casualties*, pp 48, 169, 272.

[161] http//www.cairogang.com/soldiers-killed/list-1921.html (accessed 17 August 2014).

[162] Abbott, *Police casualties*, p. 169. Although the Black and Tans and RIC Auxiliaries were "technical police" ie paramilitaries employed under special conditions rather than regular police, for the purposes of clarity they are included here in the RIC fatality figures as they were obstensibly members of that force. Ibid, p.69.

[163] http//www.cairogang.com/soldiers-killed/list-1921.html (accessed 17 August 2014).

[164] Abbott, *Police casualties*, p. 272; http;//www.cairogang.com/soldiers-killed/list-1921.html (accessed 17 August 2014).

[165] *Weekly Survey*, 6 June 1921.

Table 2 -

Number of British fatalities and reported IRA 'outrages' by month, January 1919 to June 1921[166]

Month	RIC & DMP fatalities:	British military fatalities:	Total reported 'outrages':
January 1919	**2**	**-**	**198**
February 1919	**-**	**-**	**285**
March 1919	**-**	**-**	**168**
April 1919	**1**	**-**	**258**
May 1919	**2**	**-**	**256**
June 1919	**1**	**-**	**250**
July 1919	**1**	**-**	**298**
August 1919	**2**	**-**	**349**
September 1919	**2**	**1**	**346**
October 1919	**2**	**-**	**353**
November 1919	**1**	**-**	**437**
December 1919	**1**	**-**	**483**
January 1920	**4**	**-**	**600**
February 1920	**2**	**1**	**659**
March 1920	**7**	**1**	**Figures unavailable**
April 1920	**12**	**1**	**Figures unavailable**
May 1920	**12**	**-**	**1400**
June 1920	**7**	**-**	**1180**
July 1920	**15**	**6**	**1760**
August 1920	**16**	**4**	**1324**
September 1920	**23**	**4**	**1283**
October 1920	**27**	**15**	**1422**
November 1920	**37**	**23**	**1335**
December 1920	**17**	**5**	**1483**
January 1921	**25**	**2**	**1234**
February 1921	**36**	**14**	**1283**
March 1921	**34**	**34**	**1698**
April 1921	**25**	**7**	**1867**
May 1921	**54**	**27**	**2188**
June 1921	**40**	**20**	**2256**

[166] The Chief Secretary's Office: Inspector General's Confidential Monthly Reports (NAUK, CO 904/108 - 115); Abbott, *Police casualties*, p. 7; http;//www.cairogang.com/soldiers-killed/list-1921.html (accessed 17 August 2014).

General Macready wrote to the British cabinet on 23 May 1921 stating: 'I am convinced that by October unless a peaceful solution has been reached, it will not be safe to ask the troops to continue there another winter under the conditions which obtained during the last.' His pessimism was shared by many of his fellow officers. Major General Douglas Wimberly of the Cameron Highlanders feared that a draconian suppression of the IRA's military campaign would only be a temporary victory and would not destroy the republican insurrection:

> The British government in July 1921 decided to treat and compromise with the rebel leaders. To my mind this was the only course open to them, for though no doubt we, in the Army, given the powers of life and death, and [an] official policy of ruthlessness, [we] could easily have quelled the actual active Sinn Féin revolt, by means of really stern measures backed by the British Government, I feel certain the discontent would merely have smouldered underground. It would have burst into flames as soon as we withdrew. The really brutal measures which Cumberland and his army took in Scotland in 1745, finally to crush the rising there, would never have been tolerated by public opinion in Britain in 1921![167]

Brigade Major Bernard Law Montgomery of the 17th Infantry Brigade was also convinced of the need for more draconian measures to secure victory but equally sceptical as Wimberly about political and public support for such measures and ultimately concluded that negotiation was necessary:

> My own view is that to win a war of this sort you need to be ruthless. Oliver Cromwell or the Germans would have settled it in a very short time. Nowadays public opinion precludes such methods, the nation would never allow it and the politicians would lose their job if they sanctioned it … if we had gone on we could probably have squashed the rebellion as a temporary measure, but it would have broken out again like an ulcer the moment we removed the troops. I think the rebels would probably have refused battles, and hidden away their arms etc. until we had gone. The only way therefore was to give them some form of self-government.[168]

Basil Thomson, head of the British Police Special Branch Irish Division warned the British government:

> It cannot be conscientiously said that any headway has been made against the I RA and there is a feeling among the people that Sinn Féin will win. This feeling is due to the increased prestige gained by Sinn Féin owing to its success in guerrilla warfare … The fear of reprisals is not so great now. The country folk who were opposed to the operations of the IRA in their localities do not now mind and although they are for the most part against the murders of individuals they are in favour of ambushes. They are beginning to be proud of the Irish heroes who have gained such victories over the Crown forces in spite of all the restrictions imposed by martial law.[169]

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[167] Sheehan, *British voices*, p. 192.
[168] B. L. Montgomery to Lt. General A. C. Percival 14 October 1923, quoted in Sheehan, *British voices*, pp 151 - 2.
[169] Home Office report on revolutionary organisations in the UK, 19 May 1921, (NAUK, CP 2952).

Whilst Lloyd George put on a brave front declaring to the House of Commons on 21 June that 'the British would continue the war, whatever sacrifice, to prevent Irish independence.'[170] However, the British were not any closer to defeating the IRA than they had been a year previously. In effect the IRA were winning the war, because to them, their survival meant success. Henry Kissinger stated that the cardinal maxim of guerrilla war was that: 'The guerrilla wins if he does not lose. The conventional army loses if it does not win.'[171] As long as the IRA existed, the British Government's administration could not function in Ireland. By the same measure the British forces in Ireland were effectively losing the war because their mission was to restore peaceful conditions in Ireland under British rule. This was only possible through the complete destruction of the IRA. Therefore the war has to be regarded to an extent as a victory for the Irish Republicans because of Britain's inability to destroy the IRA after two and a half years of conflict. By July 1921 the British government had little option but to broker a meaningful truce to end the conflict as a first step towards negotiating a political agreement with Sinn Féin because they were not in a position to impose a settlement.

(IV) *The final negotiation of the Truce, July 1921*

During this period the British authorities in Dublin found it difficult, due to the military situation, to keep their channels of communication with Sinn Féin open. The chief problem they faced was that they were unable to make direct contact with de Valera and instead had to draw conclusions based on interviews he gave to the international press.[172] Tom Casement, brother of the republican leader Roger Casement executed in 1916 was a personal friend of the South African Prime Minister, and former Boer rebel, Jan Smuts. Casement met de Valera in Dublin on 14 June 1921 and succeeded in putting him and Smuts in direct contact.[173] De Valera told the South African premier that he was willing to negotiate with the British but stressed the importance of a military truce between the

[170] Middlemas (ed.) *Jones' Whitehall diary*, p. 80.
[171] *Foreign Affairs,* Vol. 48, No. 2, January 1969, p. 214.
[172] Hopkinson, *War of Independence*, pp 194 - 5.
[173] Tom Casement Diary (University College Dublin, de Valera Papers 1321). [Hereafter UCDA, DeVP]

IRA and British forces before any negotiations could begin.[174] Smuts wrote to Lloyd George on 14 June describing the situation in Ireland as 'an unmeasured calamity' for the British Empire. He urged Lloyd George to begin negotiations, pointing out that the establishment of the Northern Ireland parliament effectively copper-fastened partition and would remove this thorny issue from any discussions. Finally, Smuts proposed that the King's speech at the opening of the Northern Ireland parliament should be used to extend an olive branch to the republicans.[175]

The Irish Situation Committee met on 15 June and was given a detailed report by Macready on the military measures that would be necessary to pacify Ireland if political agreement had not been reached by the mid July deadline, when Crown Colony Government was due to be imposed. Under Macready's proposals any damage to British government property would be recovered through a levy on the surrounding district. All privately owned motor transport was to be seized, all ports would be closed, compulsory identification cards were to be introduced, membership of Dáil Éireann, the IRA and IRB were to be considered treason punishable by death, and those caught with arms or ammunition would be tried by courts martial and hanged. Anyone caught using arms against the British forces would be summarily executed without trial. The general estimated that another twenty battalions of British troops would be needed to restore British authority, and as many as a hundred republicans a week might have to be executed. Macready could only warn that if these conditions were imposed it might not guarantee the defeat of the IRA and could 'land this country deeper in the mire' warning 'Anything short of these extreme measures the present situation might go on for such time that political pressures or political change will cause us to abandon the country and we shall be beaten.' Macready surmised the situation as 'It must be all out or another policy'.[176] The British government now faced a deadline of mid-July by which time they either had to enforce 'the restoration of order in Ireland' with unprecedented draconian military measures or begin political negotiations' with Sinn Féin which they knew would be conditional upon a formal military truce with the IRA.[177] Macready was privately

[174] Casement Diary (UCDA, DeVP 1321).
[175] Hopkinson, *War of Independence*, p. 195.
[176] Middlemas (ed.) *Jones' Whitehall diary*, p. 76.
[177] Hopkinson, *War of Independence*, p. 194.

willing to admit that a negotiated end to the conflict was the only viable option. On 20 June 1921 he wrote to Lloyd George's secretary, Frances Stevenson, stating that he was not convinced that draconian measures would succeed in quashing the insurrection or that the British public were willing to support the proposed draconian measures.

> There are, of course, one or two wild people about who still hold the absurd idea that if you go on killing long enough peace will ensue. I do not believe it for one moment, but I do believe that the more people that are killed, the more difficult will be the final solution, unless while killing is going on a body of opinion is growing up imbued with a strong idea that the Government have made a generous and definite offer to Ireland.[178]

Acting on the suggestion of Smuts and several influential figures in Britain, King George V used his speech at the opening of the Northern parliament to call for peace 'Few things are more earnestly desired in the English-speaking world than a satisfactory solution of the age-long Irish problems which for generations embarrassed our forefathers, as they now weigh heavily upon us … I appeal to all Irishmen to stretch out the hand of forbearance and conciliation.'[179] Privately the King also urged the British cabinet to capitalise on the favourable atmosphere generated by the speech to begin negotiations with Sinn Féin.[180] By coincidence, on same date that the King addressed the opening of the Northern Ireland parliament the British military arrested de Valera in Dublin. When Lloyd George learned of de Valera's arrest, he ordered his immediate release.[181] De Valera was then regarded by the British prime minister as a pragmatist and one of the 'moderates' within Sinn Féin who could be reasoned with - whereas Collins was believed to be a fanatical gunman and fundamentalist republican who would not agree to negotiations.[182] The day after his release, Lloyd George wrote to de Valera and Craig to attend negotiations in London. Lord Midleton who debated the necessity for a truce with Lloyd George a short time later, recalled that even at this late stage the British Government were anxious to avoid a formal military truce with the IRA and their primary objective was to get de Valera to agree to talks hoping that an informal cessation of

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[178] Macready to Miss F. Stevenson, 20 June 1921, (PA, LGP LG/F/36/2/19).

[179] These included the editor of *The Times*: Wickham Steed, Lloyd George's private secretary: Sir Edward Grigg, the King's private secretary Lord Stanfordham and the editor of The Round Table & Secretary of the British delegation at the Irish Conference: Lionel Curtis. Middlemas (ed.) *Jones' Whitehall diary*, p. 76.

[180] Middlemas (ed.) *Jones' Whitehall diary*, pp 78 - 9.

[181] Sheehan, *British voices*, p. 91.

[182] Middlemas (ed.) *Jones' Whitehall diary*, p. 60.

military activities would come as a result of this.[183]

Craig refused Lloyd George's invitation to the London conference. De Valera replied to Lloyd George on 28 June stating that he had been in consultation with 'the principal representatives of our nation as are available' (i.e. the Sinn Féin TDs and IRA leaders who were not in prison) and that they were eager to negotiate a lasting peace. However de Valera stressed that he wanted to meet with Unionist leaders in Dublin before giving a final formal acceptance to the invitation. De Valera then wrote to Craig and four of the Southern Unionists; Lord Midleton, Sir Maurice Woods, Sir Robert Dockrell and Andrew Jameson, inviting them to a conference in Dublin.[184] Tom Casement and Smut's private secretary arrived in Dublin to continue discussions with de Valera and Casement suggested to Cope that, as a sign of good faith the British authorities should released five Sinn Féin TDs, Arthur Griffith, Eoin MacNeill, Michael Staines, Eamon Duggan and Robert Barton, from prison to enable them to take part in the negotiations.[185] The release of these five was an important step given that Griffith, MacNeill and Staines had all been party to the previous attempts in December 1920 to negotiate a ceasefire, and that Duggan and Barton, as well as being TDs, were also senior IRA officers with Duggan in particular having worked closely with Michael Collins.[186]

Craig refused de Valera's invitation to talks in Dublin but the four Southern Unionist leaders met with him and Arthur Griffith at the Mansion House on 4 July. De Valera implored the Unionists to persuade Craig to come to Dublin to engage in negotiations but they replied that they could not convince him to attend. De Valera agreed in principle with the Unionists' suggestion that he should go to London and begin negotiations with Lloyd George in spite of Craig's absence, but he stressed the need for a truce before he would commit to talks, adding that he 'did not believe negotiations could well go forward while the two sides were actively engaged in war'.[187] The Southern Unionists agreed with de Valera on the need for an armistice and undertook to secure an offer of truce from the British Government if de Valera would ensure that any arrangements would be observed by the IRA. At Jameson's suggestion Lord Midleton

[183] Earl of Midleton Papers (NAUK, PRO/30/67/45/2652).
[184] Dáil Éireann official correspondence relating to the peace negotiations (NAI, BMH, CD 120/3).
[185] Coogan, *Michael Collins*, p. 215.
[186] Valiulis, *Portrait of a revolutionary*, p. 79.
[187] Midleton Papers, (NAUK PRO/30/67/45/2650).

undertook to travel to London to secure Lloyd George's support for a truce and the conference was adjourned for four days pending his response. Midleton reported to Lloyd George:

> Mr. de Valera was willing to accept the Prime Ministers proposal … Mr. de Valera [also] recognises the necessity of stopping all fighting and action likely to produce feeling between the contending parties during the progress of negotiations. He is willing to sign the formula adopted last December if the Government are willing to do the same.[188]

Midleton's mention of 'the formula adopted last December' is a reference to the terms agreed with Archbishop Clune in December 1920 whereby a formal, public and bilateral truce would be implemented between the IRA and the British forces prior to the start of political negotiations; that members of the IRA, Dáil Éireann and Sinn Féin would not be subject to arrest or execution during a truce and that a surrender of IRA arms was not a precondition of such an arrangement. The truce arrangements agreed in July 1921 were remarkably similar to these.

Midleton returned to Dublin and met with de Valera, Griffith, Barton and Duggan and the three other Southern Unionists.[189] He reported that he had met with 'some difficulty' in getting Lloyd George to agree to a formal truce between the IRA and the British forces but that the prime minister was willing to agree to a formal truce if it were approved by the British military authorities in Ireland.[190] On receipt of this news the conference adjourned at 1:00pm so that the Southern Unionists could approach General Macready to secure his approval for a formal truce. The Unionist delegation reached Macready and furnished him with a letter from Lloyd George suggesting that 'as soon as we hear that Mr. de Valera is prepared to enter into conference with the British Government and cease all acts of violence we should give instructions to the troops and to the police to suspend active operations against those who are engaged in this unfortunate conflict.'[191]

Macready agreed to draft truce terms and submitted these to the Mansion House conference when it reconvened at 4:00pm that evening. Macready then contacted Cope,

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[188] Midleton Papers, (NAUK PRO/30/67/45/2657).
[189] Valiulis, *Portrait of a revolutionary*, p. 79.
[190] Midleton Papers, (NAUK, PRO/30/67/45/2652).
[191] Macready, *Annals*, ii, pps. 571 - 7.

General Boyd, commanding officer of the British military in the Dublin District, General Tudor, as head of the RIC, all of whom agreed to the Truce.[192] At 5:30pm Midleton again contacted Macready asking if he would agree to minor changes to the terms suggested by de Valera. In response to this message Macready departed for the Mansion House, and there announced his approval of a formal truce to the peace conference there. Final agreement on the terms of the Truce were agreed about 8:00pm on Friday 8 July and Macready returned to the Royal Hospital in Kilmainham, and telephoned the result to Lloyd George in Downing Street.

The question of IRA belligerency

The Truce terms secured by the IRA in July 1921 were far more favourable than those which had been offered by the British in December 1920 and represented a significant gain for the Irish Republicans.[193] A number of concessions had been forced from the British which in effect conceded belligerent status upon the IRA. Initially the British had opposed any formal public armistice with the republicans. In December 1920 they had proposed the public announcement of an IRA ceasefire which would be followed by a private informal British undertaking to follow suit. The Anglo-Irish Truce was a formal public agreement between the IRA leadership and the British military command in Ireland. The republicans had refused to enter negotiations without first securing a bilateral ceasefire, they were adamant in rejecting anything short of a formal public Truce. The demand for a surrender of IRA arms, which had proved the main stumbling block to agreeing a ceasefire in December 1920 was dropped by the British, as was their insistence that there could be no amnesty for senior IRA officers and that IRA prisoners could be executed during the truce period. The release of senior republican leaders from prison to facilitate the Truce negotiations and the direct involvement of IRA officers in its final agreement shows just how much the British had conceded in six months.

Had the IRA agreed to halt their military campaign on such unfavourable terms as

[192] Macready, *Annals*, ii, pps. 571 - 7.
[193] See Appendix 2.

dictated by the British in December 1920 it would have been tantamount to surrender and an admission of British victory. In late 1920 the British Government felt confident in demanding such punitive terms because of the assurances from senior British military officers. In December the British cabinet was assured by it's military advisors that 'the forces of the Crown had at last definitely established the upper hand' and was consequently told that 'Sinn Fein was now rapidly being discredited in Ireland'.[194] Greenwood was so confident of victory that he told General Boyd, the General Officer Commanding the Dublin District, that the conflict would be over by February 1921.[195] Emboldened by the prospect of victory, Greenwood wrote to Lloyd George reporting: 'The SF [Sinn Féin] Cause and organisation is breaking up. Clune and everyone else admits this … there is no need of hurry in settlement. We can in due course and on our own and fair terms settle this Irish Question for good.'[196] However the failure of the British forces to defeat the IRA and restore order in Ireland, and the continued escalation of the IRA campaign in the spring and summer of 1921, forced them to reach a more generous agreement with the IRA which was negotiating from a position of relative strength. Irish Republicans recognised this as a victory and was eager to stress the concessions they had forced from the British. Sinn Féin writer P. S. O'Hegarty recalled:

> To grasp the full magnitude of it, one only has to compare the terms of the Irish Truce with the terms of the Armistice which Germany accepted at the close of the Great War. She had to surrender her arms, surrender territory, and submit to many humiliations. She was treated as a vanquished enemy. Whereas we, on the other hand, were treated as England's equal, and agreed to no conditions for our Volunteers which England did not also agree to for her army.[197]

Ultimately by continuing their military campaign the republicans had secured favourable terms which applied equally to their opponents. This was reflected in the first editorial of the IRA newspaper *An t-Óglach*, published after the Truce: 'The guns are silent - but they remain in the hands of the Irish Volunteers. From the military point of view we remain exactly where we were; we have lost no advantage.'[198]

The British were conscious that they had ceded a propaganda victory to the

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[194] Middlemas (ed.) *Jones' Whitehall diary*, p. 43.
[195] Sheehan, *British voices*, p. 90.
[196] Greenwood to Lloyd George, (PA, LGP/ F/19/2/31).
[197] O'Hegarty, *Victory of Sinn Féin*, p. 44.
[198] *An t-Óglach*, 22 July 1921.

republicans by agreeing a public military agreement with the IRA. They attempted to downplay the significance of the Truce retrospectively. Reflecting their earlier hesitation to come to a formal agreement with the IRA the British made a conscious effort to avoid references to the Truce as a 'truce', and where the word was used in *The record of the rebellion in Ireland* it was usually only used in inverted commas. The British preferred more ambiguous terms such as 'the Agreement' or 'the Suspension of Activities' to describe the event. One British commander, Colonel Maxwell Scott, was at pains to explain that the 'words "truce" and "armistice" had no application in the situation where one side [the IRA] had no belligerent rights'.[199] Another, Major-General Sir Hugh Jeudwine, wrote to his subordinate officers proscribing the use of the term 'Truce':

> The word "Truce" has been applied to this Agreement and the situation which follows from it. This word is generally understood to be applicable to an armistice between recognised belligerents. It is preferable, therefore, that it should not be used by us in this instance, but that the statement of terms should be referred to as the "Agreement" and its effects as a "suspension of activities".[200]

In his biography Macready took a slightly different approach. Whilst he was willing to refer to 'the Truce' he claimed incorrectly that it had a limited geographical scope and that its terms did not apply in Northern Ireland. 'As time went on it was claimed by Sinn Féin that Ulster was included in the terms of the truce, an absurd insinuation, but in keeping with the vanity and native inaccuracy of the Southern Irish.'[201] These attempts to undermine the status of both the Truce and the IRA as participants can be best understood as the actions of military officers who guarded their status jealously, held a supremacist world view and were used to expressing contempt for their adversaries who were dismissed as 'savages'. Their effort to demean the Truce was a statement against both their enemies and their political leaders whom they felt had failed them.[202]

However the protestations of senior British officers counted for little when compared to the fact that the Truce had been reported to the League of Nations by the British government. This action gave *de facto*, and probably also *de jure*, legitimacy to the IRA as a belligerent army because one army can only conduct a formal agreement

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[199] William H. Kautt, *Ground truths: British Army operations in the Irish War of Independence* (Dublin, 2014), pp 5 - 6.
[200] *The record of the rebellion*, Volume IV '5th Division History', Appendix XXI 'Interpretation of the "Agreement" of 11th July 1921' by GOC 5th Division', p.120.
[201] Macready, *Annals*, ii, p. 583.
[202] Kautt, *Ground truths*, p. 6; Keane, *Massacre in West Cork*, pp 30 - 1.

with an equal counterpart.[203] Commenting on the situation in Ireland, Lloyd George famously declared 'You don't declare war on rebels'. Following this logic he could equally have proclaimed that: 'You don't agree peace with a Murder Gang.' References to the 'murder gang' soon evaporated and the RIC's *Weekly Summary* news sheet published on the morning of the Truce committed a serious faux-pas by referring to the IRA as 'the Irish Army'.[204] The status of the Truce as a formal armistice between equals was a significant propaganda victory for Irish Republicans.

Knowledge of the British and Irish combatants that a Truce was imminent

Any analysis of the impact that the announcement of the Truce had on the final days of the military campaigns of the IRA and British forces has to first establish when combatants throughout Ireland learned that an armistice was imminent. This is crucial in assessing whether the announcement of the Truce on 8 July led to either a flurry of IRA attacks on their civilian opponents and British forces, or if these attacks were entirely coincidental and would have taken place regardless. Tomás Kenny has speculated that the British forces in Galway were aware that the Truce was imminent as early as May 1921. Kenny cited the lack of British reprisals after the Ballyturin House Ambush on 15 May 1921 during which an RIC district inspector and two British Army officers were killed, as evidence of this commenting: 'Strangely given the relatively high ranking of the Army and RIC men, there was no retaliation, perhaps indicating the perception that a truce was not far away.'[205] However the ambush was followed by widespread British reprisals including the killing of an RIC constable who had republican sympathies and the destruction of several houses and a local business.[206] In fact, the rank and file of the British forces like their opponents in the IRA, had little or no forewarning that an armistice was imminent. Some senior British officers in Dublin may have been aware of political developments and contact between the British government and the republicans

[203] Kautt, *Ground truths*, p. 179.
[204] *Weekly Summary*, 11 July 1921.
[205] Tomás Kenny, *Galway: politics and society 1910 - 23* (Dublin, 2011), p. 35.
[206] Patrick Glynn, (NAI, BMH, WS 1033 p. 17); Daniel Ryan, (NAI, BMH, WS 1007, p. 21) ; Joseph Stanford, (NAI, BMH, WS 1334, p. 48).

but there was no guarantee that these would result in any military or political arrangements. As Charles Townshend has demonstrated: 'From the [British] military standpoint, an armistice during the summer season still represented the height of unwisdom. A truce was not therefore a foregone conclusion when de Valera opened a Dáil conference on 5 July.'[207] General Macready's memoirs express the doubt and uncertainty which existed even amongst the highest echelons in the British forces over whether a truce could be agreed saying: 'I had no official information on the subject, nor did I place much faith in it in view of the repeated failures of such conferences in the past.'[208]

Despite the modern radio and telegraph communications available to the British forces, it took some time for news of the Truce to reach their more isolated outposts. This is unsurprising given the rate at which news of the Armistice spread amongst Allied units on the Western Front on 11 November 1918. The Allied communication network during the First World War would have been more reliable and subject to less enemy interference than that used by the British forces in Ireland in 1921. Yet some Allied units on the Western Front did not receive a ceasefire order until 4:15pm on 11 November - over five hours after the ceasefire came into effect.[209] In other theatres of that conflict it took even longer to spread news of the ceasefire. Some combatants in German East Africa did not learn about the armistice in Europe until 25 November, a full two weeks after the war had officially ended.[210] Their experience of the First World War, and the widespread republican disruption of the British communications network in Ireland, may therefore have been as important considerations as the official rational (that the implementation of the Truce was delayed to get the word to isolated IRA units) for the three day delay between the time the Truce was announced and the ceasefire implemented. The headquarters of the British 5th Division received notification of the Truce by telephone at 10:30pm on Friday 8 July, over seven hours after it had been agreed.[211] Other British units received even less notice of the Truce. Members of the Oxford and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry learned of the Truce whilst on manoeuvers

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[207] Townshend, *British campaign in Ireland*, p. 197.
[208] Macready, *Annals*, ii, p. 571 - 7.
[209] Joseph E. Perisco, *11th month 11th day 11th hour, Armistice Day 1918, World War 1 and its violent climax* (London, 2005), p. 360.
[210] Edward Paice, *Tip & run: The untold tragedy of the Great War in Africa* (London, 2007), p. 387.
[211] William Sheehan *Hearts & mines, The British 5th Division, Ireland 1920 - 1922* (Cork, 2009), p.103.

in Tipperary the following day.'[212] Likewise Douglas V. Duff, a Black and Tan stationed in Galway city only received thirty six hours' notice of the Truce. After 10:00pm on the 9 July, Duff and his comrades left Galway by boat to assist the Royal Marine garrison at Ballyvaughan Coastguard station which was under attack.[213] The Black and Tans from Galway first learned of the Truce from a wounded Royal Marine who informed them that a ceasefire had been agreed: 'one of the wounded Marines told us they had received a wireless message that a truce had been arranged between the Government and Sinn Féin to become operative within forty eight hours. We could not believe it'.[214] The detachment of the Buffs Regiment, stationed at Castletownroche, Cork, received news of the Truce about the same time by carrier pigeon.[215]

The official history of the British Army's 5th Division indicates that their IRA opponents were generally unaware that an armistice was imminent and states that the reason for the three day delay in implementing the agreement was 'in order to give the rebel leaders time to get instructions out to their own people.'[216] Rumours of a ceasefire had been circulating within the ranks of the Dublin IRA for some time, but by July 1921 these were given little credence. Gossip and press speculation about a possible truce had become commonplace since the failed peace negotiations in the winter of 1920. IRA Volunteer Todd Andrews recalled hearing rumours of a ceasefire as early as 'Bloody Sunday' in November 1920 and dismissed these as a British ploy to weaken IRA morale because 'No one wants to risk death if peace is in sight.'[217] Although Sean Prendergast, a member of the 1st Battalion of the IRA's Dublin Brigade, suspected in early July 1921 that 'something was going on behind the scenes, he did not expect an end to the conflict in the immediate future and described the announcement of the Truce as 'a bolt from the Blue.'[218] James Fulham, a member of the 4th Battalion, was equally taken by surprise, 'We had no idea then that there was a Truce near. I don't think any Volunteers had any idea of a Truce at this time.'[219] Joseph O'Connor, Commandant of the 3rd Battalion of the

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[212] 'The 52nd in Ireland' in *Regimental Chronicle 1921*, (Soldiers of Oxfordshire Trust Archives).
[213] Summary of outrages reported by the Police July 1921 (NAUK CO 904 / 146).
[214] Douglas V. Duff, *Sword for hire: the saga of a modern free-companion* (London, 1934), pp 83 - 4.
[215] Castletownroche Detachment Log, 9 July 1921 (The National Army Museum). [Hereafter TNAM]
[216] Sheehan, *Hearts & mines*, p. 104.
[217] C. S. Andrews, *Dublin made me: an autobiography* (Cork, 1979), p.154.
[218] Sean Prendergast (NAI, BMH, WS 755, pp 536 - 7).
[219] James Fulham (NAI, BMH, WS 630, pp 23 - 4).

IRA's Dublin Brigade recalled that although 'various peace rumours … were circulated through the city' he did not receive official notification of the Truce from IRA GHQ until a few hours after it had been formally agreed and had continued planning attacks on the British forces up until that time in ignorance of political developments.[220] Collins was aware of the speculation within the republican ranks concerning an armistice and felt it was damaging morale. He made a deliberate decision to keep the IRA rank and file in the dark and sent a curt message to members of the Dublin Brigade ordering them to 'Stop talking and get on with the work.'[221]

Some provincial IRA units had read press reports suggesting that a truce was being arranged but dismissed these as baseless. Tom Barry, the leader of the 3rd Cork Brigade's Flying Column, stated that he had been hearing peace rumours for so long that he put no stock in them, and was taken completely by surprise when the Truce was finally announced:

> I was standing on a roadside in west Cork and somebody came along and said, "Theres a truce with the British." I'd been hearing rumours about this for the past twelve months and I didn't believe it, but this fellow went off and got a newspaper which said that de Valera was meeting Macready, The British Commander in Chief, so I had to believe it then.[222]

IRA Volunteer Paddy Donoughue from Ballyvourney was equally taken aback by the announcement of the ceasefire: 'Peace Talk - there was quite a lot … no one of us ever recognised a peace or thought that it would come until [the news broke] two days before the Truce happened.'[223] Volunteer James Comerford in Kilkenny had a similar experience: 'The newspapers during recent days had been writing about a possible Truce. But no one expected a Truce to take place in the year of 1921.'[224] Tim O'Connor of the IRA's East Connemara Brigade was so loathe to believe the stories he had heard about a possible ceasefire that he accused the IRA courier who had brought him a despatch announcing the ceasefire of being an agent provocateur and threatened to have him shot if

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[220] Joseph O'Connor (NAI, BMH, WS 487, pp 58 - 9).
[221] Prendergast (NAI, BMH, WS 755, pp 536 - 7).
[222] Tom Barry in K. Griffith & T. E. O'Grady (eds), *Curious journey: an oral history of Ireland's unfinished revolution* (London, 1982), p. 238.
[223] Paddy Donoughue, (UCDA, EOMN, P17b/112).
[224] James J. Comerford, *My Kilkenny IRA days 1916 - 1922* (Kilkenny, 1980), p. 817.

it were a trick.[225] Members of the Tipperary No. 3 Brigade IRA's flying column thought the IRA officer who brought them the news was playing a joke.[226] Members of the brigade headquarters staff were equally shocked by the sudden end to the conflict, and Seamus Babington, the Brigade Engineer, stated that the suggestion that the British forces would agree a Truce with the IRA was completely inconceivable at the time: 'No one could believe it, for, at the time, no one saw or expected anything but death and burning ... But, far and beyond our wildest hopes and dreams, like children's imagination, or the peaks of a Walt Disney imagination, the Truce was declared'.[227]

The available evidence from contemporary British documents and from the personal accounts of veterans from the British forces and the IRA indicates that rank and file combatants on both sides had no prior knowledge or indication that a ceasefire was imminent before the Truce was officially announced at 5:30pm on 8 July. Despite the modern and efficient communications networks used by the British forces (including telephone, telegraph, radio and airmail), some of their units were not made aware that the Truce had been agreed until the night of 9 July. However, all British troops would have been made aware of the Truce by 10 July. By contrast, news of the agreement spread much slower through the IRA's communication network which was reliant on couriers travelling with written despatches. IRA volunteers in Dublin city would have been the first to learn of the Truce on the evening of the 8 and morning of the 9 July. Many of their counterparts in provincial areas only learned of the agreement on the evening of Sunday 10 July, or early on the morning of Monday 11 July. In some cases IRA units received official despatches informing them of the Truce but more often they discovered that the Truce had been agreed by means of press reports. For example, Michael Brennan, commander of the IRA's 1st Western Division, received the despatch from IRA Headquarters sometime 'on the 9th or 10th of July.'[228] Brennan immediately sent copies of the despatch to the units under his command throughout Clare and southeast Galway. However some of the IRA flying columns under Brennan's command did not learn about

[225] Michael Ó Droighnáin (NAI, BMH, WS 1718, p. 37).
[226] Patrick Butler (NAI, BMH, WS 1187, p. 20).
[227] Babington (NAI, BMH, WS 1595, pp 149 - 150).
[228] Brennan, *War in Clare*, p. 104.

the Truce until as late as 3:00pm on Sunday 10 July.[229]

The IRA's three Cork brigades, which had been the most active and effective republican military units during the conflict, received no advance notice of the Truce. Senior officers in the Cork No. 1 Brigade IRA knew nothing of the Truce until after it had been signed.[230] The Adjutant of the IRA's Bantry Battalion discovered that the Truce was imminent from press reports in the *Cork Examiner* newspaper on Saturday 9 July.[231] Tom Barry claimed that all the senior IRA officers in Cork learned about the Truce in the same way and: 'No Divisional or brigade officer of the IRA [in Cork] knew anything about the negotiations of the Truce except through the reports appearing in the daily press.'[232] In some cases the despatches and messages sent from IRA GHQ and local IRA commanders barely reached local IRA units before the Truce came into effect. James O'Toole and his fellow IRA volunteers in the North Wexford Brigade were informed that a Truce had been agreed late on 10 July.[233] Likewise Patrick McKenna, captain of the IRA's Dunamore Company in Tyrone only learned that a Truce had been agreed on 10 July.[234] James J. Comerford's IRA Battalion in Kilkenny received a despatch notifying it of the Truce at 1am on 11 July. Comerford was immediately ordered to relay the message to Bill Carrigan, commandant of the 4th Battalion of the IRA's Kilkenny Brigade. Comerford reached Carrigan with the news of the Truce at 7:00am on the morning of 11 July, just four hours before the ceasefire was due to take effect.[235] A few IRA Brigades including the Donegal No. 4 Brigade IRA received no formal notification of the Truce until after it had come into effect.[236] At least one IRA unit which was unaware that a ceasefire had begun carried out a successful ambush near Macroom at 3:00pm on 11 July and succeeded in forcing the surrender of a patrol of RIC Auxiliaries and in capturing their vehicle. The captured Auxiliaries were quick to point out that this action was in breach of the truce but the IRA personnel involved refused to believe that such an arrangement had been agreed. It was only after they returned to their base of

[229] Daniel Ryan, (NAI, BMH, WS 1007, p. 24).
[230] Connie Neenan, (Cork City and County Archives, Neenan Memoir, p. 70). [Hereafter CCCA]
[231] Ted O'Sullivan (NAI, BMH, WS 1478, p. 43).
[232] Tom Barry in Twohig, *Green tears for Hecuba*, p. 79.
[233] James O'Toole (NAI, BMH, WS 1084, p. 19).
[234] Patrick McKenna (NAI, BMH, WS 911, pp 10 - 2).
[235] Comerford, *My Kilkenny IRA days*, pp 817 - 23.
[236] Michael Doherty (NAI, BMH, WS 1583, pp 11 - 2).

operations that they learned that the Auxiliaries had been correct.[237]

IRA ceasefire despatches: orders to ground arms or escalate activity?

Having established that combatants on both sides were taken by surprise by the announcement of the Truce the next question relevant to this thesis is to examine the content of the IRA's ceasefire orders and if these support the established narrative that the republicans deliberately exploited the opportunity to their advantage by ordering an increase in IRA activity. Following immediately after the signing of the Truce agreement, IRA GHQ set about informing IRA units nationally of this development by means of an official despatch which read:

> Oglaigh na h-Éireann 8 - 7 - 1921 GHQ. Dublin
>
> To officers commanding all units,
>
> In view of the conversations now being entered into by our government, with the government of Great Britain, and in pursuance of mutual understandings to suspend hostilities during these conversations, active operations by our troops will be suspended as from noon Monday 11th July
>
> Risteard Ua Maolchata
>
> Chief of Staff.

The IRA in Munster only learned of the Truce through press reports on 9 and 10 July. This may have been due to the intensity of the fighting, or to transport and communication difficulties in the south-west. Most IRA brigades in Connacht and Leinster received official notice of the Truce at the same time by means of a despatch sent by the IRA Chief of Staff, Richard Mulcahy, on 8 July. Bridie O'Reilly a shorthand-typist working for Mulcahy was one of several women who copied the despatch:

> Our Department issued the notices to the Officers Commanding the various Brigades of the cessation of hostilities consequent on the terms of the Truce. The hostilities were to cease from twelve o'clock noon on the 11th July, 1921 … The order was multigraphed by me, and I have an idea … that they were sent by special couriers to ensure their delivery in time, because the weekend was intervening.[238]

[237] Jamie Moynihan, *Memoirs of an old warrior* (Cork, 2014), pp 219 - 20.
[238] Bridie O'Reilly (NAI, BMH, WS 454, p. 8).

This communication was very matter of fact in informing local IRA units that a truce had been agreed with the British forces, the date and hour it would begin and that its terms were to be complied with in full. This order contains no instruction to local IRA units as to what action they were to take in the interim. This effectively left local IRA commanders to decide if they should follow through with operations which had been scheduled in the intervening days and hours, or if these operations should be abandoned in light of the impending Truce. It also gave no specific direction as to whether additional operations should be planned to 'tie up loose ends' regarding intelligence matters, the activities of local loyalists, and grievances against British forces personnel.

The primary veteran's account at variance with the narrative and timescale set out above is that of Seamus Finn. Finn, who was adjutant of the IRA's 1st Eastern Division, and vice commandant of the IRA's Meath Brigade, claimed that the Meath Brigade had received about a week's notification that the Truce was due to come into effect. Furthermore, he claimed that accompanying this notice were definite instructions to execute any suspected spies in the Meath Brigade area who already had been sentenced to death:

> We received notification from GHQ that a truce was about to be signed between the Dáil and the British Government. We received one week's notice and were asked to clear up any arrears in the matter of removing spies and informers who had been sentenced but who had escaped. In some of the brigades operations had been planned, and in the 5th Brigade an attack on Castlepollard Barracks was carried out.[239]

However none of the other IRA veterans from counties which formed part of the 1st Eastern Division stated that they had received such advance notice of the Truce. These included Sean Boylan, the commander of the 1st Eastern Division, and Thomas Peppard, the intelligence officer of the IRA's Fingal Brigade, who presumably would have been aware if such an order had been issued a week before the Truce. Furthermore, no civilians suspected of being spies were killed by the IRA's Meath Brigade in the week before the Truce came into effect on 11 July.[240] Therefore Finn must have been mistaken in stating that the 1st Eastern Division was given a full week's notice of the Truce. What

[239] Seamus Finn (NAI, BMH, WS 1060, p. 58).

[240] The body of Thomas Smith, who was killed by the IRA on suspicion of being a spy, was found at Bective, County Meath on 6 July 1921. However the state of decomposition of the body indicates that Smith had been dead for some time and was probably killed in late June. No spies were killed in Meath between 4 - 11 July 1921. RIC County Inspectors' Reports (NAUK, CO 904 / 116).

Finn was most likely referring to was the ceasefire order that he issued to the IRA's 1st Eastern Division on 9 July 1921 which specified the action that was to be taken against suspected spies before the Truce came into effect.[241]

This order was circulated throughout the IRA Brigades comprising the IRA's 1st Eastern Division in counties Meath, Kildare, southeast Cavan, southern Louth, northeast Offaly, eastern county Westmeath and the Fingal Battalion of the IRA's Dublin Brigade. The 1st Eastern Divisional order was far more militant and detailed in its instructions than the official despatch issued by IRA GHQ the previous day. In particular it differed significantly by making specific reference to the execution of suspected spies.

> FIRST EASTERN DIVISION
> GENERAL ORDER
> 9/7/21.
>
> To, O/C. No. (7) Naas Brig.
> Owing to TRUCE been called at noon on MONDAY next, it is advisable that a good stroke be made at the Enemy before then. Sucs [sic] will it is believed strengthen the hands of our representatives in the making of a definite peace. You will therefore hit anywhere and everywhere you can within your area before 12 NOON on MONDAY. The principle objecti [sic] chould [sic] in all cases be members of old RIC or their Barracks. ALL SPIES of whom you may have already been advised off [sic] are to be executed also before said hour on MONDAY.
>
> IMPORTANT
>
> It is definitely understood that all HOSTILITIES cease at 12 NOON on MONDAY THE 11th OF JULY
> Brig. Coms. Have power in all cases to execute known SPIES or TRAITORS without consulting D.H.Q.
> In order to take advantage of terms of TRUCE and to prevent our O/C from falling into hands of Enemy.
> The Div. meeting called for Monday is hereby postponed until same hour on TUESDAY 12th July.
> Officers to report at Div, H.Q. on Monday night.
> SIGNED DIV. ADJ.[242]

This is the only extant IRA order issued at either a local or national level which specifically instructs IRA volunteers following the announcement of the Truce to escalate attacks on the British forces and to carry out the execution of suspected civilian spies before the ceasefire. This, coupled with oral testimony from IRA volunteers in Tipperary which refers to direct orders from local IRA leadership to increase the frequency of

[241] This order is signed 'Divisional Adjutant' - this was Finn's rank. See; IRA Officers and Units 11 July 1921: the Bureau of Military History List, Noelle Grothier and Anthony Kinchella (eds) in *Irish Sword,* Vol. XXVII, No. 110 ; However, another IRA veteran, James Maguire, suggests that this order was issued by Sean Boylan rather than Finn. James Maguire (NAI, BMH, WS 1439, p. 29).
[242] James Durney, *The Volunteer: uniforms, weapons and history of the Irish Republican Army 1913 - 1997* (Naas, 2004), p. 31. (Emphasis in the original).

attacks following the announcement of the Truce, are the only direct evidence in support of the popular historical narrative which alleges that the IRA specifically set out to exploit the advent of peace to launch an orchestrated military campaign to settle outstanding grievances with members of the British forces, as a favourable opportunity to kill a number of civilians suspected spies or to inflict the maximum number of fatalities on their opponents without fear of retribution. These claims will now be examined thematically, in specific detail, to establish their veracity.

Chapter Three

The announcement of the Truce and the execution of suspected spies by the IRA

(I) *The Intelligence War*

The accumulation of accurate intelligence information was of crucial importance for military operations in the Irish War of Independence. From the British forces perspective, the best way to defeat a popular insurgency like the IRA's military campaign was to gain accurate information about their personnel, supply of arms, and planned operations. During the conflict the British forces were unable to establish the level of penetration of republican groups that they had previously achieved in the nineteenth century with paid spies and informers. The tactic, which had worked so well during the Fenian era, of threatening captured republicans with prosecution and offering to withdraw the charges in return for intelligence, was not effective during the War of Independence. With the closure of rural RIC barracks and the success of Sinn Féin's police boycott, it became increasingly difficult for the authorities to gather accurate intelligence. They increasingly reacted to this deficit by recruiting civilians as agents. The anger generated by reprisals meant that the British forces often had to gather intelligence in a largely hostile climate from a local population which, to a significant extent was isolated and alienated from them.[1]

In contrast to the British forces general dearth of accurate information during that conflict, the IRA operated using intimate local knowledge and intelligence gleaned from a population that was generally supportive of them. Lieutenant General A. E. Percival, who served as a British Army major in Cork during the War of Independence, declared that the bulk of the majority Catholic population were 'if not active Sinn Féiners, were sympathetic to the Sinn Féin movement.' Likewise Major General Douglas Wimberley stated that; 'we were now in what was largely a hostile country, and … maybe 75 per cent of all local inhabitants … viewed us with enmity.' [2] From the IRA's perspective the

[1] Séan Hogan, *The Black and Tans in north Tipperary policing, revolution and war 1913 - 1922* (Nenagh, 2013), p. 115.
[2] Sheehan, *British voices*, p. 98, 173.

best way to neutralise the British counter insurgency was to discourage the local populace from having any dealings with the British forces. It is common in such insurgencies that those who cooperate with the authorities, or actively assist them in their operations, are dealt with severely.[3] Given the role of spies and informers in compromising the republican insurrections of 1798 and 1867, the IRA was acutely aware of the importance of stopping the flow of intelligence to its enemy by identifying and eliminating British agents. IRA leader Tom Barry stated that there were a number of different categories of British agents, who were motivated by different factors. He maintained that 'informers' were typically unpaid, independently wealthy loyalists - 'big landlords, gombeen men and all these types … quite a number of what was called the ascendency were informers.' Barry defined spies as 'paid scoundrels' who came from more impoverished backgrounds however the IRA generally seems to have used the labels 'spy' and 'informer' as interchangeable terms.[4] A more accurate definition than Barry's might be that an 'informer' was a member of a local community who, motivated by political or personal factors, breached the popular policy of boycotting the British forces by volunteering information. Whereas, 'spies' were usually strangers to an area who employed clandestine methods, disguises and false identities to gather information in return for financial reward.[5]

As a guerrilla army relying on secrecy and mobility, the IRA could rarely afford to take alleged spies or informers prisoner for extended periods. The chief of IRA intelligence in Cork city, Florence O'Donoghue, later commented on this dilemma: 'The absence of any facilities for detention of prisoners over a long period made it impossible to deal with the doubtful cases. In practice, there was no alternative between execution and complete immunity.'[6] Given the potential threat they posed, the execution of British intelligence agents, spies and informers was a logical and necessary action from a republican perspective. Table 3 (see page 94 below) indicates that a total of 186 civilians accused of spying were executed by the IRA during the conflict and gives their name,

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[3] For example the various French resistance organisations are estimated to have killed around 9,000 people in extra judicial executions during what is termed the *épuration sauvage*. The majority of those executed were policemen accused of aiding the Nazis, suspected civilian informers and collaborators. Matthew Cobb, *The Resistance: The French fight against the Nazis* (London, 2009), pp 185, 280.

[4] Tom Barry quoted in Hart, *The IRA & its enemies: violence and community in Cork 1916 - 1923* (Oxford, 1998), pp 301 - 2.

[5] Charles Townshend, *The Republic: the fight for Irish independence* (London, 2013), p. 263.

[6] John Borgonovo (ed.) *Florence and Josephine O'Donoghue's War of Independence* (Dublin, 2006), p. 84.

religious denomination, record of military service, date and place of death.[7]

The execution of suspected spies and informers: theories

Allegations that members of the IRA exploited the intelligence war for personal gain, settle personal vandettas or persecute members of the Protestant-Loyalist community were made in the memoirs of British veterans of the conflict and later historians from an Irish Loyalist background who had connections to the British forces. H. B. C. Pollard, a Press Officer with the RIC, who had been involved in producing anti-Republican propaganda during the War of Independence claimed in his 1922 book *The Secret societies of Ireland: their rise and progress* that the IRA killing of suspected spies was primarily motivated by agrarianism and 'land hunger'.

> A peculiar feature … was the number of Irish who were killed by Sinn Feiners as "spies" who had nothing whatever to do with the authorithies and who were guiltless of conveying information of any kind. In most cases it is thought that these were private murders, possibly in pursuit of old faction feuds, but carried out under the all-embracing Irish cloak of patriotism.[8]

The history of the British Army's 6th division, completed in 1923, suggested a possible sectarian motivation to these killings by noting that 'a large number of Protestant Loyalists were murdered and labeled as spies' and that an indiscriminate 'regular murder campaign was instigated against Protestant Loyalists and anyone who might be suspected of being an informer quite irrespective of weather he really was one or not'.[9] Sir Arthur Hezlet, a former British Naval officer turned Military historian, who published a history of *The "B" Specials* in 1972 stated that many civilians killed as suspected spies by the IRA had no contact with the British forces, and were murdered solely because they were

[7] This figure is similar to recent research by O'Halpin, who gives a figure of 181 civilians killed by the IRA as spies between February 1920 and January 1922. However the figure given above only includes those civilians killed by the IRA on suspicion of spying up to the end of the War of Independence in July 1921 and does not include those killed in the later Truce period. O' Halpin includes a number of men in his study such as Bell and Byrne (AKA Jameson) both killed by the Dublin IRA who I have excluded from my figure as they appear to have been employed by the British authorities as professional intelligence agents at the time of their deaths, rather than civilians engaged in intelligence work of their own volition. Eunan O'Halpin, 'Problematic killing during the War of Independence and its aftermath: civilian spies and Informers' in *Death and dying in Ireland, Britain and Europe: historical perspectives* (Dublin, 2013), pp 328 - 9.

[8] H. B. C. Pollard, *The secret societies of Ireland, their rise and progress* (2nd ed., Kilkenny, 1998), p. 182.

[9] 'The Irish rebellion in the 6th divisional area', pps. 85, 99.

Protestants or ex-servicemen.[10]

In recent years a number of academic historian's have reached similar conclusions regarding the killing of alleged spies by the IRA. Taking Cork as his case study, Peter Hart argued that accusations of spying made by the IRA served as a pretext for the intimidation of minority groups, 'strangers' and 'outsiders' that 'fell outside the moral boundries of respectable Catholic society'. Hart alleged that the term 'informer' was used by the IRA in Cork as a short hand for 'enemy' and that religion, class and social standing were as important as espionage activity in identifying informers. He claimed that the IRA were more likely to kill itinerants, ex-servicemen and Protestants than others who were suspected of spying, and suggested that prejudice against these groups was a motivating factor in the execution of alleged spies and informers.[11] Hart claimed that military circumstances, the behavior and activities of those killed was often less important than social identity in determining their fate.[12] Hart asserted that the majority of those executed by the IRA were innocent of spying. He acknowledged that some had given intelligence to the British forces, but claimed that 'such definite cases were still exceptional.'[13]

With regard to the timing of these killings Hart claimed: 'The war continued to escalate right up to the July 1921 Truce, and anti-Protestant violence rose right along with it.'[14] There is a divergence of opinion amongst historians from a Protestant background as to the whether or not the conflict was sectarian. Relying on Hart's work, Alan Stanley dismissed as 'a nationalist myth' the suggestion that Protestant-Loyalists killed by the IRA had given intelligence information to the British forces.[15] Kenneth Milne concluded in a recent history of the Church of Ireland that: 'in the turbulent years of the War of Independence from 1916 to 1922 some Protestant families suffered grievously from acts of terrorism, losing their lives or going in fear of doing so.'[16] By

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[10] Arthur Hezlet, *The 'B' Specials: a history of the Ulster Special Constabulary* (Belfast, 1997), p. 35.
[11] Hart, *IRA & its enemies*, pp 304 - 15
[12] Peter Hart, 'Definition: defining the Irish Revolution' in Augusteijn (ed.) *Irish Revolution* (London, 2002), p. 26 : Peter Hart, 'The Protestant experience of revolution in Ireland' in Richard English and Graham Walker (ed.) *Unionism in modern Ireland* (Dublin, 1996), p. 89
[13] Hart, *IRA & its enemies*, p. 300.
[14] Hart, *IRA at war*, p. 235.
[15] Alan Stanley, *I met murder on the way: the story of the Pearsons of Coolacrease* (Carlow, 2005), p. 30.
[16] Kenneth Milne, 'A history of the Church of Ireland' in Claude Costecalde and Brian Walker (eds), *The Church of Ireland: an illustrated history* (Dublin, 2013), p. 61.

contrast, Jasper Ungoed-Thomas' study of IRA activity in Skibbereen, West Cork found little to suggest that the IRA had a sectarian agenda and found that its activities were motivated by military rather than sectarian concerns.[17]

David Fitzpatrick, has claimed that, in addition to Protestants and ex-servicemen, the IRA also exploited the intelligence war to purge areas within their control of several other isolated social groups including itinerants, adulterers and homosexuals:

> several hundred supposed informers were murdered, sometimes in gruesome fashion, their bodies being buried or dumped in the sea. Though many of the dead had indeed tipped off the police or the Castle, others were the victims of numerous paranoiac assumptions. Adulterers, homosexuals, tinkers, beggars, ex-servicemen, Protestants: there were many dangerous and potentially lethal labels for Ireland's inhabitants in the revolutionary period … The purity of the fight had been sullied, even in republican consciousness, well before the Truce.[18]

However, Fitzpatrick offered no detail, examples or references to support this extraordinary claim. Others have suggested different motives for IRA killings. Townshend has claimed that moral outrage led the IRA to kill Patrick O'Gorman, a Limerick farmer, because he was involved in an extramarital sexual relationship.[19] In fact, the Limerick IRA did not succeed in killing O'Gorman and there is ample evidence which suggests that he was targeted because he had passed intelligence to the British forces which led to the killing of an IRA officer, Lieutennant William Slattery.[20]

Hart's research on Cork reflected the national scenario presented previously by Jane Leonard. Leonard contended that unarmed ex-servicemen became an increasingly tempting target for the IRA when it was unable to overcome improvements in the tactics, weaponry and armament of the British forces. Leonard also asserted that: 'there were changing patterns of intensity and inactivity, occasioned by political developments and the progress of the IRA's campaign against the military and police.'[21] The period immediately prior to the beginning of the Truce combined both the military pressures and political developments that Leonard claimed led to intensification in the IRA's campaign against ex-soldiers. Although Leonard found that the IRA commonly attributed the

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[17] Jasper Ungoed-Thomas, 'IRA Sectarianism in Skibbereen?' in *The Skibbereen and District Historical Society Journal* (Vol. 6, 2010), pp 97 - 115.
[18] David Fitzpatrick, *The two Irelands 1912 - 1939* (Oxford, 1998), p. 95.
[19] Townshend, *The republic*, p. 266.
[20] Tom Toomey, The *War of Independence in Limerick 1912 - 1921* (Limerick, 2010), pp 295 - 7.
[21] Jane Leonard, 'Getting them at last: the IRA and ex-servicemen' in David Fitzpatrick (ed.) *Revolution? Ireland, 1917 - 23* (Dublin, 1990), p. 121

killing of ex-soldiers as a punishment for espionage, she concluded that this was an 'implausible guise' and that 'evidence to sustain these allegations is remarkably thin.'[22]

Marie Coleman, in her work on Longford, described ex-servicemen as 'the softest of targets' for the IRA, and interpreted the shooting of two such men in that county in a similar vein to Leonard and Hart, citing the lack of detailed evidence of these men's guilt in the memoirs of IRA Volunteers as an indication that they were innocents.[23] Like Leonard, Coleman has argued that these shootings took place at times when the IRA in Longford where under increasing military pressure from the British forces.[24] Coaimhe Nic Dháibhéid has also suggested an increase in the killing of ex-soldiers by the IRA in the final months of the conflict:

> The IRA was not slow to target ex-servicemen. The general campaign of boycotting and harassment, punctuated by the occasional murder, was taken to a new level by Michael Collins assertion in the spring of 1921 that "there was no crime in detecting and destroying in wartime, the spy and the informer." This statement was followed by a marked increase in the number of ex-servicemen executed in March 1921.[25]

The allegation that the IRA were prejudiced against ex-soldiers has been challenged by Paul Taylor who found that: 'the reality was far more complex and multifaceted … intimidation directed towards them [ex-soldiers] during the conflict was mostly for reasons other than war service and … following independence they were not marginalised by the state or the community.'[26] In his study of Cork city, John Borgonovo also questioned the suggestion that the IRA used the intelligence war as a pretext to target Protestants and former soldiers. Borgonovo found that although a majority of the alleged spies killed by the IRA in Cork city were ex-service men and a small minority were Protestant; 'there is little indication that the IRA deliberately targeted ex-soldiers or Unionists as part of a general terror campaign' and that these individuals were targeted because the republicans believed they had assisted the British forces.[27]

Recent research by Thomas Earls-Fitzgerald on the execution of alleged spies in

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[22] Leonard, 'Getting them at last', p.125.
[23] Marie Coleman, *County Longford and the Irish revolution 1910 - 1921* (Dublin, 2006), p. 154.
[24] Coleman, *Longford and the Irish revolution*, p. 154.
[25] Caoimhe Nic Dháibhéid, *Seán MacBride: a republican life 1904 - 1946* (2nd ed, Liverpool, 2014), p. 43.
[26] Paul Taylor, 'Heroes or traitors? Experiences of returning Irish soldiers from World War One' (Unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Oxford, 2012) in Myles Dungan, *Irish Voices from the Great War* (2nd ed., Kildare, 2014), p. 285.
[27] John Borgonovo, *Spies, informers and the Anti-Sinn Féin Society* (Dublin, 2007) p. 180.

West Cork has also concluded that the IRA did not systematically kill Protestants arising from an anti-Protestant bias. Fitzgerald found that, of the ten civilians executed by the west Cork IRA in the first two months of 1921, nine had committed transgressions in the eyes of the local IRA, and six of these were likely to have supplied information to the British forces.[28] In his study of North Tipperary, Seán Hogan examined the deaths of four Catholic ex-soldiers killed by the IRA on suspicion of spying. He found no evidence that these men were victims of a campaign spawned from prejudice against ex-soldiers, concluding: 'shooting and publicly labelling suspected spies … while horrific in its execution was probably effective in deterring a sector of the population from … becoming involved with the police.'[29]

This author's studies of Clare have failed to find any evidence reflecting claims of anti-Protestant sectarianism in the intelligence war.[30] All three men executed by the Clare IRA as suspected spies were Catholic, and only one was an ex-soldier. In his study of Limerick, John O'Callaghan has also challenged the conclusions of those who allege prejudice against Protestants and ex-servicemen. Seven men were executed by the IRA in Limerick city and county between 1920 and 1921. Five of the seven were ex-soldiers, but O'Callaghan found no evidence of the link proposed by Leonard between the execution of ex-soldiers in Limerick and periods when the IRA were under severe military pressure.[31] All seven were Catholic, and O'Callaghan has demonstrated that religion 'was not a factor in any of the executions.' Consequently, Hart's findings attributing a sectarian dimension to the intelligence war in Cork cannot be applied to county Limerick. The same could be said of the conflict in County Clare, Cork city and, (as will be demonstrated), several other counties where heavy casualties were incurred.[32]

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[28] Thomas Earls Fitzgerald, 'The execution of spies and informers in West Cork 1921' in David Fitzpatrick (ed.) *Terror in Ireland 1916 - 1923* (Dublin, 2012), p. 185.
[29] Hogan, *Black and Tans in north Tipperary*, p. 459.
[30] Pádraig Óg Ó Ruairc, '"The difference is a fine but a real one": Sectarianism in Clare during the Irish War of Independence 1919 - 21' in *The other Clare: journal of the Shannon Archaeological and Historical Society* (Shannon, 2010), pp. 42 - 6.
[31] John O'Callaghan, *Revolutionary Limerick: the republican campaign for independence in Limerick* 1913 - 1921 (Dublin, 2010), p. 174.
[32] O'Callaghan, *Revolutionary Limerick*, p. 174.

The IRA does not appear to have differed significantly from the military norms then practiced by other armies (and in particular the British Army where many IRA Volunteers had learned their soldiering) in their methods of detection and punishment of suspected spies. A culture of 'short shrift for spies' existed in the British forces during the First World War. For example the British authorities in Zanzibar began arresting and publicly executing suspected German spies by hanging as soon as news of the outbreak of war reached them in 1914.[33] This suggests that British intelligence in Zanzibar was either extremely efficient in detecting genuine spies or that innocent suspects were killed as part of a 'knee jerk' reaction. The British Army in France and Belgium frequently executed civilians it suspected were acting as German spies.[34] Spy mania on the Western Front is thought to have resulted in hundreds of arrests and multiple civilian executions.[35] In some cases these suspected spies were apparently executed on the basis of questionable evidence. Private B. W. Page of the London Irish Rifles recalled an incident when a telephone was found in the house of a peasant girl who was friendly with British troops on the Western Front. The discovery of the device was taken as proof of espionage and all the occupants of the house were summarily executed.[36] When Ivone Kirkpatrick, the British Secret Service's chief spymaster in Holland during the First World War, was asked what action should be taken to deal with a German agent who had infiltrated his spy network he replied 'Bump him off.' The suspected German agent died after being shot five times in the stomach at point blank range, whilst dining in a café at San Van Gent.[37] It is difficult to differentiate between the violence used in the British Secret Service's treatment of this spy and the treatment of suspected British spies killed by the IRA.

T. K. Wilson's research has noted that the IRA's standard operating procedure regarding the execution of suspected spies was concerned with imitating executions conducted by regular armies. According to Wilson, this explains why the majority of

[33] Paice, *Tip & run*, p. 26.
[34] James Morton, *Spies of the First World War: under cover for King and Kaiser* (London, 2010), p. 74.
[35] Ian Penberthy, *The First World War in pictures* (Sussex, 2013), p. 114.
[36] William Sheehan, *The Western Front: Irish voices from the Great War* (Dublin, 2011), p. 45.
[37] Morton, *Spies of the First World War*, pp 94 - 7.

those killed by the IRA as spies were shot and their bodies were deposited fully clothed in public places. The labelling of the corpse as a 'spy' took extra effort on the part of the killers and was an attempt at showing proper bureaucratic and judicial processes. By labelling their victims' bodies, IRA executioners assumed that this definition would be shared by their supporters and the wider community.[38] Features of some IRA executions mimicked traits of British Army executions including the use of firing squads, tying the condemned person to a fixed post before shooting and the use of spy labels.[39]

The announcement of the Truce and its impact on the intelligence war

An examination of the number of spies killed by the IRA on a monthly basis shows that the frequency with which the IRA killed suspected spies and informers increased rapidly as the conflict progressed.[40] Eunan O'Halpin's research has established that the vast majority of those executed by the IRA as spies were killed in the final months of the war. According to his findings, approximately 86% of the suspected spies executed by the IRA, were killed between 1 January and 11 July 1921, and he suggests that, in the final months of the conflict, the civilians suspected of spying were killed by the IRA primarily on the basis that they were 'soft targets'.[41] O'Halpin has also suggested that prior knowledge by IRA Volunteers that the Truce was imminent may have spurred them to kill alleged spies:

> In … Queens County … the decision to execute spies may have arisen partly from a desire to fire a fatal shot for Ireland while there was still time to do so. The IRA killed Peter Keyes, a father of ten … on 5 July [1921]. John Poynton, who had briefly served in the RIC before resigning for family reasons, was also shot at 4 am on the morning of the Truce. [42]

Hart, in addition to claiming that anti-Protestant violence escalated in the final weeks of

[38] T. K. Wilson, *Frontiers of violence: conflict and identity in Ulster and Upper Silesia 1918 - 1922* (Oxford, 2010), pp 152 - 3. In the minority of cases where the IRA chose instead to secretly bury the bodies of suspected spies they had killed, this suggests that the killing would not have been approved by the wider community (eg the shooting of a woman - Mrs. Lindsey). It may also have been done as a purely pragmatic measure to obscure evidence of the killing. Ibid, pp 152 - 3.
[39] See for example the depiction of a British Military execution entitled 'Short shrift for spies at the battle front' in *War Illustrated*, 20 November 1915.
[40] See Table 3 below.
[41] O'Halpin, 'Problematic killing', p. 327.
[42] O'Halpin, 'Problematic killing', p. 331.

the war, stated that by July 1921 the IRA was deliberately targeting civilians and that these attacks became more numerous than attacks on the British forces.[43] More specifically, Hart stated that there was an upsurge in republican violence in July 1921 which he claimed was timed to coincide with advent of the Truce because the killers knew they would soon be immune from retaliation.'[44] Hart alleged that some IRA units attempted to inflict as many fatalities on their opponents as possible before the ceasefire took effect.[45] Coleman's suggestion that the IRA in Offaly knew that a truce was imminent when it executed the Pearson brothers at Coolacrease is highly unlikely given that these killings occurred a week before the ceasefire was agreed and nearly a fortnight before it began.[46] Citing the killing of an ex-soldier at Bruff, and a botched attempt to kill another who was apparently suspected of spying, O'Callaghan wrote that prior to the Truce 'There seems to have been something of a rush for justice in East Limerick.'[47] However, both of these attacks occurred before the cessation had been agreed and at least a day before the rank and file of the IRA in Munster learned of its impending implementation.

The charge that republicans had engaged in hasty and unjustifiable killings immediately after the Truce was announced was current in some of the first histories of the conflict as outlined in Chapter One. In particular, Macready cited the execution of civilians suspected of spying by the IRA, the killing of Major Gerorge B. O'Conor, an alleged spy, and the shooting of Bridget Dillon during a botched attempt to kill her brothers who were suspected of spying, as incidents in 'a tale of outrage.'[48] More recently the newspaper columnist Myers claimed that the IRA exploited the announcement of the Truce to commit sectarian murder. He claimed that Andrew Knight, a Protestant ticket inspector for the Dublin United Tramway Company, was killed in reprisal for the deaths of four Catholics who were shot dead by the B-Specials in Newry. His article also implied that two other Protestants, Major O'Conor and John Poynton, were killed in

[43] Hart, *IRA at war*, p. 19.
[44] Hart, *IRA at war*, pp 71 - 2.
[45] Hart, *Mick*, p. 277.
[46] Coleman, *Irish revolution*, p. 94.
[47] O'Callaghan, *Revolutionary Limerick*, p. 180.
[48] Macready, *Annals*, pp 577 - 8.

sectarian attacks.[49] However, there is little or no evidence to support these assertions. The available evidence suggests that Knight was shot on suspicion of spying and that his killing was probably not connected in any way to events in Newry.[50] Furthermore, Knight was killed by the IRA at 5:20pm on 7 July, almost twenty-four hours before the Truce was agreed and publicly announced.[51] Significantly, Myers assumption that O'Conor and Poynton were killed because they Protestants ignores Poynton's status as a former Black and Tan, and the fact that both men were staunch loyalists accused of spying.

The only surviving IRA order issued after the announcement of the Truce which specifically gives a directive regarding the execution of suspected spies is the 1st Eastern Division order referenced in Chapter Two.[52] Despite the free hand and encouragement this order apparently gave, no civilians suspected of spying were executed by the IRA's 1st Eastern Division between the time the order was issued and the beginning of the Truce. Likewise, despite the instructions implicit in the order no members of the RIC were killed in the 1st Eastern Division's operational area in the same time period. As established in Chapter Two, the majority of IRA brigades knew nothing of the ceasefire before 9 - 10 July; the Truce was therefore unlikely to have been a motivating factor in the execution of suspected spies killed on 8 - 9 July, but may have been a relevant or even a decisive factor in the execution of suspected spies killed later that weekend.[53]

(II) S*uspected spies executed immediately prior to the Truce*

In her biography of Richard Mulcahy, Maria Valiulis significantly overestimated the number of suspected spies executed by the IRA in the final days of the conflict. Valiulis stated: 'records indicate that eleven spies were executed by the IRA just prior to the

[49] *Irish Times*, 27 August 1994.

[50] Patrick Mannix (NAI, BMH, WS 502, p. 4). DMP Constable Patrick Mannix, who was secretly working for IRA intelligence during the War of Independence, claimed that Knight was a spy, and that he had reported Knight's alleged intelligence gathering activities to the IRA: 'I supplied information that Andrew Knight, a tram inspector on the Dalkey line, was a very active anti-IRA man and that he was supplying information about IRA activities to the British military. As a result of the information supplied he was taken off a tramcar by the IRA and taken out to Killiney Golf Links where he was shot. In his pocket were found cheques for information he had given to the British. A search was made in his residence in Clarinda Park and in his box was found a list of names of members of the IRA.' Ibid, p. 4.

[51] Provisional Military Commission in lieu of coroner's inquest on Andrew Knight (NAUK, WO 35/153B). [Hereafter PMCILCI].

[52] Durney, *The volunteer*, p. 31.

[53] See Chapter Two.

advent of the Truce.'[54] Valiulis bases this figure on a list of suspected spies, executed by the IRA which appears in the Collins Papers.[55] The entry for July 1921 notes:

July	9. George B. O'Conor, Cork
	9. Eric Steadman, Ballydaly, Tullamore
	11. John Poynton, Killbride, Portarlington
	R. G. Dreaper, Castlecomer, Co. Kilkenny
	F. M. Dreaper, Castlecomer, Co. Kilkenny
	Captain William Good, Bandon
	James J. Russell ex-RIC Clonmel
	A. N. Other, Howth, Co. Dublin
	Donoghue S.C. Road, Dublin. London
	Michael Walsh, Blarney St., Cork
	Patrick Conners, Cork. USA

This list was edited several times, and re-arranged in chronological order with the last names on the list dated 9 - 11 July 1921. Eight additional names which are undated appear immediately after the names dated 9 - 11 July. These include Michael Walsh killed in Cork on 18 February 1921 and Patrick Conners who was shot in April 1922.[56] Valiulis seems to have mistakenly identified these men as being suspected spies executed by the IRA after the announcement of the Truce, hence her total of eleven. Only three of those named: George B. O'Conor, Eric Steadman and John Poynton, were actually executed as spies after the ceasefire was announced.[57]

Gerard Murphy has claimed that, in addition to Major O'Conor, William Nolan and John Begley (discussed below), a further four civilians were abducted and executed by the Cork IRA immediately prior to the Truce.[58] Murphy states that a person named Duggan was abducted and killed by the IRA in July 1921. However Murphy does not

[54] Valiulis, *Portrait of a revolutionary*, p. 78.
[55] Executions by IRA 1921 (National Library of Ireland, CP, Microfilm 920).
[56] RIC County Inspector's Report for Cork City and East Riding February 1921 (NAUK, CO 904/115) ; *New York Times*, 15 April 1922.
[57] A report of activities by the IRA's Dublin Brigade refers to an un-named, alleged spy killed by the IRA in Howth, Dublin on 11 July 1921, but there is nothing in police or press reports to corroborate this. (Irish Military Archives, Dublin Brigade Reports A/0694).
[58] Gerard Murphy, *The year of disappearances: political killings in Cork 1921 - 1922* (Dublin, 2010), pp 300 - 6.

state Duggan's full name, sex and date or place of death. He admits that: 'Little or nothing is known about Duggan.'[59] Murphy also suggests that the IRA executed three Protestant youths from Cork on the pretext that they were spies, and secretly buried their bodies between 11 - 15 July 1921. The trio are unnamed in Murphy's work and he refers to them throughout as the 'Three Protestant Boys'. Murphy claims that IRA veteran Connie Neenan referred to the killings of this trio in an account recorded by Ernie O'Malley.[60] Murphy gave the following as being an extract from Neenan's account: 'Three were friends and they confessed to their trackings and they were killed.' He claims that this quote corroborates other references he has to this incident.[61] However Murphy has misread this sentence. The original reads: 'Both kids confessed their trackings, and they were killed.'[62] Therefore Neenan was referring to two suspected spies executed by the IRA before the Truce and could not possibly be referring to three Protestant teenagers allegedly killed afterwards. When questions were raised about the accuracy of Murphy's transcription he initially defended it.[63] However Murphy later conceded that his transcription was inaccurate and corrected it in the second edition of his book.[64] Despite admitting to this error, Murphy continues to insist that Neenan referred to the execution of three Protestant teenagers in his interview with O'Malley.[65] Murphy's only other information about the alleged fate of these three comes from an anonymous source.[66] This anonymous third-hand information must be rejected since it cannot be examined or verified. In short, Murphy's claims do not meet the standards of evidence required of historians and his work cannot be taken seriously as factual history. Given that there is no verifiable evidence to support Murphy's claims, his assertion that three Protestant teenagers were executed by the IRA in Cork at the time of the Truce cannot be considered to have any basis in fact.

O'Halpin's work on the subject has also overestimated the number of suspected spies executed by the IRA on the date of the Truce. His 2013 television documentary, 'In

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[59] Murphy, *Year of disappearances*, p. 35.
[60] Connie Neenan (UCDA, EOMN, P17b / 112).
[61] Murphy, *Year of disappearances*, pp 300 - 6.
[62] O'Malley's son Cormac K. H. O Malley, custodian of the O'Malley notebooks, has confirmed the accuracy of this transcription.
[63] *Sunday Tribune*, 16 January 2011.
[64] Murphy, *Year of disappearances*, p. 173.
[65] *History Ireland*, November / December 2011.
[66] Murphy, *Year of disappearances*, p. 302. Murphy states he was told 'the story' by the 89 year old son of an IRA volunteer from Cork who had in turn been informed 'by a Volunteer who waited until all connected to the event were themselves dead.' Ibid, p. 302.

the Name of the Republic' concluded with a 'List of the known disappeared' naming fifty-seven individuals 'known with certainty' to have been 'disappeared' by the IRA. Amongst those listed was William Shiels, a British spy from Bweeng in Cork, whom O'Halpin claimed was abducted and killed by the IRA on the date the Truce came into effect. However, Shiels was never captured by the republicans and fled Ireland following the ceasefire. During the Civil War both the IRA and the Free State Army attempted without success to locate and assassinate Shiels. It is clear that when Shiels 'disappeared' it was with the assistance of the British Crown, and not into a shallow grave dug by the IRA.[67]

The *Irish Times* published a list of missing civilians issued by the British Government on 22 August 1921. The list contained the names of eight people who 'disappeared' between 8 - 11 July 1921. At least one of those named was abducted and killed by the IRA. John H. N. Begley was arrested by the IRA in Cork city on 11 July and was executed as a suspected spy a few days later.[68] A second loyalist named on 'the missing list'; William J. Nolan, also went missing in Cork city on the same date and is likely to have been killed by the IRA.[69] However, a number of people abducted by the IRA prior to the Truce were later released unharmed and inclusion on 'The missing list' is by no means conclusive evidence that the person listed was killed by the IRA. A case in point is that of Edward Olliffe Jr. According to an RIC report; Olliffe, a West Cork Protestant, was abducted near his home at Innishannon on 10 July.[70] Murphy assumed that Olliffe was suspected of spying by republicans because he was a neighbour of a former British officer killed by the IRA in May 1921 and that, after his abduction Olliffe was killed by the IRA.[71] In fact Edward Olliffe was not killed by the IRA, and died over half a century after the conflict ended. He was apparently held by the IRA for several months but emerged from the ordeal unscathed and later made an appeal for aid to the Bandon Board of Guardians.[72] Olliffe, like all four of his siblings, emigrated to the

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[67] Eunan O'Halpin, 'In the name of the Republic', (TV3 / Title Films, March 2013). For a review of the programme see: *History Ireland*, May / June 2013.
[68] Activity report of O/C G. Coy for Month July 1921 (UCDA, RMP, P7/A/23).
[69] Borgonovo, T*he Anti-Sinn Féin Society,* p. 69.
[70] Summary of outrages reported by the police July 1921 (NAUK, CO 904 / 146).
[71] Murphy, *Year of disappearances*, pp 229 - 30.
[72] *Southern Star*, 18 February 1922.

United States in the aftermath of the War of Independence.[73] He left Liverpool on the passenger ship *Cedric* on 26 November 1922 and arrived in New York, en route to his uncle in California. In December 1979, Edward C. Olliffe was still alive and residing at Walnut Creek, California.[74]

At least two others listed as 'missing' immediately prior to the Truce, Bridget Burke and Daniel M. J. O'Connell, were later released unharmed by the IRA.[75] A third, Eugene Swanton, escaped after ten weeks in IRA captivity.[76] No information is available about the fate of two other men whose names appeared on the list: James Gaffney and Francis Boyle. Both men were from Monaghan and went missing on 9 July.[77] Neither of these men's families made applications for compensation to the Irish Compensation Commission. It was common for the families of the IRA's victims to do so. Without further information it is futile to speculate as to whether the IRA was responsible for their disappearances, and if so why they were abducted and their fate.

The bodies of three men who were apparently executed by the IRA on suspicion of being spies were discovered on 8 July - the date that the Truce was announced. These were Andrew Knight, John Moloney and William McPherson. The British military inquests into these men's deaths established that Knight was shot and killed at 5:20pm on 7 July.[78] Moloney was shot at 11:30pm on 7 July and died at 5:20am on 8 July.[79] McPherson's body was discovered at 9:45am on 8 July, but he had been dead for several hours by then.[80] Therefore, the announcement of the Truce could not possibly have been a factor in the killings of these men since the ceasefire was not agreed until 5:30pm on 8 July and most provincial units of the IRA were not aware that an armistice was imminent before 9 July.[81] In total, six suspected spies were executed by the IRA at the time of the Truce. Four were executed between 8 - 11 July. These were: David Cummins, Eric Steadman, Major G. B. O'Conor and John Poynton. A fifth suspected spy, John Begley, was abducted by the IRA in Cork on 11 July, but was held for a number of days before

[73] Barry Keane, 'Ethnic Cleansing? Protestant decline in West Cork 1911 to 1926' in *History Ireland*, (March /April 2012).
[74] *Washington Observer-Reporter*, 3 December 1979.
[75] *Irish Times*, 22 August 1921; Jasper Ungoed, *Jasper Wolfe of Skibbereen* (Cork, 2008), p. 122.
[76] Ungoed, *Jasper Wolfe*, p. 122.
[77] *Irish Times*, 22 August 1921.
[78] PMCILCI on Andrew Knight, (NAUK, WO 35 / 153B).
[79] PMCILCI on John Moloney, (NAUK WO 35 / 155B).
[80] PMCILCI on William Alexandra McPherson (NAUK, WO 35 / 153B).
[81] See Chapter Two.

being executed. William Nolan, who disappeared on the same date as Begley, also appears to have been executed about the same time.

The killing of David Cummins

At 1:00pm on 8 July the IRA arrested David Cummins at his workplace in Noan, County Tipperary.[82] He was executed by an IRA firing squad that night and his body was discovered on the side of the road near Dualla village the following day. Cummins was a native of Donegal, and worked as a chauffeur for Mr Armitage, and had lived at Noan for over a decade. Cummins was arrested at his workplace, by a group of IRA volunteers under the command of Paddy Byrne, vice commandant of the 2nd Battalion, Tipperary No. 3 Brigade IRA.[83] Cummins was taken to Meldrum House at Dualla which was then unoccupied except for its caretaker. Whilst he was being held there, Timothy Tierney, a lieutenant in the local IRA company, arrived with a despatch from Sean Downey ordering Paddy Byrne to execute the prisoner.[84] According to Paul Mulcahy, Byrne offered Cummins a chance to receive spiritual aid.

> In Dualla, Byrne asked Cummins if he wished to see a priest or to make an act of contrition. Cummins replied; "No, I am not a Catholic." Later before his execution Byrne again asked him if he wished to see a clergyman or if he had any final request to make, and he replied, "No." In my presence at any rate, there were no other conversations with him.[85]

Cummins was executed by an IRA firing squad and his body was left on the roadside near Dualla village. A label was attached to his body bearing the text 'Convicted spy. Spies and informers beware.'[86] It is difficult to establish on what basis or evidence, if any, the IRA executed David Cummins as a spy. Neither of the IRA Volunteers, Paul Mulcahy and Timothy Tierney, who were involved in, and mentioned Cummins execution in their statements to the Bureau of Military History, were privy to the

[82] Summary of outrages reported by the police July 1921, (NAUK CO 904 / 146).
[83] There seems to be some confusion as to Byrne's exact rank. Mulcahy states that Byrne was the battalion's quartermaster whilst Tierney claims Byrne was vice commandant of the Battalion. Paul Mulcahy (NAI, BMH, WS 1434, pp 13 - 4).
[84] Timothy Tierney (NAI, BMH, WS 1227, pp 12 - 3).
[85] Tierney (NAI, BMH, WS 1227, pp 12 - 3).
[86] *Irish Times*, 11 July 1921.

evidence or information used to convict him.[87]

Tierney was acting as a courier for Sean Downey when he brought the order to Byrne to execute Cummins and did not remember being given any specific information about Cummins' alleged guilt on the charge of being a spy: 'I cannot tell you anything of Cummins' history but I understand that he had been found guilty of spying. What the specific charge against him was, I cannot now recall - perhaps I never heard it.'[88] Mulcahy knew Cummins, but was likewise uninformed by his superior officers: 'I had known him for some time but had no evidence that he was a spy. The Brigade and Battalion Staffs had apparently information about him of which I was not, or am not now aware … I understand that the decision to execute him had already been made.'[89]
Coleman has cited a lack of detailed evidence in the memoirs of IRA veterans for the execution of suspected spies, as an indication that they were killed primarily because of an IRA prejudice against ex-soldiers rather than military necessity and suspicion based on intelligence information.[90] However, this situation was relatively common during the War of Independence. Members of Collins's 'Squad', which regularly assassinated British agents and civilians suspected of spying, were rarely informed of the specific reasons why their target was to be assassinated.'[91]

It would be wrong to assume that because the reasons for the execution of a suspected spy were not known by those carrying it out, that there was no legitimate reason for it. That the evidence has not survived to the present day does not necessarily imply a lack of contemporary evidence. The IRA was a secretive guerrilla army, where much communication would have been carried out orally and where written communications would sometimes have deliberately been destroyed. Executions were often based on sensitive intelligence information from protected sources, and this information was restricted to those who had the authority to sanction an execution. This was necessary in case an IRA volunteer who had carried out an execution was captured by the British forces. In that event he would be unable to reveal the reasons for the execution or the source of the intelligence information that had caused it. What the

[87] Paul Mulcahy (NAI, BMH, WS 1434 pp 13 - 4) ; Tierney (NAI, BMH, WS 1227, pp 12 - 3).
[88] Tierney (NAI, BMH, WS 1227, pp 12 - 3).
[89] Mulcahy (NAI, BMH, WS 1434, pp 13 - 4).
[90] Marie Coleman, *Longford and the Irish revolution*, p.154
[91] T. Ryle Dwyer, *Michael Collins: The man who won the war* (Cork, 2009), pp 153, 161.

suspected spy had done, or was accused of having done, to deserve their fate was not the concern of those tasked with carrying out the execution. However, without more detail it is impossible to discern what information, if any, led the IRA to suspect Cummins was a British spy and whether the IRA was motivated to kill him based on military circumstances. Interestingly the Irish Grants Commission awarded Cummins' mother £600 in compensation for his death and whilst the British authorities did not accept responsibility for his death, the liability in his case was listed as 'Agreed 50/50' in terms of British responsibility.[92] David Cummins' abduction and shooting appear to have been completely coincidental with the advent of the Truce. He was abducted by the IRA at 1:00pm on 8 July, before the Truce had been agreed or announced. One of his captors, Paul Mulcahy, stated that the decision to kill Cummins had already been made well in advance of his abduction.[93] Given that Ernie O'Malley, the commander of the local IRA Division, did not learn of the Truce until he received a despatch the following day, it is highly unlikely that the decision to shoot Cummins could have been made in the knowledge that a ceasefire was imminent.[94]

The killing of Eric Steadman

Shortly after 2:00am on 10 July, Michael Buckley discovered the body of an unidentified man at Puttaghaun, Tullamore.[95] The RIC reported that the man's body had been 'riddled with bullets'.[96] This man had been executed by the IRA as a suspected spy the previous day and a 'spy label' was affixed to his body reading 'Convicted Spy, Eric Steadman, X [sic] Soldier Birmingham. TRIED, Convicted and Executed on July 9th 1921. Sooner or later we get THEM. Beware of the IRA.'[97] The deceased was an Englishman. He was apparently an ex-soldier, and when interrogated by his captors, gave his name as Eric Steadman.[98] Despite extensive inquiries made by the Birmingham Constabulary, no trace

[92] Compensation Commission Register of Cases, (NAUK CO 905 / 15).
[93] Mulcahy (NAI, BMH, WS 1434, pp 13 - 4).
[94] Ted O'Sullivan (NAI, BMH, WS 1478, p. 43).
[95] PMCILCI on an unknown man found at Puttaghaun, Tullamore (NAUK, WO 35 / 159B).
[96] RIC County Inspector's Report, Offaly July 1921 (NAUK, CO 904 / 115).
[97] PMCILCI on an unknown man found at Puttaghaun, Tullamore (NAUK, WO 35 / 159B).
[98] Jim Harris (UCDA, EOMN, P17b / 120).

was ever uncovered of an Eric Steadman having lived in that city.[99] Steadman had been in Ireland for some time. His IRA interrogators later alleged that Steadman had travelled through Carlow, Kildare and Wicklow passing information to the British forces via loyalist landowners for which he was financially rewarded. They further alleged that 'Steadman' was not a genuine vagrant but that he had cultivated the appearance of one by dressing as a tramp and carrying a 'billy can'.[100] British intelligence officers stated in their memoirs that they often disguised themselves as itinerants whilst on intelligence gathering missions in Ireland.[101]

One of his executioners stated that Steadman's hands belied the impression of someone living rough: 'his fingers were long and they had silky indications of a man who didn't do much manual work … a low stout block of a man who seemingly didn't do any manual work … he was not much to look at.'[102] The inquest into Steadman's death confirmed this impression. The deceased was described as being 'about 40 years of age, about 5ft 9 in height … slightly built and poorly clad.' Steadman had been arrested in the first week of July and interrogated. According to Sean Magennis, Steadman spoke openly under interrogation about his role as a British agent: 'We questioned him and he seemed to be frank enough, he said that he went from house to house in Kildare and Wicklow and that he supplied information to the big houses, and that they paid him.'[103] Steadman's captors held a conference and decided that he should be executed by firing squad.[104] Steadman was held prisoner for a number of days at Ballydaly, Tullamore. After execution, his body was removed to Puttaghaun to prevent the houses of republican activists in Balydaly being burned.[105] The IRA had attempted to secure a clergyman to provide the condemned with spiritual aid. A clergyman from Tullamore refused this request, so his executioners instead baptised Steadman before shooting him and affixing the 'spy label' to his body.[106] It was unusual to name the deceased on these placards and his executioners may have done this because Steadman was not local to the area and

[99] PMCILCI on an unknown man found at Puttaghaun, Tullamore (NAUK, WO 35 / 159B).
[100] Sean Magennis & Jim Harris (UCDA, EOMN, P17b / 120).
[101] Hittle, *Collins and The Anglo Irish War*, p. 127 ; Sean Magennis (UCDA, EOMN, P17b / 120).
[102] Magennis (UCDA, EOMN, P17b / 120).
[103] If Steadman was executed by firing squad as Magennis suggests rather than a single shot to the head it would account for the RIC Report which claimed that Steadman's body was 'riddled with bullets.' Sean Magennis (UCDA, EOMN, P17b / 120).
[104] Magennis (UCDA, EOMN, P17b / 120).
[105] Magennis (UCDA, EOMN, P17b / 120).
[106] Sean Magennis (UCDA, EOMN, P17b / 120); Jim Harris (UCDA, EOMN, P17b / 120).

would not have been identified otherwise.

As an Englishman and a stranger to the area, Steadman's presence in Tullamore would have immediately made the IRA suspicious of his activities. The British Army appears to have sent soldiers in civilian clothes into the countryside, often posing as deserters, to gather intelligence information and scout the countryside.[107] The RIC also used the same tactic. RIC veteran Hugh McIvor served in a special unit in Bandon led by a head constable who directed his subordinates to seek out information on the IRA whilst 'dressed like old farmers'.[108] Consequently, republicans had a tendency to regard all strangers visiting their areas as potential spies. In November 1920, the IRA's Intelligence Department warned local units to be on the lookout for strangers in their area and 'those with English accents in particular.'[109] In May 1921 Wilfrid Ewart, an ex-British Army officer, turned reporter, was arrested by the IRA near Tullamore on suspicion of being a spy. Although Ewart was an Englishman and a former British Army officer, which have been evident from his accent and manner, he was subsequently released unharmed after being searched and interrogated.[110] Sir Kenneth Strong, Detachment Intelligence Officer with the Royal Scots Fusiliers stationed in Tullamore, disguised himself in civilian attire when carrying out intelligence work in the area

> My area of responsibility was so small that unusual happenings soon came to the notice of local inhabitants. Contacts with my so called agents had to be personal and this could be an exceedingly dangerous undertaking for the informant. To get to a rendezvous I would disguise myself, usually as the owner of a small donkey cart, but my English accent was against me and I had several narrow escapes.[111]

Ewart and Strong's experiences show that the Tullamore IRA did not automatically condemn to death as spies any strangers and Englishmen visiting the area, although they had justifiable grounds to suspect them. Steadman's presence in the area would undoubtedly have given the IRA cause for concern. Farmers in the Tullamore area had reported to the IRA that a stranger was in the area looking for work on the bogs. The IRA claimed to have arrested Steadman for interrogation on a previous occasion, but he had

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[107] 'Military intelligence in the Black and Tan days', O'Donoghue Papers (NLI, MS 31 / 443).
[108] Fitzgerald, 'The execution of spies and informers in West Cork, 1921', p. 184.
[109] IRA Intelligence Department November 1920, O'Donoghue Papers (NLI, MS 31 / 202).
[110] Ewart, *A journey in Ireland*, pp 127 - 9.
[111] Kenneth Strong, *Intelligence at the top: the recollections of an intelligence officer* (London, 1969), p. 1.

escaped from them. Local republicans alleged that Steadman later returned to the district and was seen alighting from an RIC lorry, was captured by the IRA a second time and killed.[112]

If Steadman was not a British agent, then his presence in rural Ireland during the conflict was incredibly dangerous and exceptionally foolhardy. He was certain to be suspected of being a spy by republicans thereby putting his life in extreme peril. If Steadman was not a British agent, then his persistence in returning to the Tullamore district, if he had escaped from IRA custody defies logic and any regard for his life or personal safety. Without further information it is impossible to establish for certain if Steadman had gathered intelligence for the British forces. It is also difficult to establish if his executioners knew of the impending ceasefire at the time he was killed. Magennis stated that Steadman had been arrested and held 'a couple of days' before his execution on 9 July.[113] This strongly suggests that Steadman was captured and sentenced to death before the Truce had been announced. The evidence of Captain E. C. Lindsey of the Royal Army Medical Corps regarding the timing and date of the killing is problematic. Captain Lindsey examined Steadman's body at 9:00am on 10 July and declared 'I consider that the deceased had been dead for at least three days.'[114] If Lindsey was correct, Steadman would have been executed on or before 7 July and therefore the Truce could not possibly have been a factor in his death. However Lindsey's conclusion is at odds with the spy label attached to Steadman's body that stated specifically that he had been 'Executed on 9th July'. The court of inquiry concluded that 'the deceased … met with his death prior to 9 July'.[115]

The killing of Major George Bernard O'Conor

Shortly before midnight on 10 July IRA Volunteers from the Cork No. 1 Brigade called at the home of Major George Bernard O'Conor at Illane, Rochestown. They knocked on the door of the house and were answered by O'Conor's wife. They said that they wanted

[112] Casualties - British military & police (IMA, A / 0614).
[113] Sean Magennis (UCDA, EOMN, P17b / 120).
[114] PMCILCI on an unknown man found at Puttaghaun, Tullamore (NAUK, WO 35 / 159B).
[115] PMCILCI on an unknown man found at Puttaghaun, Tullamore (NAUK, WO 35 / 159B).

to see her husband and pushed their way inside. Major O'Conor was forced to dress and taken outside. The raiders told their captive's wife and the household servants that he would return shortly. O'Conor was taken a short distance from his home and shot several times. His body was found about 100 yards on the Cork side of Hop Island the following morning with a label reading 'Convicted Spy'.[116] O'Conor, aged seventy, was a Justice of the Peace and member of the Cork Chamber of Commerce. He was a former British officer with the 19th Hussars and had been promoted to the rank of major during the Boer War. O'Conor was a Unionist and supporter of Sir Horace Plunkett's Dominion Home Rule League. He stood for election in the College Green Parliamentary Division of Dublin City, a traditional Southern Unionist stronghold, but was unsuccessful. He was later nominated as the Unionist candidate for the Cork City Division in the 1918 election but declined to stand.[117]

O'Conor was also an active and outspoken opponent of Irish Republicanism. Connie Neenan, a local IRA officer, claimed that the Major was killed because the IRA believed that he was a spy, and had been responsible for several setbacks suffered by the IRA in Cork city:

> The night before the Truce was signed was a Sunday and the only activity planned in our battalion was the apprehension of a well known British intelligence agent who was responsible for a great deal of the harm and hardship that befell our men. This assignment came within the activities of [our] Company and the man in question was caught and executed.[118]

On 29 January the IRA had commandeered a horse and trap belonging to O'Conor at Rochestown and used it to remove six cases of British Army supplies they had taken from the Cork train. The following month the IRA again raided the train for mail which they checked in the hope of revealing the identity of informers.[119] In April 1921 the major had made a legal affidavit to the courts-martial of the IRA prisoners captured at Clonmult, two of whom were later executed.[120] On 13 June 1921 the Cork to Crosshaven train was raided for mails for the second time that week and O'Conor made a complaint

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[116] RIC County Inspector's Report Cork July 1921 (NAUK, CO 904 / 115).
[117] *Cork Examiner* 12, 15, 17 October 1921.
[118] Connie Neenan (CCCA, Neenan Memoir, pp 70a - 71).
[119] Colman O'Mahony, *The maritime gateway to Cork: a history of the outports of Passage West and Monkstown 1754 - 1942* (Cork, 1986), p. 104.
[120] *Cork Constitution*, 21 April 1921.

to the British Army castigating them for not doing enough to protect the rail network.[121] O'Conor had been under observation by the IRA for some time and his execution had been ordered by the leadership of the Cork No. 1 Brigade. Since early July IRA volunteers had been posted near his home in preparation for his abduction. On 10 July, the Cork No. 1 Brigade issued orders for O'Conor's immediate execution.[122]

Mick Murphy, a member of the 2nd Battalion of the Cork No. 1 Brigade IRA, alleged that O'Conor was shot because he was a member of a civilian spy ring in Cork.[123] On 9 February 1921 another Justice of the Peace named Alfred Reilly was travelling with O'Conor on a pony and trap through Cork city. They were held up by armed IRA Volunteers and Reilly was taken from the trap, placed against a wall and shot twice. A label was pinned to his coat reading 'Spy. By order IRA. Take warning.'[124] According to Murphy, Reilly had been shot because he was a member of a civilian spy ring in the city and O'Conor's connection to him later brought him under suspicion. 'This man [Reilly] was a member of the senior secret service of the Y.M.C.A. … With Riley that night was a retired British Army officer named Major O'Conor. He, too, was [later] shot and killed.[125] Shortly after Reilly's killing the IRA made a failed attempt to kill O'Conor.[126]

Florrie O'Donoghue apparently refers to Major O'Conor's killing and the evidence used to sanction his execution in an interview conducted by O'Malley:

> At the end of the Tan War, Florrie and a number of other officers got out of town every night. They used to go separately to a small cottage … An ex British officer noticed one or some of them and he gave information Florrie's wife, [General] Strictland's secretary, saw the note but she had no time [to copy it]. She tried to memorise it. Later that day she got hold of this note, brought it out as evidence. The man was arrested, court-martialled and shot before nightfall. [127]

O'Conor was named on an IRA list of suspected spies executed in 1921 compiled by IRA GHQ.[128] His family made a claim for financial compensation to the Ireland

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[121] O'Mahony, *Maritime gateway to Cork*, p. 104.
[122] O'Mahony, *Maritime gateway to Cork*, p. 104.
[123] Mick Murphy, (UCDA, EOMN, P17b / 112).
[124] *Cork Constitution*, 10 February 1921; *Cork Examiner*, 15 February 1921.
[125] Mick Murphy (NAI, BMH, WS 1547, p. 36).
[126] It is unclear whether this was a separate attempt on O'Conor's life or if it was a reference to Reilly's killing. The former seems more likely. Cork East Riding Criminal Injury Book, February - October 1921 (NAI, Cork Crown and Peace Officers Records).
[127] Florrie O'Donoghue, (UCDA, EOMN, P17b / 96).
[128] Executions by IRA 1921, (NLI, CP, Microfilm 920).

Compensation Commission.[129] Although O'Conor had undoubtedly been killed by the IRA his killing was listed as being 'Accepted as [a] British Liability'.[130] Though not conclusive evidence that the Major was a British agent this ruling is suggestive that he was killed because he had an association with the British authorities. O'Conor's connection with Reilly, a suspected spy executed by the IRA, his communications with the British Army regarding IRA raids on the mails and perhaps most significantly his testimony to the courts-martial of the IRA men captured at Clonmult may have led the IRA to conclude that he was providing information and assistance to the British forces concerning IRA activities. It is beyond doubt that his killers knew the Truce was imminent at the time of his killing.

The killing of John Poynton

Shortly before 3:00am on 11 July, a group of armed and masked men called to Poynton's farm at Kilbride near Portarlington, Co. Laois. The men knocked, and then called out for the door to be opened. When John Poynton, the youngest son of the family, answered the door, a tall masked man armed with a revolver entered the house and forced him outside. Poynton's mother attempted to follow them but was ordered back inside at gunpoint. Seconds later she heard five gunshots and went outside to see what had happened. Poynton's mother witnessed two men walking away and found her son trying to follow them. John Poynton had been fatally wounded and his mother and two sisters carried him into the house where he collapsed, dying about twenty minutes later.[131] Poynton was a twenty-three year old farmer, and a former member of the RIC. He had joined the RIC with his older brother Ambrose, on 6 December 1920. The brothers were in the force less than two weeks when their father, a retired RIC sergeant, died suddenly. John subsequently resigned from the RIC on 20 December citing 'family affairs' and returned to Kilbride to run the family farm.[132] Ambrose remained in the RIC and was stationed in

[129] Ireland Compensation Commission was established in 1922 by the British Government and the Provisional Government of the Irish Free State to compensate civilian victims of the War of Independence.
[130] Compensation Commission Register of Cases (NAUK, CO 905 / 15).
[131] PMCILCI on John Poynton (NAUK, WO 35 / 157B).
[132] RIC Register (NLI, Microfilm).

Belturbet, Co. Cavan.[133]

The local IRA were aware that the brothers had joined the RIC and monitored John Poynton closely after his return. The IRA volunteers tasked with scrutinizing Poynton's activities reported that he regularily socialised with the RIC in Portarlington and made frequent visits to the RIC barracks there to play cards.[134] These would have been very dangerous activities at a time when a social boycott of the police was widely enforced, even in areas like Laois that had seen relatively little republican activity. Local IRA intelligence reported that Poynton 'frequented the Barracks and was absent after curfew being in the habit of meeting patrols on lonely points along the roads.'[135] As a result of these alleged activities the IRA came to suspect that Poynton was guilty of gathering information for the British forces. The local IRA reported to IRA QHQ that Poynton was responsible for a number of arrests made by the RIC in the Kilbride district and ordered him to leave the area.[136] Poynton was seemingly oblivious or indifferent to the danger his life was in due to his association with the RIC. According to IRA intelligence, Poynton allegedly boasted on one occasion that: 'He would shop every member of the IRA for a £1 per head [sic].'[137] He continued to ignore the IRA's order to leave the area even after another suspected spy in the district was killed.[138]

Poynton's family made a claim for financial compensation to the Ireland Compensation Commission. Although Poynton had undoubtedly been killed by the IRA, his killing is listed as being an 'Agreed British Liability'.[139] Though not conclusive evidence that Poynton was a British agent, this ruling is a strong indication that he was killed because he had an association with, or had given assistance to, the British authorities.

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[133] RIC Register (NLI, Microfilm).
[134] Michael Rafter, *The quiet county: towards a history of the Laois brigade IRA and revolutionary activity in the county 1913 - 1923* (Naas, 2005), p. 96.
[135] Executions by IRA 1921 (NLI, CP, Microfilm 920).
[136] Executions by IRA 1921 (NLI, CP, Microfilm 920).
[137] Executions by IRA 1921 (NLI, CP, Microfilm 920).
[138] Edward Brennan (NAI, BMH, WS 1514 pp 4 - 5).
[139] Compensation commission register of cases (NAUK CO 905 / 15).

The killing of William J. Nolan

Seventeen year old William J. Nolan left his family's home at Annmount, Friar's Walk in Cork city to post a letter at 11:00am on 11 July 1921.[140] Nolan did not return from this errand, and was reported missing to the RIC. Nolan had recently applied to join the RIC, and it appears that he was abducted and executed by the IRA.[141] Nolan's recent application to join the police could explain his abduction and execution at the hands of republicans. The Nolan family had very strong links to the RIC; William Nolan's father was a retired RIC constable, and William's older brother had also joined the force. At the time of Nolan's disappearance, applicants to join the RIC were being targeted by the IRA in Cork. A number of RIC recruits in Cork had also been killed by the IRA including Michael O'Sullivan who was abducted and executed in February 1921.[142] Republicans in Cork had issued a proclamation warning: 'prospective recruits that they join the RIC at their own peril - All nations are agreed as to the fate of traitors.'[143] The fact that Nolan had applied to join the RIC at such a young age may be an indication that he had supplied the British forces with information about republican activities. It was not unusual for young loyalists who aided the British in this manner to join the RIC as a means of protection. For example Constable Patrick Edward Conway a sixteen year-old loyalist joined the DMP as a 'Temporary Constable' a few days after an informer's information led to the death of an IRA volunteer in Conway's home place of Broadford, Limerick. The acceptance of such a young recruit into the force was highly unusual.[144] In a similar case a young woman in East Clare who was suspected of spying by the local IRA applied to join the RIC Women's Auxiliary Service as a 'searcher'.[145] It is uncertain whether Nolan was targeted because he was suspected of spying, because he had applied to join the RIC, or both. There is some uncertainty as to Nolan's exact fate however it would appear that he was abducted by IRA Volunteer Pat 'Pa' Scannell and other members of E

[140] RIC County Inspector's Report, Cork July 1921 (NAUK, CO 904 / 115).
[141] Borgonovo, *Anti-Sinn Féin Society*, p. 69.
[142] Robert Ahern (NAI, BMH, WS 1676, p. 8).
[143] Liam Ó Duibhir, *The Donegal awakening: Donegal and the War of Independence* (Cork, 2009), pp 128 - 9.
[144] Toomey, *War of Independence in Limerick*, p. 467.
[145] East Clare Brigade, Report to IRA GHQ (UCDA, RMP, P7/ A /17).

Company, 2nd Battalion of the IRA's Cork No.1 Brigade, killed and secretly buried.[146]

The killing of John H. N. Begley

At 11:55am on 11 July, five minutes before the Truce came into effect, John H. N. Begley was abducted by the IRA in Cork.[147] He had been identified in the city centre by a group of IRA volunteers, led by Sean O'Connell and Tadhg Twohig. According to O'Connell:

> we received instructions to arrest another ex-British Soldier named Begley who was alleged to be an enemy agent. We watched for him and at about noon one day Tadhg Twohig and I tracked him up Patrick Street. We were covered by four or five men from G Company all of whom were armed with revolvers. We arrested Begley and took him out of the city.[148]

He was held by the IRA, and interrogated for five days before being killed on the 16 July. According to O'Connell, their captive was executed on the instructions of the leadership of the Cork No. 1 Brigade. Begley was a Catholic ex-soldier who lived at 1 Rock Cottages, North Mall in Cork.[149] Connie Neenan stated 'we had a few ex-British soldiers in Cork who were spies and we shot them and buried them.'[150] John Begley was apparently one of these. Neenan described Begley as 'a young kid, a nondescript type'. He claimed that Begley was a spy for the British forces who had been recruited by William Shiels, an ex-soldier who had infiltrated the IRA: 'One of the group broke down in June [sic] 1921 when he was caught outside of Douglas. Begley one of the Shiels' crowd, said it was Shiels who got him into this mess.'[151]

William 'Bill' Shiels, an ex-soldier, was a native of Boherbee in North Cork.[152] In February 1920, he approached a member of the IRA, asked to join the Cork No. 2 Brigade's flying column, and was accepted despite the objections of a local IRA officer.

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[146] Pa Scannell, IRA Pension Application, quoted by Gerard Murphy in http//www.year-of disappearances.blogspot.ie/2011/10/ response1-to-padraig-og-o-ruairc.html?m=1 (accessed 17 August 2014). Scannell's Pension application like those of other War of Independence veterans is currently a sealed file in the Irish Military Archives. However some scholars have been able to quote details from these files although they are currently inaccessible to the general public. John Borgonovo, 'Revolutionary violence and Irish historiography' in *Irish Historical Studies*, xxxviii, no. 150 (November 2012).

[147] Activity report of O/C G. Coy for Month July 1921 (UCDA, RMP, P7/A/23).

[148] Sean O'Connell (NAI, BMH, WS 1706, p. 9).

[149] Annie Begley to Minister of Defence, 6 October 1922 (DOD Series, A/07360).

[150] Connie Neenan (UCDA, EOMN P17b / 112).

[151] Neenan (UCDA, EOMN, P17b / 112).

[152] Denis Mulchinock, Michael Courtney & Jeremiah Murphy (NAI, BMH, WS 744, pp 14 - 6).

It appears that Shiels joined with the specific intent of gathering intelligence information for the British forces.[153] In February 1921, he supplied the British forces with information that an IRA flying column was stationed at Mourne Abbey, resulting in the deaths of six IRA volunteers.[154] The following month the British Army raided a republican 'safe house' at Nadd, which resulted in the deaths of three IRA volunteers.[155] The British Army attributed its success to Shiels whom it described as 'a man who had deserted from the rebels.'[156] He left the flying column the night before the raid on the pretext of visiting his sick mother. He was observed entering Kanturk RIC Barracks but there was a delay in relaying this information to the IRA unit at Nadd.[157] During the raid Shiels was seen wearing a British uniform and assisting the British forces.[158] This was apparently a disguise for Shiels who was working as an 'identifier'.[159] Shiels recruited other ex-soldiers who worked as paid informers for the British forces in Cork, including a man named Saunders who identified Shiels as his 'handler' before being executed by the IRA in May 1921.[160] Shiels may also have recruited a third ex-soldier, William McPhearson, who was killed by the IRA in Mallow.[161] Shiels fled Ireland for England after the War of Independence and may later have gone to America.[162]

As well as the information about Shiels' activities forced from Saunders the IRA also received information about his intelligence network from a Black and Tan stationed in Kanturk.[163] Begley's alleged association with Shiels, Saunders and the British Army intelligence network in Cork would have made his capture, interrogation and execution a top priority for the IRA in Cork. Séan O'Connell, captain of G. Company, 1st Battalion of the Cork No.1 Brigade IRA stated that: 'Due to the excellent intelligence service set up in each Battalion and Company area, it was possible to bring those informers 'to heel' when

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[153] F. O'Donoghue, IO First Southern Division report to Chief of Staff, 24 June 1921, (UCDA, RMP, P17A/20); Denis Mulchinock, Michael Courtney & Jeremiah Murphy (NAI, BMH, WS 744, pp 14 - 6).

[154] 'The Irish rebellion in the 6th divisional area', p. 82.

[155] Denis Mulchinock, Michael Courtney & Jeremiah Murphy (NAI, BMH, WS 744, pp 14 - 6).

[156] 'The Irish rebellion in the 6th divisional area', p. 82.

[157] Michael O'Connell (NAI, BMH, WS 1428, pp 14 - 5).

[158] John Moloney (NAI, BMH, WS 1036, p. 17).

[159] John Moloney (NAI, BMH, WS 1036, p. 17.) 'It was found essential that the police or other "identifiers" should not be seen, otherwise, if recognised as identifiers, they become marked men and liable later for assassination.' Sheehan, *British voices*, p. 93.

[160] F. O'Donoghue, IO First Southern Division report to Chief Of Staff, 24 June 1921, (UCDA, RMP, P17A/20).

[161] Saunders and Mc Phearson were neighbours. Saunders lived at No. 3 Broom Lane, Mallow whilst Mc Phearson lived just 200 yards away at No. 4 Bridge Street, Mallow. The 'spy label' attached to Mc Phearson's body indicates that the IRA suspected that he was associated with a network of spies in the town. PMCILCI on William Alexandra Mc Phearson (NAUK, WO 35 / 153B).

[162] Owen Hayes (UCDA EOMN P17b/123); Mulchinock, Courtney & Murphy (NAI, BMH, WS 744, pp 14 - 6).

[163] Mulchinock, Courtney & Murphy (NAI, BMH, WS 744, pp 14 - 6).

the evidence against them proved conclusive.'[164] O'Connell cited Begley's execution as an example of the effectiveness of IRA counter-intelligence in Cork. The report of Begley's shooting to IRA GHQ stated that Begley was 'a spy for whom we were on the look out.'[165] O'Connell's statement to the Bureau of Military History and the IRA's report on Begley's shooting both make it clear that the IRA had been aware of his supposed connection to Shiels and British Army intelligence and had intended to abduct and interrogate him for some time. The fact that the British authorities accepted liability for Begley's fate and awarded his family £1,500 in compensation may be an indication that Begley had been involved in intelligence work.[166]

Failed IRA attempts to kill suspected spies

There were also a number of unsuccessful attempts to kill suspected spies between the announcement of the Truce and its implementation three days later. For example; on 10 July six IRA volunteers raided the home of Thomas Goulding, a Catholic ex-soldier, who lived at College Road, Cork. Whilst they were questioning Goulding's father about his whereabouts, Goulding escaped through the back door unnoticed and sought refuge in the adjacent RIC barracks. He had previously been shot and wounded in an attempt on his life.[167] The most serious of the failed attempts to kill suspected spies happened at Kilcash, County Tipperary when the IRA attempted to kill Michael-Thomas Dillon, a Catholic ex-soldier, and his younger brother William on the night of 9 July. There are two surviving accounts of this incident recorded in the Ernie O'Malley Notebooks. The briefer of the two comes from Mick Burke, a veteran of the Tipperary No. 3 Brigade IRA who simply stated: 'A girl, Dillon, [was] shot there [in] Kilcash, in connection with spying. There was some mix up over it, and it was supposed to have been a mistake'.[168] Andrew Kennedy a member of the brigade's flying column gave a slightly more detailed account of the affair:

[164] Sean O'Connell (NAI, BMH, WS 1706, p. 9).
[165] 'Activity report of O/C G. Coy for Month July 1921' (UCDA, RMP, P7/A/23).
[166] Compensation Commission Register of Cases (NAUK CO 905 / 15).
[167] RIC County Inspector's Report Cork July 1921 (NAUK, CO 904 / 115).
[168] Mick Burke, (UCDA, EOMN, P17b / 103).

> The night we left the place [Kilcash] a policeman's son, and a daughter, sent in the information to Carrick. He [Michael Dillon, the ex-policeman] fired on the lads that were sent to arrest him and she was shot dead, and the peeler's son disappeared from the country. Some of the Carrick[-on-Suir] men had been sent to arrest him in Kilpatrick, Kilcash.[169]

However the circumstances of Bridget Dillon's death were far more complex than either of O'Malley's interviewees indicated.[170]

During the War of Independence several members of the Dillon family come to the attention of the local IRA. The head of the family, Michael Dillon Senior, a retired RIC constable, was employed as a caretaker by Lord Ormonde.[171] According to Seamus Babington, who knew him personally, Dillon had attempted to join the IRA, and was prone to erratic and suspicious behaviour.[172] It is clear that Michael Dillon had given some assistance to the British forces during the conflict, but it is questionable if this was of anything more than perriferal value. In his correspondence with the Irish Grants Committee he stated definitively: 'I attribute all my misfortune to the fact that I directed British troops in Ireland in 1921.'[173] This could be interpreted as Michael Dillon having been an 'identifier' for the British Army. However the application of Dillon's son to the same body is more ambiguous. Michael-Thomas Dillon stated that his father was victimised because he had given directions to a British Army patrol that was lost on a mountain road in 1921.'[174] Regardless of whether Michael Dillon Snr. gave the British forces relatively minor aid on just one occasion, or if he consistently gave them more substantial assistance, once the IRA had discovered that he had helped a British patrol to any degree he would have automatically have come under suspicion. Dillon's youngest son William, a senior pupil at Carrick-on-Suir Christian Brothers College, was also known to Babington who owned a business in the town. Babington's shop in Carrick-on-Suir was used to hold IRA meetings and to store arms and ammunition. Babington claimed to have noticed William Dillon loitering outside the premesis for hours at a time, and regarded this behavior as suspicious.[175] Babington described Dillon as 'not fully

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[169] Andrew Kennedy, (UCDA, EOMN, P17b / 114).
[170] Burke, (UCDA, EOMN, P17b / 103); Kennedy, (UCDA, EOMN, P17b / 114).
[171] *Cork Examiner*, 12 July 1921.
[172] Seamus Babington (NAI, BMH, WS 1595 pp 110 - 28).
[173] Michael Dillon Snr. application to the Irish Grants Commission. (NAUK, CO 762 / 3).
[174] Michael-Thomas Dillon application to the Irish Grants Commission. (NAUK, CO 762 / 119).
[175] Babington (NAI, BMH, WS 1595, pp 110 - 28).

normal' and today he would probably be described as having an intellectual disability or behavioral disorder.[176]

In July 1921, a meeting of IRA officers in Kilcash was encircled by British troops stationed at Clonmel, and those attending narrowly avoided capture.[177] Seamus Babington later claimed to have received definite information, from republican sympathisers in the post office at Clonmel, that William Dillon and his older brother Michael-Thomas, an ex-soldier who worked as a postal clerk in Clonmel, were responsible.

> We had friends in the post office at Ballypatrick as well as at Clonmel, the receiving depot. Young [William] Dillon … who mixed frequently and socially the night before with the column billeted with families in [the] Kilcash area, phoned from Ballypatrick post office to his brother [Michael], who was a postal clerk in Clonmel post office, informing him of the IRA invasion of the area … and he at once phoned the British Military in Clonmel. Ears were always on the alert, and word was at once sent from Clonmel to Kilcash to Ballypatrick shortly before the military arrived and by the narrowest escape imaginable the IRA men had just got outside the ring.[178]

Local IRA leader Dinny Lacey came to the area on 9 July and ordered the IRA's Ballyneale Company to surround the Dillon house and keep it under observation.[179] According to Babington, the republicans had orders to 'surround the house only'.[180] After watching the house for two hours, those monitoring the house overstepped their instructions. At 11:30pm members of the IRA approached the house asking for a drink of water in a ruse to gain entry. When this was refused they attempted to force their way in. The head of the family, Michael Dillon Snr., threw a glass jug at one of the men who came to the window attempting to force an entrance.[181] At that moment Dillon's fifteen year old daughter Bridget appeared at an upstairs window and was shot at by one of the IRA volunteers who was armed with a shotgun. Bridget Dillon was fatally wounded suffering eight buckshot pellets the right side of her head, two of which penetrated her brain.[182] Reports that members of the Dillon family opened fire first are apparently

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[176] Information from Phil Flood, local historian Ballypatrick, Kilcash, Co. Tipperary.
[177] Babington (NAI, BMH, WS 1595, pp 110 - 28).
[178] Babington (NAI, BMH, WS 1595, pp 110 - 28).
[179] Babington (NAI, BMH, WS 1595, pp 110 - 28). Alternatively, Andrew Kennedy stated that he was in charge of this operation and that it was conducted by members of the IRA's Carrick-On-Suir Company. Kennedy, (UCDA, EOMN, P17b / 114).
[180] Babington (NAI, BMH, WS 1595, p. 128).
[181] PMCILI on Bridget Dillon (NAUK, WO 35 / 149A).
[182] PMCILI on Bridget Dillon (NAUK, WO 35 / 149A).

without basis.[183]

Following Bridget's shooting, William and Michael-Thomas Dillon went outside and appealed to the IRA to send for medical aid for their sister. Their request for a doctor wasrefused. Instead, they were forced to stand at the gable-end of the house whilst the IRA formed a firing squad. William and Michael-Thomas Dillon managed to escape while the IRA officer in command of the group was preparing the firing squad. The brothers were fired upon as they fled but escaped unscathed. The IRA remained at Dillon's for about an hour before departing. Bridget Dillon died of her wounds about 1:30am without receiving any medical assistance.[184] Following the shooting, Dinny Lacey held an IRA inquiry into her death and to investigate as to why the IRA Company responsible had exceeded their orders. According to Babington, Lacey 'was so upset and so annoyed that he favoured punishment on the Company, and on the man who so foolishly fired on the house.'[185] The Dillon family relocated to Clonmel but soon suffered further misfortune. On 4 May 1922, William Dillon was abducted by a group of armed men and killed a short time later.[186] Michael-Thomas Dillon left Clonmel for England following his brother's death.[187]

Anti-Protestant sectarianism?

In the five cases where the religion of those executed as spies following the announcement of the Truce is known, three, David Cummins, Major O'Conor and John Poynton, were Protestant. Two, William Nolan and John Begley was Catholic. The religious denomination of Eric Steadman is unclear. It has been stated that O'Conor and

[183] Kilmartin (NAI, BMH, WS 881, pp 19 - 20); Kennedy, (UCDA, EOMN, P17b / 114). Kilmartin claimed that Michael Dillon had opened fire on the IRA from inside the house, and that Bridget Dillon was killed when the IRA returned fire. Kennedy made a similar claim. Michael Dillon Snr. told the British Military inquest into his daughter's death that when he threw the glass jug at a member of the IRA who was attempting to break in through the window of his home: 'I threw a glass jug at the man at this window and my daughter thinking I was shot went to a window upstairs and was wounded.' A possible explanation is that the IRA Volunteers interpreted the noise of the jug smashing as a gun shot, and opened fire. PMCILI on Bridget Dillon (NAUK, WO 35 / 149A).

[184] PMCILI on Bridget Dillon (NAUK, WO 35 / 149A).

[185] Babington (NAI, BMH, WS 1595, pp 110 - 28).

[186] Michael Dillon Snr. application to the Irish Grants Commission. (NAUK, CO 762 / 3). William Dillon's body was discovered buried in the grounds of Tollomain Castle at Fethard, Tipperary the following October. It was alleged that his remains had been mutilated. Michael Dillon Senior apparently blamed members of the Free State Army for this and stated to the Irish Grants Committee in 1929 that: 'It wasn't the Rebels that destroyed the remains of my son but the people put in power in Ireland by British Act of Parliament.' Following the discovery of William Dillon's body the remaining members of the family left Ireland for East Sheen in London. Ibid.

[187] Michael-Thomas Dillon application to the Irish Grants Commission. (NAUK, CO 762 / 119).

Poynton were both killed because of their Protestant faith.[188] This claim is supportive of the suggestion that Catholic prejudices and sectarianism amongst members of the IRA were motivating factors in the killing by the IRA of Protestant civilians who were alleged to have been spies. No comprehensive list of the fatalities that occurred during the War of Independence has been published; consequently it is very difficult to establish precisely the extent to which members of the IRA may have exploited the intelligence war as a cover for anti-Protestant sectarianism. However recent research has shown that the IRA did not kill any civilians they suspected of spying in seven Irish counties: Antrim, Donegal, Down, Fermanagh, Mayo, Tyrone and Wicklow.[189] Using local histories, veteran testimony, and contemporary documents, Table 3 lists all the civilians executed as spies by the IRA in the remaining twenty five counties and in England.

A total of 186 civilians accused of spying were killed by the IRA during the War of Independence. The religious denomination that 9 of those killed is unknown. Of the remaining 177 whose religious affinities are known 43 (approximately 24%) were Protestant and 134 (approximately 76%) were Catholic. In terms of religion this shows that Protestants were a small but significant minority of those executed by the IRA as spies. No Protestants were killed in 11 of Ireland's 32 counties which rules out any possibility that the IRA in counties: Armagh, Carlow, Cavan, Clare, Galway, Kildare, Kilkenny, Limerick, Louth, Waterford or Wexford used the issue of spies as a pretext for sectarian activity against, or the 'ethnic cleansing' of, Protestants. If the seven counties where no suspected spies were executed are also taken into account then it can conclusively be shown that no Protestants were executed on suspicion of spying in 18 of Ireland's 32 counties. Therefore, even if Hart's thesis that the IRA's campaign in Cork had been motivated, at least in part,k by anti-Protestant sectarianism, this sample illustrates the dangers of assuming that the experience of one county during the conflict was reflective of the country as a whole. Furthermore, given that only 21 (approximately 31%) of the 67 civilians shot as spies by the Cork IRA were Protestant, Hart may have overstated the case for a possible sectarian motivation in the killing of civilians by the IRA during the 'intelligence war' in Cork.

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[188] *Irish Times*, 27 August 1994.

[189] O'Halpin, 'Problematic killing during the War of Independence and its aftermath: civilian spies and informers', pp 328 - 9.

Table 3 -

Civilians killed by the IRA as alleged spies and informers, county by county

Name	Date killed	Religion	Previous military or police service
Civilians executed as suspected spies by the IRA in County Armagh - **2**			
Hugh O'Hanlon	07-06-1921	Catholic	No military service.
James Smyth	07-06-1921	Catholic	No military service. [190]
Civilians executed as suspected spies by the IRA in County Carlow - **5**			
Patrick Doyle	19-09-1920	Catholic	No military service.
William Kennedy	15-03-1921	Catholic	No military service.
Michael J. O'Dempsey	15-03-1921	Catholic	No military service.
Frank O'Donoghue	-- 06-1921	Catholic	No military service.
Michael Hackett	01-06-1921	Catholic	Ex-soldier.[191]
Civilians executed as suspected spies by the IRA in County Cavan - **2**			
Patrick Briody	23-05-1921	Catholic	No military service.
Hugh Newman	29-06-1921	Catholic	Ex-Soldier. [192]
Civilians executed as suspected spies by the IRA in County Clare - **3**			
Martin Counihan	28-10-1920	Catholic	No military service.
John Reilly	21-04-1921	Catholic	Ex-soldier.
Patrick D'Arcy	21-06-1921	Catholic	No military service.[193]

[190] O'Hanlon & Smyth - RIC County Inspector's Report for Armagh, June 1921 (NAUK CO 904 /115).

[191] Doyle - Thomas Ryan (NAI, BMH, WS 1442, p. 9); Kennedy - PMCILCI on William Kennedy (NAUK, WO 35 / 157A); O'Dempsey - PMCILCI on Michael J. O'Dempsey (NAUK, WO 35 / 157A); O'Donoghue - RIC County Inspector's Report Carlow June 1921 (NAUK, CO 904 / 115); Hackett -Executions by IRA 1921 (NLI, CP, Microfilm 920).

[192] Briody - Séan Sheridan, (NAI, BMH, WS 1613, p. 17); Newman - PMCILCI on Hugh Newman (NAUK, WO 35 / 155B).

[193] RIC County Inspector's Report for Clare October 1920 (NAUK, CO 904 / 113); PMCILCI on J Reilly (NAUK, WO 35 / 157B); PMCILCI on P D'Arcy (NAUK, WO 35 / 147B); Pádraig Óg Ó Ruairc, *Blood on the banner: the republican struggle in Clare* (Cork, 2009), pp 186 - 7, 237 - 8, 250 - 3, 331. D'Arcy's execution was controversial and some IRA veterans later stated his innocence. John Burke (UCDA, EOMN, P17b / 130). Liam Haugh mentions a fourth Clareman supposedly shot as a spy in December 1920, but does not name him. This may a reference to the killing of Joe Greene of Toonavoher in January 1921. However, contemporary reports suggest Greene's killing was agrarian, consequently he has not been included above. Liam Haugh (NAI, BMH, WS 474, p. 26).

Civilians executed as suspected spies by the IRA in County Cork - **67**

Timothy Quinlisk	20-02-1920	Catholic	Ex-soldier.
James Herlihy	20-08-1920	Catholic	No military service.
James Gordon	??-08-1920	Catholic	Ex-RIC.
John O'Callaghan	15-09-1920	Catholic	Ex-soldier.
John Hawkes	13-10-1920	Catholic	No military service.
Thomas Downing	24-11-1920	Catholic	Ex-Soldier.
James Blemens	02-12-1920	Protestant	No military service.
Frederick Blemens	02-12-1920	Protestant	No military service.
George Horgan	12-12-1920	Catholic	Ex-Soldier.
Michael Dwyer	22-01-1921	Catholic	Ex-Soldier.
Tom Bradfield	23-01-1921	Protestant	No military service.
Patrick Rae	23-01-1921	Catholic	No military service.
Tom Bradfield	01-02-1921	Protestant	No military service.
Alfred Kidney	04-02-1921	Catholic	Ex-Soldier.
Alfred Charles Reilly	09-02-1921	Protestant	No military service.
William Johnson	09-02-1921	Protestant	No military service.
Robert Eady	11-02-1921	Catholic	No military service.
John O'Leary	12-02-1921	Catholic	Ex-Soldier.
William Sullivan	14-02-1921	Catholic	Ex-Soldier.
Charles Beale	14-02-1921	Protestant	No military service.
Michael Walsh	18-02-1921	Catholic	Ex-Soldier.
Matt Sweetnam	19-02-1921	Protestant	No military service.
Thomas Connell	19-02-1921	Protestant	No military service.
William Mohally	20-02-1921	Catholic	Ex-Soldier.
Michael O'Sullivan	20-02-1921	Catholic	Ex-Soldier (applicant to join RIC).
Alfred Cotter	25-02-1921	Protestant	No military service.
Thomas Cotter	01-03-1921	Protestant	No military service.
John Sheehan	05-03-1921	Catholic	No military service.
John Good	10-03-1921	Protestant	No military service.
David Nagle	13-03-1921	Catholic	Ex-RIC.
Brigid Noble	04-03-1921	Catholic	No military service.
Mary Lindsey	19-03-1921	Protestant	No military service.
James Clarke	19-03-1921	Protestant	No military service.
Cornelius Sheehan	19-03-1921	Catholic	Ex-Soldier.
Dan Lucey	20-03-1921	Catholic	No military service.
Daniel Mc Carthy	25-03-1921	Catholic	No military service.

John Cathcart	25-03-1921	Protestant	No military service.
William Good	26-03-1921	Protestant	Ex-Soldier.
Denis Donovan	29-03-1921	Catholic	Ex-Navy.
Frederick Stennings	30-03-1921	Protestant	No military service.
Denis Finbar Donovan	12-04-1921	Catholic	No military service.
John Sheehan	21-04-1921	Catholic	No military service.
Stephen O'Callaghan	29-04-1921	Catholic	Ex-Soldier.
William McCarthy	29-04-1921	Catholic	Ex-Soldier.
N. J. Harrison	30-04-1921	Catholic	Ex-RIC.
Michael O'Keefe	30-04-1921	Catholic	Ex-Soldier.
James Saunders	05-05-1921	Catholic	No military service.
Warren J. Peacock	31-05-1921	Protestant	Ex-Soldier.
William B. Purcell	06-05-1921	Catholic	Ex-Soldier.
James Lynch	06-05-1921	Catholic	No military service.
Thomas Collins	07-05-1921	Catholic	Ex-Soldier.
David Walsh	16-05-1921	Catholic	Ex-Soldier.
Edward Hawkins	20-05-1921	Catholic	Ex-Soldier.
Francis McMahon	20-05-1921	Protestant	Ex-Soldier.
Christopher O'Sullivan	27-05-1921	Catholic	Ex-Soldier.
Dave Fitzgibbon	08-06-1921	Catholic	Ex-Soldier.
Leo Corby	19-06-1921	Catholic	No military service.
Daniel O'Callaghan	21-06-1921	Catholic	Ex-Navy.
John Crowley	24-06-1921	Catholic	No military service.
John Lynch	25-06-1921	Catholic	Ex-Soldier.
Patrick Sheehan	28-06-1921	Catholic	No military service.
John Sullivan	28-06-1921	Catholic	Ex-Soldier.
Francis Sullivan	01-07-1921	Catholic	No military service.
Alex McPhearson	07-07-1921	Protestant	Ex-soldier.
George B. O'Conor	10-07-1921	Protestant	Ex-soldier.
William Nolan	11-07-1921	Catholic	Civilian (applicant to join RIC).
John Begley	11-07-1921	Catholic	Ex-soldier.[194]

[194] Quinlisk - Michael Murphy, (NAI, BMH, WS 1547, pp 12 - 8); Herlihy - Jeremiah Keating, (NAI, BMH, WS 1657, p. 6); Gordon - Timothy O'Sullivan, (NAI, BMH, WS 719, p. 7); O'Callaghan - IRA Executions 1921 (NLI, CP, Microfilm 920); Hawkes - RIC County Inspector's Report for Cork October 1920 (NAUK, CO 904 / 113); Downing - *Cork Examiner*, 26 November 1920; Blemens - Séan O'Hegeraty to Adj.General O'Sullivan (IMA, A/0535); Horgan - Emmet Dalton to Richard Mulcahy (IMA, A/0535); Dwyer - PMCILCI on Michael Dwyer (NAUK, WO 35 / 149A) ; Bradfield - RIC County Inspectors Report for Cork WR January 1921 (NAUK,CO904/114); Rae - IRA Executions 1921 (NLI, Collins Papers, Microfilm 920); Bradfield - PMCILCI on Thomas Bradfield (NAUK, WO 35 / 146A); Kidney - RIC Co. Inspectors Report for Cork WR February 1921 (NAUK,CO904 / 114); Reilly - RIC Co. Inspectors Report for Cork ER February 1921 (NAUK, CO904 / 114); Johnson - RIC Co. Inspectors Report for Cork WR February 1921 (NAUK, CO904 / 114); Eady - RIC Co. Inspectors Report for Cork WR February 1921 (NAUK, CO904 / 114); O'Leary - *The Cork Constitution*, 10 February 1921; Sullivan - *Cork Constitution*, 15 February 1921; Beale - *Cork Constitution*, 16 February 1921;

Civilians executed as suspected spies by the IRA in County Dublin - **13**

William 'Jack' Straw	21-10-1920	Unknown	Ex-soldier.
Thomas Herbert-Smith	21-11-1920	Protestant	No military service.
William McGrath	14-01-1921	Catholic	Ex-soldier.
James 'Skanker' Ryan	05-02-1921	Catholic	Ex-soldier.
William Doran	29-01-1921	Catholic	Ex-soldier.
Patrick James O'Neill	15-04-1921	Protestant	Ex-soldier.
Peter Graham	15-05-1921	Catholic	No military service.
Stephen Arthur Barden	19-05-1921	Catholic	No military service.
Leslie Frasier	22-05-1921	Protestant	Ex-soldier.
John Ellard Brady	04-06-1921	Catholic	Ex-soldier.
Thomas Halpin	04-06-1921	Catholic	Ex-Navy.
Robert Pike	18-06-1921	Catholic	Ex-soldier.
Andrew Knight	07-07-1921	Protestant	No military service.[195]

Coffey - Summary of outrages reported by the police February 1921 (NAUK, CO 904 / 144); Coffey - ibid; Walsh - *The Irish Times*, 21 February 1921; Sweetnam - RIC County Inspectors Report for Cork WR February 1921 (NAUK, CO904 / 114); Connell - RIC County Inspectors Report for Cork WR February 1921 (NAUK, CO904 / 114); Mohally - RIC County Inspectors Report for Cork ER February 1921 (NAUK, CO904/114); Sullivan - RIC County Inspectors Report for Cork ER February 1921 (NAUK, CO904 / 114); Cotter - RIC County Inspectors Report for Cork WR February 1921 (NAUK, CO904 / 114); Cotter - RIC County Inspectors Report for Cork WR March 1921 (NAUK, CO904 / 114); Good - RIC County Inspector's Report for Cork WR March 1921 (NAUK, CO904/114); Nagle - IRA Executions 1921 (NLI, CP, Microfilm 920); Noble - *Irish Times*, 22 August 1921; Lyndsey - *Irish Times*, 22 August 1921; Clarke - *Irish Times*, 22 August 1921; Sheehan - Compensation Commission Register (NAUK CO 905 / 15); Lucey - (NAI, BMH, WS 1665). ; Sheehan - Compensation Commission Register (NAUK CO 905 / 15); McCarthy - RIC County Inspector's Report for Cork ER March 1921 (NAUK, CO904 / 114); Cathcart - RIC County Inspector's Report for Cork ER March 1921 (NAUK, CO904 / 114); Good - RIC County Inspector's Report for Cork WR March 1921 (NAUK, CO904 / 114); Stennings - Compensation Commission Register (NAUK, CO 905 / 15); Woodward - RIC County Inspector's Report Cork ER April 1921 (NAUK, CO904 / 115); Boynes - RIC County Inspector's Report Cork ER (NAUK, CO904 / 115); Donovan - RIC County Inspector's Report for Cork ER April 1921 (NAUK, CO904 / 115); Sheehan - RIC County Inspector's Report for Cork ER March 1921 (NAUK, CO904 / 115); Donovan - PMCILCI on Denis Donovan (NAUK, WO 35 / 149A); O'Callaghan - RIC County Inspector's Report for Cork ER April 1921 (NAUK, CO904 / 115); McCarthy - IRA Executions 1921 (NLI, CP, Microfilm 920); Harrison - IRA Executions 1921 (NLI, CP, Microfilm 920); O'Keefe - IRA Executions 1921 (NLI, CP, Microfilm 920); Saunders - Florence O'Donoghue to Richard Mulcahy (UCDA, RMP, P17A /20); Peacock - RIC County Inspector's Report for Cork WR May 1921 (NAUK, CO904/115); Purcell - RIC County Inspector's Report for Cork ER May 1921 (NAUK, CO904 / 115); Lynch - PMCILCI on James Lynch (NAUK, WO 35 / 153B) Collins - *Irish Times*, 9 May 1921; Walsh - IRA Executions 1921 (NLI, CP, Microfilm 920); Hawkins - RIC County Inspector's Report for Cork ER May 1921(NAUK, CO904 / 115); McMahon - RIC County Inspector's Report for Cork ER May 1921(NAUK, CO904 / 115); Sullivan - RIC County Inspector's Report for Cork ER May 1921(NAUK, CO904 / 115); Fitzgibbon - RIC County Inspector's Report for Cork WR June 1921(NAUK, CO904 / 115); Corby - (NAUK, WO35 / 148); O'Callaghan - PMCILCI on Daniel O'Callaghan (NAUK, WO 35 / 156); Crowley - IRA Executions 1921 (NLI, CP, Microfilm 920); Lynch - RIC County Inspector's Report for Cork ER June 1921 (NAUK, CO904 / 115); Sheehan - RIC County Inspector's Report for Cork ER June 1921(NAUK, CO904 / 115); Sullivan - RIC County Inspector's Report for Cork WR June 1921(NAUK, CO904 / 115); RIC County Inspector's Report for Cork ER July 1921(NAUK, CO904 / 116); McPhearson - RIC County Inspector's Report for Cork ER July 1921 (NAUK, CO904 / 116); O'Conor - RIC County Inspector's Report for Cork ER July 1921(NAUK, CO904 / 116); Nolan - RIC County Inspector's Report for Cork ER July 1921(NAUK, CO904 / 116), Begley - RIC County Inspector's Report for Cork ER July 1921(NAUK, CO904 / 116). Note - This list does not include: Samuel Shannon who died 13 October 1920 after resisting an unidentified group of men who attempted to force their way into his home. Hart has claimed that Shannon was executed by the IRA for spying, but it seems just as likely that Shannon was killed in a botched IRA arms raid or a bungled burglary by a criminal gang. Gilbert Fenton was fatally wounded when armed men tried to force their way into his home. He died of his wounds six months later, his attackers cannot be identified and consequently their motives cannot be accurately ascribed. George Woodward and Joseph Boyes were killed near Mallow on 10 April 1921. The local RIC claimed the IRA were responsible, but did not clarify if the men had been killed on suspicion of being spies, or for some other reason. William Bransfield killed on 8 May 1921 was described at the inquest into his death as a 'Sinn Féiner'. A witness said that the masked men who killed him 'did not speak like men from Cork'.

[195] Straw - *The Freeman's Journal*, 1 Nov. 1920; Smith - Hittle, *Collins and The Anglo Irish War* , p. 167; McGrath - Executions by IRA 1921 (NLI, CP, Microfilm 920); Ryan - ibid ; Doran - Hittle, *Collins and The Anglo Irish War* , p. 226; O'Neill - Executions by IRA 1921 (NLI, CP, Microfilm 920); Graham - Patrick J. Brennan (NAI, BMH, WS 1773, p. 22); Barden - Patrick J. Brennan (NAI, BMH, WS 1773, p. 22), Frasier - *Irish Times*, 24 May 1921, Brady - Executions by IRA 1921 (NLI, CP, Microfilm 920); Halpin -

Civilians executed as suspected spies by the IRA in England - **1**

Vincent P. Fourvargue	21-03-1921	Catholic	IRA Volunteer.[196]

Civilians executed as suspected spies by the IRA in County Galway - **3**

Patrick Joyce	15-10-1920	Catholic	No military service.
Thomas Morris	02-04-1921	Catholic	Ex-soldier (also served in RIC).
Tom Hannon	27-04-1921	Catholic	No military service.[197]

Civilians executed as suspected spies by the IRA in County Kerry - **8**

Godfrey Jasper	29-10-1920	Protestant	Ex-RIC.
Martin Daly	20-03-1921	Catholic	No military service.
John'Sardy' Nagle	25-03-1921	Catholic	No military service.
John O'Mahony	07-04-1921	Catholic	Ex-soldier.
Arthur Vicars	14-04-1921	Protestant	Ex-soldier.
Thomas O'Sullivan	04-05-1921	Catholic	No military service.
John Fitzgerald	03-06-1921	Catholic	Ex-soldier.
James Kane	11-06-1921	Catholic	Ex-RIC.[198]

Civilians executed as suspected spies by the IRA in County Kildare - **2**

Michael Power	13-06-1921	Catholic	Ex-soldier.
Philip Dunne	16-06-1921	Catholic	No military service.[199]

(NLI, CP, Microfilm 920); Pike - Pádraig Yeates, *A city in turmoil, Dublin 1919 -1921*, (Dublin, 2012), p. 180 ; Knight - Executions by IRA 1921 (NLI, CP, Microfilm 920). This figure for Dublin does not include John Charles Byrne (AKA Jameson), Alan Bell and Leonard Aldie Wilde all of whom appear to have been in the full employment of the British intelligence services when killed.

[196] Fourvargue - Hittle, *Collins and the Anglo Irish War*, p. 202.

[197] D. M. Leeson, *The Black & Tans: British police and auxiliaries in the Irish War of Independence* (Oxford, 2011), pp 48, 61. Leeson claimed that two other Galway men, Tom Malloy and Tom McKeever were executed by the IRA. However both men were killed by the British forces. Leeson admitted this was a possibility in Molloy's case but failed to realise that the same was true of McKeever. Thomas Manion (NAI, BMH, WS 1408, pp 15-6).

[198] Patrick McKenna, (NAI, BMH, WS 1205, p. 8), Daly - PMCILCI on Martin Daly (NAUK, WO 35 / 147B); Ryle Dwyer, *Tans terror and troubles*, pp 295, 299, 301, 308, 318. Michael Quille (UCDA, EOMN, P17b / 120); RIC County Inspector's Reports for Kerry April, May and June 1921 (NAUK, CO 904 /115).

[199] Power - PMCILCI on Michael Power (NAUK, WO 35 / 157B); Dunne - PMCILCI on Phillip Dunne (NAUK, WO 35 / 149B).

Civilians executed as suspected spies by the IRA in County Kilkenny - **4**.

William Kenny	27-08-1920	Catholic	Ex-soldier.
Michael Cassidy	05-01-1921	Catholic	Ex-soldier.
Michael O'Keefe	17-05-1921	Catholic	Ex-soldier.
Patrick Dermody	17-05-1921	Catholic	Ex-soldier.[200]

Civilians executed as suspected spies by the IRA in County Laois - **2**

Peter Keyes	05-07-1921	Catholic	No military service.
John Poynton	10-07-1921	Protestant	Ex-RIC[201]

Civilians executed as suspected spies by the IRA in County Leitrim - **2**

William Latimer	30-03-1921	Protestant	No military service.
John Harrison	22-04-1921	Protestant	No military service.[202]

Civilians executed as suspected spies by the IRA in County Limerick - **7**

Denis Crowley	26-03-1920	Catholic	Ex-soldier.
James Dalton	15-05-1920	Catholic	IRA Volunteer.
Patrick Daly	01-08-1920	Catholic	No military service.
Michael O'Meara	31-12-1920	Catholic	Ex-soldier.
John O'Grady	18-03-1921	Catholic	Ex-soldier.
Michael Boland	28-06-1921	Catholic	Ex-soldier.
John Moloney	08-07-1921	Catholic	Ex-soldier.[203]

[200] Kenny - *Irish Times*, 22 August 1921; Cassidy - *Irish Independent*, 7 January 1921; O'Keefe - Thomas Treacy (NAI, BMH, WS 1093, p. 70); Dermody - Executions by IRA 1921 (NLI, CP, Microfilm 920).
[201] Keyes - PMCILCI on Peter Keyes (NAUK, WO 35 / 153A) ; Poynton - PMCILCI on John Poynton (NAUK, WO 35 / 157B).
[202] Latimer - PMCILCI on Will Latimer (NAUK, WO 35 / 153A); Harrison - PMCILCI on John Harrison (NAUK, WO 35 / 151A).
[203] O'Callaghan, *Revolutionary Limerick*, pp 171 - 84; Dalton appears to have been killed as the result of an internal IRA feud. It is likely that the allegation he had been a spy was later invented by his killers, Toomey, *War of Independence in Limerick*, pp 283 - 91.

Civilians executed as suspected spies by the IRA in County Longford - **7**

William Elliot	22-01-1921	Protestant	No military service.
William Charters	22-01-1921	Protestant	No military service.
Thomas Leacock	15-03-1921	Catholic	No military service.
Edward Beirne	05-04-1921	Catholic	No military service.
Thomas Byrne	06-04-1921	Catholic	Ex-soldier.
John Mac Namee	08-04-1921	Catholic	No military service.
Sandy Gillespie	Unknown	Catholic	No military service.[204]

Civilians executed as suspected spies by the IRA in County Louth - **1**

Henry Murray	25-02-1921	Catholic	Ex-soldier.[205]

Civilians executed as suspected spies by the IRA in County Meath - **5**

William Gordon	?? -08-1920	Protestant	Ex-soldier.
Brian Bradley	02-01-1921	Catholic	Ex-soldier.
John Donoghue	13-06-1921	Catholic	Ex-soldier.
Thomas Smith	26-06-1921	Catholic	Ex-soldier.
Patrick Keelan	02-07-1921	Catholic	No military service.[206]

Civilians executed as suspected spies by the IRA in County Monaghan - **8**

Michael O'Brien	13-11-1920	Catholic	No military service.
Joseph Gibbs	-- 01-1921	Catholic	No military service.
Patrick Larmour	09-03-1921	Catholic	IRA Volunteer.
Frank McPhillipps	09-03-1921	Catholic	No military service.
Henry Kerr	25-03-1921	Catholic	No military service.
Hugh Duffy	01-04-1921	Protestant	Member Ulster Special Constabulary.
Kate Carroll	16-04-1921	Catholic	No military service.
Arthur Treanor	25-06-1921	Catholic	No military service.[207]

[204] Coleman, *Longford and the Irish revolution*, pp 153 - 4.
[205] Stephen O'Donnell, *The Royal Irish Constabulary and Black and Tans in County Louth 1919 - 1922* (Louth, 2004), pp 109 - 110.
[206] Gordon - Leonard, 'Getting them at last', p. 124; Bradley - *Irish Times*, 22 August 1921; O'Donoghue - Executions by IRA 1921 (NLI, CP, Microfilm 920); Smith - Compensation Commission Register (NAUK, CO 905 /15); Keelan - *Irish Times*, 22 August 1921.

Civilians executed as suspected spies by the IRA in County Offaly - **8**

Patrick Birmingham	05-05-1921	Catholic	Ex-soldier.
John Lawler	26-05-1921	Catholic	Ex-soldier.
Patrick O'Connell	17-06-1921	Catholic	Ex-soldier.
Michael Reilly	17-06-1921	Catholic	Ex-soldier.
Thomas Cunningham	18-06-1921	Catholic	Ex-soldier.
Richard Pearson	01-07-1921	Protestant	No military service.
Abraham Pearson	01-07-1921	Protestant	No military service.
Eric Steadman	09-07-1921	Unknown	Ex-soldier.[208]

Civilians executed as suspected spies by the IRA in County Roscommon - **9**

Edward Canning	01-11-1920	Catholic	Ex-soldier.
Bernard Ward	06-11-1920	Catholic	Ex-soldier.
Martin Heavy	31-12-1920	Catholic	Ex-soldier.
Francis Elliot	04-03-1921	Catholic	Ex-soldier.
John Gilligan	06-04-1921	Catholic	Ex-soldier.
John Weymes	06-04-1921	Catholic	Ex-RIC.
Martin Scanlon	08-05-1921	Catholic	Ex-RIC.
John McCalley	08-05-1921	Unknown	No military service.
---"Slickfoot" Maher	Unknown	Unknown	Ex-soldier.[209]

Civilians executed as suspected spies by the IRA in County Sligo - **1**

Thomas Walker	14-04-1921	Protestant	No military service.[210]

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[207] Fearghal McGarry, *Eoin O'Duffy: a self made hero* (Oxford, 2005), pp 64 - 73. It is unclear whether Hugh Duffy was killed solely because of the suspicion that he was a spy, or whether his membership of the USC was also a motivating factor. A ninth suspected spy John McCabe, a Catholic ex-soldier, was shot by the IRA near Carrickmacross in April 1921 but apparently survived. Ibid, pp. 64.

[208] *Irish Times*, 20 June 1921; RIC County Inspector's Reports May - July 1921 (NAUK, CO 904 / 116).

[209] Canning - Frank Simmons (UCDA, EOMN P17b / 107, 137); Ward - Compensation Commission Register of Cases (NAUK, CO 905 / 15); Heavy - Luke Duffy (NAI, BMH, WS 661, p. 31); Elliot - *Irish Independent*, 9 March 1921; Gilligan - Kathy Hegarty Thorne, *They put the flag a-flyin: the roscommon volunteers 1916 -1921* (Oregan, 2005), p. 79; Weymes - ibid ; Scanlon - Frank Simmons (NAI, BMH, WS 770, p. 32); McCalley - ibid; Maher - Seamus O'Meara (NAI, BMH, WS 1505, p. 50).

[210] Michael Farry, *Sligo 1914 -1921: a chronicle of conflict* (Trim, 1992), pp 288 - 9; Michael Farry, *The Aftermath Of Revolution: Sligo 1921 -1921* (Dublin, 2000), pp 192 - 3.

Civilians executed as suspected spies by the IRA in County Tipperary - **16**

Thomas Kirby	08-01-1921	Catholic	Ex-soldier.
--- "Looby"	-- -01-1921	Unknown	Unknown.
Michael Ryan	19-02-1921	Catholic	Ex-soldier.
James 'Rockam' Maher	07-03-1921	Catholic	Ex-soldier.
Patrick 'Swordy' Meara	07-03-1921	Catholic	Ex-soldier.
George Lysaght	07-03-1921	Protestant	No military service.
Joseph Brady	26-03-1921	Catholic	No military service.
Robert Stone	16-04-1921	Protestant	No military service.
Timothy Cranley	23-04-1921	Catholic	Ex-soldier.
Frederick Crossley Boyle	13-06-1921	Protestant	No military service.
George Wallis	15-06-1921	Protestant	No military service.
Robert Healy	15-06-1921	Catholic	Ex-soldier.
Patrick Maher	26-06-1921	Catholic	Ex-soldier.
David Cummins	09-07-1921	Protestant	Ex-soldier.
Jerry Brien	1921	Unknown	Unknown.
Brian Turpin	1921	Unknown	Unknown.[211]

Civilians executed as suspected spies by the IRA in County Waterford - **1**

William Moran	13-04-1921	Catholic	Ex-soldier.[212]

Civilians executed as suspected spies by the IRA in County Westmeath - **5**

Martin Lyons	25-11-1920	Catholic	Ex-soldier.
James Blagriff	30-12-1920	Catholic	Ex-soldier.
George Johnston	11-04-1921	Protestant	No military service.
Samuel Lee	11-06-1921	Unknown	Unknown.
Unidentified man	02-07-1921	Unknown	Unknown.[213]

[211] Kirby - *Irish Times*, 7 September 1990; John C. Ryan, (NAI, BMH, WS 1450, pp 12 - 13); Michael Davern, (NAI, BMH, WS 1348, p. 44); Looby - Patrick Butler (NAI, BMH, WS 1187, pp 13 - 14). In January 1921 that the body of an unidentified man was found near Cahir. The likelihood is that this man was the individual Butler identified as Looby. RIC County Inspectors report Tipperary SR, January 1921, (NAUK, CO 904 / 114); Ryan - RIC County Inspectors report Tipperary SR, February 1921, (NAUK, CO 904 / 114); Maher - James Leahy, (NAI, BMH, WS, 1454, pp 67 - 8); Meara - ibid ; Lysaght was shot by the IRA on 07-03-1921 and died on 20-06-1921. PMCILCI on George Lysaght (NAUC WO 35 / 153A); Brady - Hogan, *The Black and Tans*, p.331; Stone - *Irish Times*, 22, 26 June 1921; Sean E. Walshe (NAI, BMH, WS, 1363, p. 8); Cranley - *Irish Times*, 27 April 1921; Boyle - *Irish Times*, 16 June 1921 & Sean E. Walshe (NAI, BMH, WS, 1363, p. 8); Wallis - ibid; Healy - ibid; Maher - Hogan, *Black and Tans*, p. 383; RIC Co. Inspectors report Tipperary NR, June 1921, (NAUK, CO 904 / 146). Cummins - *Irish Times*,*11* July 1921. Two suspected spies, Jerry Brien and Brian Turpin, were killed by the IRA in Tipperary at an unknown date in 1921. It would appear that they were killed during the War of Independence rather than in the Truce period. 'The Upperchurch lads killed and buried two tramps, one of them was Jerry Brien a tinker from Newport … they shot Brian Turpin who had a lame step and some said he was shot wrong'. Paddy Dwyer, (UCDA, EOMN, P17b / 119).

[212] Tommy Mooney, *Cry of the curlew: a history of the Déise Brigade IRA and the War of Independence* (Dungarvin, 2012), p. 258.

Civilians executed as suspected spies by the IRA in County Wexford - **4**

Jeremiah Newsome	08-02-1921	Catholic	Ex-soldier.
James Skelton	21-03-1921	Catholic	Ex-soldier.
Thomas Skelton	21-03-1921	Catholic	No military service.
James Morrisey	25-05 1921	Catholic	Ex-soldier. [214]

Thomas Walker, the only person killed by the IRA in County Sligo as a spy, was Protestant as were both of the men executed by the IRA in Leitrim. One of the two civilians killed by the IRA on the pretext of spying in Laois was Protestant. However, in Tipperary, Protestants accounted for about half of those killed whose religious denomination is known. In counties Cork, Kerry, Longford, Meath, Monaghan, Offaly and Westmeath, Protestants accounted for a third, or less, of those killed. Whilst they accounted for a significant minority of the total number killed (approximately a quarter), Protestants would also have comprised a very significant proportion of Irish loyalists who were the most likely section of the Irish population, who for political, cultural and social reasons, were the most likely section of the populace to risk incurring the wrath of the IRA by assisting the British forces. Table 3 shows that Catholics suspected of spying were shot in very large numbers. Overall, the religious make up of those executed closely mirrored the overall religious make up of Irish society at that time with Catholics forming the vast majority of those executed by the IRA, and Protestants a small, but significant, minority.[215]

Despite this evidence, there have been repeated claims that IRA executions of Protestants who were alleged to be spies were motivated by sectarianism. In February 1921, the RIC county inspector for West Cork reported that: 'a new feature of the IRA

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[213] Lyons - County Inspector's Report for Westmeath November 1920 (NAUK, CO 904 / 113); Blagriff - Michael McCormack (NAI, NMH, BMH, WS 1488, p. 33); Johnston - McCormack (NAI, BMH, WS 1500, p.13, 45); Executions by IRA 1921 (NLI, CP, Microfilm 920).

[214] Newsome - Thomas Doyle, (NAI, BMH, WS 1041, p. 67); Skelton - James O'Toole (NAI, BMH, WS 1084, pp 14 - 5); Skelton - ibid; Morrisey - Doyle, (NAI, BMH, WS 1041, p. 68).

[215] In this instance the term 'Protestants' includes members of the Church of Ireland, Presbyterian and Methodist churches. It could be argued that the number of Protestants was highest in the historical province of Ulster where there IRA shot very few spies and that therefore Protestants were overrepresented in terms of civilians killed as alleged spies. However it should also be noted that because of the previous preferential treatment Protestants in Ireland were shown by the British authorities (such as the role of the Church of Ireland as the established church until 1871) and the close links between the Protestant community and the British Army, Protestants were more likely to be loyalists who actively supported the British Government.

campaign was the murder of respectable and loyal Protestant farmers, on the grounds that they were giving information to the military.'[216] Whilst the British Army's 'Record of the Rebellion in Ireland' states that Protestants in southern Ireland 'rarely gave much information, because, except by chance they had not got it to give', it also acknowledged that West Cork, where there was a large Protestant-Loyalist population, was different in this respect.[217] Hart suggested that many of the Protestants in West Cork killed by the IRA were targeted on account of their religious profession. However, there is evidence that the British forces in Bandon recruited many members of the local Protestant congregation, through their Minister, Reverend Lord, to gather intelligence information about the IRA. Tom Bradfield, a Protestant civilian from Bandon, met Peter Monaghan, a Scottish IRA volunteer, and mistook him for an RIC Auxiliary on account of his accent. After volunteering the location of an IRA arms dump, Bradfield proudly declared that he had gathered intelligence for the British forces: 'The Reverend Mr Lord is my man, and I give him the information.'[218] Another Protestant interrogated by the IRA on suspicion of being an informer told his captors that he was innocent, but that Reverend Lord met members of his congregation every Sunday after church services to gather information for the British forces. This information was evidently passed on to Major Percival of the Essex Regiment who boasted: 'I have my own intelligence service around here, and I know everything.'[219] The British Army's *Irish rebellion in the 6th divisional area* stated:

> Martial law had undoubtedly frightened a large number of civilians, and made them more willing to give information to the Crown forces. This fact, apparently was realised by the rebel leaders, as, commencing in February [1921], a regular murder campaign was instituted against Protestant-Loyalists and anybody who might be suspected of being an informer, quite irrespective of whether he really was one or not … it had the result of making information very hard to obtain.[220]

Although this statement accuses the IRA of being less than discerning in targeting suspected spies, it also implies that the IRA's execution of suspected spies was largely motivated by military circumstances, rather than sectarianism or other prejudices, and was ultimately effective in discouraging civilians from assisting the British forces. Lionel

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[216] RIC County Inspector's Report, Cork West Riding February 1921. (NAUK CO 904 / 114).
[217] Peter Hart (ed.) *British intelligence in Ireland 1920 - 1921: the final reports* (Cork, 2002), p. 49.
[218] León Ó Broin, *Protestant nationalists in revolutionary Ireland: the Stopford connection* (Dublin, 1985), p. 177.
[219] Flor Begley, (UCDA, EOMN, P 17b / 111).
[220] 'The Irish rebellion in the 6th Divisional area', p. 99.

Curtis, an advisor to the British government who visited Ireland in June 1921, reported to the British government: 'Protestants in the South do not complain of persecution on sectarian grounds. If Protestant farmers are murdered, it is not by reason of their religion, but rather because they are under suspicion as loyalists. The distinction is a fine but a real one.'[221] Although at least two Protestants and five ex-servicemen were killed as suspected spies by the IRA in Offaly, Kenneth Strong, a British Army intelligence officer active in the county, attributed the killing of suspected spies in the county to errors made by the British forces and not an IRA campaign against Protestants or ex-soldiers.

> If things went wrong I knew that I had always the shelter of the barracks to which to retire. Not so the unfortunate informant. A few shots in the night and the next morning a corpse and pinned to it a label "Traitor. Shot by orders of the IRA". I'd had no previous Intelligence training and I was often worried by the fear that my inexperience may have led to some of these tragedies.[222]

Regarding the pre-Truce killings, in David Cummins case it appears that at the time he was abducted and sentenced to death the local IRA leader may not have been aware of his captive's religious denomination. According to Paul Mulcahy, who was present at Cummins' abduction and execution, Paddy Byrne, the vice commandant of the local IRA Battalion initially offered Cummins the chance to see a Catholic priest before his execution. Presumably Byrne did this on the assumption that Cummins, like the overwhelming majority of those who shared his surname in the county, was a Catholic.[223] If this was the case, then it was only when Cummins stated definitively that he was 'not a Catholic', immediately before his execution, that Byrne would have realised Cummins was Protestant. If the IRA military commander who ordered his execution was unaware of Cummins religion it might rule out the possibility of a sectarian motive in the IRA's decision to execute David Cummins. If the IRA were indeed ignorant of Cummins' religion, it might be interpreted as an indication that the IRA was acting on very poor intelligence. However it may also indicate that the 2nd Battalion of the Tipperary No. 3 Brigade IRA suspected people of being spies based on their activities, and that a

[221] Paddy Heaney, Pat Muldowney and Philip O'Connor (eds), *Coolacrease: the true story of the Pearson executions - an incident in the Irish War of Independence* (Cork, 2008), p. 178.
[222] Strong, *Intelligence*, p. 1.
[223] Surnames have traditionally been used in Ireland as a means of ascertaining a person's religious denomination. The surname Cummins was a popular family name in Tipperary. The 1911 census records for Tipperary show that a total of 429 people named Cummins lived in the county at the time. Of these an overwhelming majority of 419 were Catholic. Given this it would be unsurprising if Byrne had assumed that David Cummins was a Catholic based on his name. (NAI, 1911 Census).

suspect's religious denomination was removed from their thought process in attempting to discern a suspect's guilt.

It seems that the IRA may have had valid reasons (cited above) to suspect that Major O'Conor was passing information to the British forces at the time of his killing. At the inquest into John Poynton's death, his mother, Emily Poynton, stated that: 'My son had no enemies and was very popular and except that for a week he was in the RIC I know no reason why this should have occurred.'[224] Constable W. T. McMullen also gave evidence at the inquest that Poynton 'was no friend to Sinn Féin and was friendly with the police.'[225] Poynton's previous membership of the RIC, his continued association with members of the force, coupled with the IRA's apparent suspicion that he was acting as a spy and had allegedly ignored an IRA order to leave the district, are enough to account for his killing. The inquest did not cite religious sectarianism as a factor in Poynton's death. Given that the only other civilian executed by the IRA in Laois on suspicion of spying, Peter Keyes, was Catholic it seems unlikely that Poynton's death was motivated by religious sectarianism.

'Eric Steadman' was a stranger in the Tullamore area and it is extremely unlikely that the IRA would have known what religious denomination, if any, he belonged to. It is therefore likely that suspicion of him as a stranger in the area and a possible spy were more significant factors in his killing. A unique aspect of Steadman's killing was his baptism by his captors shortly before his execution.

> He was a prisoner only for a couple of days. We did that on our own, but we had a conscience about it. The brother Jimmy pointed out to him how nice it would be if he could die in the State of Grace, that is from our point of view: and Seamus explained the Catholic Church situation to him. We sent into the Tullamore parochial house for a clergyman as there was a spy to be shot, but no one came out to him. So begod Seamus then got the water and he had him baptised. Then he was shot soon afterwards.[226]

The only other instance where a suspected spy was baptised immediately before their execution occurred in Roscommon where a Black and Tan named Harold Round was captured and executed in June 1921. Round told his captors that he was an Atheist, but at

[224] PMCILCI on John Poynton (NAUK, WO 35 / 157B).
[225] PMCILCI on John Poynton (NAUK, WO 35 / 157B).
[226] Magennis (UCDA, EOMN P17b / 120).

their instigation, agreed to see a priest and be baptised.[227] If Steadman's executioners believed he was an Atheist or had not been baptised, they may have wanted him to be baptised based on a Christian belief that the un-baptised cannot enter Heaven.[228] They may have feared that if they killed an un-baptised man, they may have been condemning his soul to an eternal state of Limbo. Given the information available, it is impossible to determine exactly why Steadman's baptism occurred but this seems the most likely scenario.

Cummins and Steadman appear to have been the only two of the suspected spies executed immediately prior to the Truce to have been offered any form of spiritual aid. Whilst more Protestant suspects were executed as spies than Catholics immediately prior to the Truce, the issue is not as clear cut a case of anti-Protestant sectarianism as has been suggested. Whilst the IRA did kill three Protestants immediately before the Truce, they also killed two Catholics suspected of spying and attempted to kill at least three other Catholic-Loyalists suspected of spying. In a complete juxtaposition of the clain that the IRA were unduly influenced by anti-Protestant bias in their decision to kill suspected spies; the night before the Truce when the Meath IRA treated C. W. Chaloners, a Protestant ex-soldier who merely had his car commandeered, more leniently than Christopher Farrell, a Catholic laborer, who was abducted and interrogated.[229]

Ex-servicemen and former members of the RIC

Four of the six suspected spies executed by the IRA at the time of the Truce were ex-soldiers: David Cummins, Eric Steadman, Major O'Conor and James Begley. A fifth, John Poynton, was an ex-RIC constable. The final IRA victim, William Nolan had applied to join the RIC. Table 3 shows that at least 89 of the 186 civilians killed by the IRA as suspected spies (approximately 48%) were ex-servicemen. (86 ex-British Army soldiers and 3 ex-Royal Navy). A further 8 of the total (approximately 4%) were ex-

[227] Tom Crawley (NAI, BMH, WS 718, p. 11).
[228] Theological insight supplied by Fr. Brian Murphy OBM, Glenstall Abbey, Co. Limerick.
[229] Sean Farrelly (NAI, BMH, Ws 1734, p. 48); Michael Govern (NAI BMH WS 1625, p. 7).

RIC.[230] One of those killed, Hugh Duffy, was a member of the USC, and William Nolan was a civilian, but had recently applied to join the RIC. Three serving IRA volunteers were shot as spies. At least 87 of those killed (approximately 47%) had no military or police service. Leonard has argued that the IRA envied the military experience, pensions and entitlements of ex-soldiers. She further contended that ex-soldiers were despised by the IRA for having served in the British Army. According to Leonard: 'Within the nationalist community ex-soldiers weakened the revolution's effectiveness by refusing to join Sinn Féin, subscribe to its funds, or obey the rulings of its courts'.[231] However Leonard's study completely failed to take into account the very large number of ex-soldiers who joined both republican organisations during the conflict. Rather than having been penalised as Leonard has suggests, the experience of ex-servicemen who chose to join the IRA was largely recognised and rewarded by that body.

The presence of large numbers of ex-servicemen in IRA units throughout Ireland implies that the IRA was far less prejudiced against ex-soldiers than Leonard and Hart's work has suggested.[232] In direct contrast to their findings, Hittle's study of the conflict concluded that 'some of the IRA's best men were experienced combat veterans of the British Army. Their knowledge of weapons and tactics proved invaluable to the [IRA's flying] columns.'[233] These included the IRA's director of training, Emmet Dalton, Tom Barry, training officer of the Cork No. 3 Brigade.[234] Ignatius O'Neill leader of the 4th Battalion of the Mid Clare Brigade's Active Service Unit. [235] Dan McSweeney, the training officer with the 7th Battalion, Cork No. 1 Brigade IRA.[236] Paddy Horkan, a former member of the Worchester Regiment, was appointed captain of A Company, of the 1st Battalion, West Mayo Brigade.[237] The commandant of the IRA's Athlone Brigade, Jim Tormey, was also an ex-British soldier.[238] The Sinn Féin leaders Erskine Childers and Robert Barton were both former British Army officers, and Barton held honorary

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[230] Thomas Morris in Galway is not included in this figure as he has already been counted as an ex-soldier.
[231] Leonard, 'Getting them at last', p. 119.
[232] Michael J. Whelan, *Allegiances compromised: faith honour and allegiance ex-British soldiers in the Irish Army 1913 - 1924*, (Dublin, 2010).
[233] Hittle, *Collins and the Anglo-Irish war*, p. 96.
[234] Borgonovo, *Anti-Sinn Féin Society*, p. 82.
[235] Ó Ruairc, *Blood on the banner*, pp 99, 157 - 63.
[236] C. Browne (NAI, BMH, WS 873, p.10).
[237] Neil Richardson, *A coward if I return,a hero if I fall: stories of Irishmen in World War One* (Dublin 2010) pp 328 - 31.
[238] Phil Tomkins, *Twice a hero: from the trenches of the Great War to the ditches of the Irish midlands* (Gloucestershire, 2012), p. 88

rank in the IRA.[239] This shows that ex-servicemen were actively recruited by the IRA, and held influence and a percentage of leadership positions within the organisation that were far in excess of their numerical representation. Far from being prejudiced against ex-British soldiers, many IRA brigades actively sought to recruit ex-servicemen because of their military experience. Frank McGrath, commandant of the Tipperary No. 1 Brigade IRA, was known to favour IRA recruits and officers who had seen military service in the British Army.[240]

The RIC reported that in Belfast 'many ex-soldiers with good war records become IRA criminals.'[241] Seamus McKenna, intelligence officer of the IRA's Belfast Brigade, claimed that this was because the leadership of the Belfast IRA favoured recruits who were ex-British servicemen over raw recruits with stronger republican credentials.[242] A briefing document circulated to British Army intelligence officers in October 1920 stated that the IRA was actively recruiting ex-servicemen.[243] Florrie O'Donoghue, the intelligence officer with the 1st Cork Brigade IRA, stated that 'hundreds of men with British Army service served loyally and well in the IRA, some of them being the foremost among the intrepid fighters.'[244] William Corrie, an ex-British soldier who served in E Company, 1st Battalion of the Dublin Brigade IRA, stated: 'During my service with the IRA I met *hundreds* of ex-servicemen'[245] Corrie's experience, and the numerous examples cited above, pose serious questions about Leonard's conclusions and disprove Hart's claim that republicans were so prejudiced against ex-soldiers that: 'only a tiny minority of [British Army] veterans ever joined the IRA'.[246]

Nonetheless, the IRA had reason to be suspicious of ex-soldiers who demonstrated strong loyalist sympathies. At least two attempts were made to use ex-soldiers' associations to gather information about the IRA. British intelligence recruited John Byrne, a former leader of the Soldier's, Sailor's and Airmen's Union, to infiltrate

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[239] Borgonovo, *Anti-Sinn Féin Society*, p. 82.
[240] Hogan, *Black and Tans*, p. 220.
[241] File on Patrick Barnes, Ministry of Home Affairs., files Public Record Office of Northern Ireland (PRONI, HA/5/2182).
[242] Seamus McKenna (BMH WS 1016, p. 41).
[243] Sinn Féin the Irish Volunteer Army, (NAUK, WO 141 / 40).
[244] Florence O'Donoghue, *No other law* (Dublin, 1954), p. 145.
[245] Yeates, *City in turmoil*, p. 57. (Emphasis in original).
[246] Peter Hart in *History Ireland*, March / April 2005, p.50.

the IRA in an effort to capture Michael Collins.[247] A similar British intelligence operation was mounted in Kerry where John O'Mahony, an ex-soldier who worked in Tralee, attempted to recruit ex-servicemen to gather intelligence for the British military.[248] Both attempts failed after the British agents involved were assassinated by the IRA. The economic difficulties of many former ex-servicemen, coupled with their military training and proven record of loyalty to the British Crown, made them ideal candidates for intelligence work on behalf of the British forces. Irishmen who had served in the British forces were far more likely to suffer economic hardship after the war than their British counterparts. Average unemployment in Ireland amongst ex-soldiers was 46% compared to just 10% in Britain.[249]

As early as July 1919, several thousand Irish ex-servicemen engaged in protests about unemployment and inadequate financial provisions in their British Army pensions.[250] By February 1920, an estimated 27,000 able-bodied ex-servicemen in Ireland were unemployed.[251] This situation had improved little by the end of that year with 21,000 ex-servicemen still unemployed.[252] In January 1921, there were 24,000 unemployed ex-soldiers in Ireland with a concentration of 4,500 former servicemen out of work in Cork alone.[253] In June 1921, the Munster Fusilier Ex-Comrades Association reported 'in the present state of affairs in Ireland, it was very difficult for an ex-serviceman to obtain employment of any kind.'[254] Major General H. S. Jeudwine commanding the British 5th Division in Ireland, reported in February 1921 that 'although the peasants and the small farmers in the west of Ireland were the most prosperous they had been within living memory, ex-soldiers were suffering particular hardship. Probably almost the only cases in which there has been want this winter have been among unemployed ex-soldiers and their families.'[255] Since the British authorities in Ireland had publicly offered financial rewards for the supply of intelligence information, some ex-soldiers may have been forced to act as spies and informers out of economic necessity in

[247] Hittle, *Collins and the Angl- Irish war,* pp 101 - 10.
[248] Tadg Kennedy (EOMN, UCDA, 17b / 102).
[249] Yeates, *City in turmoil,* p. 56.
[250] Hogan, *Black and Tans,* p. 110.
[251] Yeates, *City in turmoil,* p. 101.
[252] Borgonovo, *Anti-Sinn Féin Society,* pp 78, 98.
[253] Whelan, *Allegiances compromised* p. 45.
[254] *Cork Examiner,* 20 June 1921.
[255] H. S. Jeudwine in Sheehan, *Hearts & mines,* p. 211.

1920 and 1921.

Post 1920, approximately 2,500 of the RIC's recent recruits, comprising 20% of the recruits to the Black and Tans and 10% of the recruits to the RIC Auxiliary Division, were Irishmen. The vast majority of these were ex-soldiers.[256] The RIC Veterans and Drivers Division recruited local ex-servicemen in Ireland because of a shortage of experienced drivers in the RIC. The Division operated in tandem with the RIC Auxiliary Division and its members drove the vehicles used in their patrols, raids and searches.[257] Local ex-servicemen who joined the Veterans and Drivers Division proved a particularly useful source of intelligence information because of their knowledge of the local populace and geography. At least one local ex-serviceman, Denis O'Loughlin, who joined the Veterans and Drivers Division was suspected of being a spy and killed by the IRA.[258] A number of Catholic ex-servicemen who had operated as a criminal gang in Limerick joined the RIC Auxiliary Division following an armed clash between them and the local IRA unit at Newcastle West, Limerick and were suspected of having engaged in intelligence gathering after their enlistment.[259]

Many unemployed Irish ex-servicemen who were unable to find work re-enlisted in the British Army in 1919 and 1920. In February 1921, the British Government facilitated further recruitment by issuing a directive allowing ex-servicemen to re-enlist in the British Army for short service attachments to British Regiments stationed in Ireland.[260] These regiments often recruited local ex-servicemen who could re-enlist for a period of ninety days 'emergency service'.[261] The 1st Battalion of the Devonshire Regiment recruited local ex-servicemen in Waterford. The local recruits performed general fatigue duties, wore British uniform, but lived outside of barracks, and were known as the 'Waterford Devons'.[262] Some ex-soldiers like William Shiels were involved in covert intelligence gathering work on behalf of the British Army whilst disguised in

[256] W. J. Lowe, 'Who were the Black and Tans?' in *History Ireland* Vol. 12, No.3 (Autumn 2004) p. 48.
[257] McCall, *Tudor's toughs*, p. 51.
[258] Ryle Dwyer, *Tans, terror and troubles*, pp 304 - 5.
[259] Toomey, *War of independence in Limerick*, pp 261 - 3. One of the four, Thomas Hanley, appears to have been captured by the IRA in October 1921, executed and secretly buried. *Limerick Leader*, 4 November 1928.
[260] *Irish Times*, 10 February 1921.
[261] Richardson, *A coward if I return*, pp 328 - 34.
[262] W. J. P. Agget, *'The Bloody II' Vol. 3: History of the Devonshire Regiment 1914 - 1969* (Exeter, 1995) p. 205.

British uniform.[263]

Another alleged informer, Thomas Kirby, who was captured, executed, and secretly buried by the IRA, had supposedly employed similar disguises whilst assisting the British military.[264] A number of other ex-soldiers were amongst the most effective informers in the British forces' intelligence war against the IRA; these included Daniel 'Monkey' McDonnell and Patrick 'Croxy' Connors.[265] The re-enlistment of local ex-solders into the British regiments serving in Ireland helped to blur the distinction between ex-servicemen and serving members of the British forces. It was therefore logical for the IRA to assume that, if the British Army were utilising ex-soldiers in Ireland for fatigue duties, then they would also seek to recruit them for intelligence gathering duties. This distinction was further blurred when Irish ex-servicemen donned British uniform as a disguise whilst carrying out intelligence work.

The RIC county inspectors' reports for July 1921 do not state that any of the ex-servicemen, David Cummins, Eric Steadman, or Major G. B. O'Conor were killed by the IRA as part of an IRA campaign targeting ex-soldiers.[266] As Steadman was not a native of the area where he was killed, it is unlikely that the local IRA would have been aware that he was an ex-soldier until it captured and interrogated him. The IRA had a tendency to regard strangers visiting its brigade and battalion areas as potential spies. Steadman's demeanour, behaviour, and in particular his English accent, would have been enough to have drawn the IRA's suspicion even if he had no prior military experience.

John Poynton's mother testified that the sole source of his unpopularity was his associations with the RIC.[267] Given that he was the only ex-RIC constable executed by the IRA in Laois it seems more likely that it was his continued interaction with the RIC after his return home, which led to the suspicion that he was a spy and his killing, rather than any campaign against former RIC constables. Borgonovo has found evidence of hostility between ex-soldiers and the British forces in Cork city during the War of Independence.[268] At least five ex-soldiers, who were not members of the IRA, were killed

[263] John Moloney (NAI, BMH, WS 1036, p. 17).
[264] *The Irish Times*, 7 September 1990.
[265] Borgonovo, *Anti-Sinn Féin Society*, pp 58 - 9, 89.
[266] RIC County Inspector's Reports, July 1921 (NAUK, CO 904 / 116).
[267] PMCILI on John Poynton (NAUK, WO35 / 157B).
[268] Borgonovo, *Anti-Sinn Féin Society*, p. 82.

by the British forces in Cork in contentious circumstances.[269] Similarly O'Callaghan found that at least ten ex-soldiers who had no association with the IRA had been killed by the British troops in Limerick.[270] Both the IRA and the British forces killed numbers of civilian ex-servicemen, usually because they were perceived to be active opponents. However it would be a gross and misleading oversimplification to suggest that either grouping was so blindly prejudiced that they were wholly disinterested in harnessing the military experience of ex-servicemen and waged campaigns against them.

The question of 'guilt' of those killed by the IRA prior to the Truce

The question of establishing the 'guilt' or 'innocence' of those executed by the IRA for spying is an exceptionally difficult one for historians. Brian Hanley has stated that 'in many instances it is simply impossible to know how many of the people killed by the IRA for spying, were, in fact, informers.'[271] Diarmaid Ferriter has described it as 'perhaps an impossible task' for historians.[272] This is because there is no documentation still in existence that can confirm the guilt or innocence of suspected spies conclusively. The letters written to the British forces which provided intelligence information and were captured by the IRA are no longer extant. Contemporary British documents did not name their informants for security reasons. The British forces rarely confirmed or denied the alleged role of those who had been executed. Since very few members of the British forces who served in Ireland during the War of Independence were willing to talk about the conflict or include information concerning it in their memoirs, we are overly reliant on the accounts of IRA veterans for information about the supposed guilt or innocence of suspected spies and informers. Many of the quotes and information cited as evidence here come from veteran statements recorded by Ernie O'Malley and the Bureau of Military History. As these statements were collected between twenty to thirty-five years after the events described they must be treated with caution since they may contain inaccuracies, contradictory evidence or personal bias. However, they are often the only surviving

[269] Borgonovo, *Anti-Sinn Féin Society*, pp 82, 99.
[270] O'Callaghan, *Revolutionary Limerick*, p. 184.
[271] Brian Hanley, *The IRA: a documentary history 1916 - 2005* (Dublin, 2010), p. 16.
[272] *Irish Examiner*, 30 October 2010.

evidence detailing the supposed guilt or innocence of a suspected spy from the perspective of those who were directly involved in, or familiar with, their cases.

Table 4:

Suspected spies killed by the IRA, listed on the Irish Compensation Commission Register

Name	Date	Acceptance of British liability	Compensation awarded.
James Gordon	??-08-1920	'L' [Liability]	£34.
William Kenny	27-08-1920	NOT STATED	£360.
John O'Callaghan	15-09-1920	'L'	£950.
Patrick Doyle	19-09-1920	'Accepted British liability'	£1,200.
John Hawkes	13-10-1920	'L - British supporter'	£300.
Patrick Joyce	15-10-1920	NOT STATED	£3,750.
Martin Counihan	28-10-1920	'Agreed to accept as a British liability'	£2,160.
Bernard Ward	06-11-1920	'L - Agreed British liability'	£2,500.
Michael O'Brien	13-11-1920	'Agreed 50/50'	£125.
Tom Herbert-Smith	21-11-1920	'L'	£3,500.
Thomas Downing	24-11-1920	'L'	£38.
Frederick Blemens	02-12-1920	'L'	£56.
George Horgan	12-12-1920	'Agreed British liability'	£900.
James Blagriff	30-12-1920	'British supporter'	£1,500.
Martin Heavy	31-12-1920	'Agreed to accept as British liability'	£400.
Michael O'Meara	31-12-1920	'L - Agreed to accept as British liability'	£2,850.
William Charters	22-01-1921	'L - Agreed British liability'	£1,500.
William Elliot	22-01-1921	'Agreed British liability'	£1,000.
Michael Dwyer	22-01-1921	'L - Agreed to accept as British liability'	£1,600.
Tom Bradfield	23-01-1921	'British supporter'	£6,000.
Patrick Rae	23-01-1921	'L'	£2,000.
William Doran	29-01-1921	'L - British supporter'	£1,750.
Tom Bradfield	01-02-1921	'British supporter'	£5,000.
Alfred Kidney	04-02-1921	'L'	£750.
Jeremiah Newsome	08-02-1921	'Agreed 50/50'	£150.
Alfred Charles Reilly	09-02-1921	'L'	£9,000.
William Johnson	09-02-1921	'L - Agreed 50/50	£4,150.
Robert Eady	11-02-1921	'Agreed 50/50'	£2,000.
William Sullivan	14-02-1921	NOT STATED	£50.

Charles Beale	14-02-1921	‘Agreed 50/50’	£900.
Michael Walsh	18-02-1921	NOT STATED	£650.
Michael Ryan	19-02-1921	NOT STATED	£150.
Matt Sweetnam	19-02-1921	‘Agreed 50/50’	£100.
Michael O’Sullivan	20-02-1921	‘L’	£2,000.
Alfred Cotter	25-02-1921	‘Agreed to accept as British liability’	£5,000.
Henry Murray	25-02-1921	NOT STATED	£135.
Francis Elliot	04-03-1921	‘L - Agreed to accept as British liability’	£2,600.
Brigid Noble	04-03-1921	‘British supporter’	£2,000.
James Maher	07-03-1921	‘Agreed to accept as a British liability’	£1,500.
George Lysaght	07-03-1921	‘L - Agreed as British liability’	£14,700.
Frank McPhillipps	09-03-1921	‘Agreed to accept as British liability’	£410.
John Good	10-03-1921	‘Agreed 50/50’	£7,000.
David Nagle	13-03-1921	‘Agreed to accept as British liability’	£1,400.
Michael O’Dempsey	15-03-1921	‘Agreed 50/50 liability’	£4,500.
John O’Grady	18-03-1921	‘Agreed to accept as British liability’	£450.
James Clarke	19-03-1921	‘British supporter’	£200.
Dan Lucey	20-03-1921	‘L’	£500.
Martin Daly	20-03-1921	‘L - British supporter’	£600.
John Cathcart	25-03-1921	‘L’	£8,500.
Denis Donovan	29-03-1921	‘L’	£2,000.
Frederick Stennings	30-03-1921	‘Agreed to accept as British liability’	£5,500.
William Latimer	30-03-1921	‘Agreed to accept as British liability’	£5,180.
Edward Beirne	05-04-1921	‘L - Agreed to accept as British liability’	£2,500.
John Gilligan	06-04-1921	‘Agreed British liability’	£2,000.
John Weymes	06-04-1921	‘Agreed British liability’	£1,700.
John O’Mahony	07-04-1921	‘Agreed to accept as British liability’	£3,000.
John Mac Namee	08-04-1921	NOT STATED	£1,240.
George Johnston	11-04-1921	‘L - British supporter’	£1,000.
William Moran	13-04-1921	‘Agreed British liability’	£50.
Kate Carroll	16-04-1921	‘L - British liability’	£600.
Robert Stone	16-04-1921	‘L - Agreed to accept as British liability’	£1,000.
John Reilly	21-04-1921	‘L - Agreed to accept as British liability’	£1,200.
John Harrison	22-04-1921	‘British liability’	£4.640.
Tom Hannon	27-04-1921	‘Agreed to accept as full liability’	£1,150.
Michael O’Keefe	30-04-1921	‘L - Agreed to accept as British liability’	£950.
Martin Scanlon	08-05-1921	‘L - British supporter’	£2,500.

Peter Graham	15-05-1921	‘L - British supporter’	£500.
Michael O’Keefe	17-05-1921	NOT STATED	£100.
Stephen Barden	19-05-1921	‘Accepted as a British supporter’	£25.
Patrick Briody	23-05-1921	‘Agreed to accept as British liability’	£3,100.
Chris. O’Sullivan	27-05-1921	‘L - Agreed to accept as British liability’	£1,850.
Michael Hackett	01-06-1921	‘L” [Liability]	£400.
John Ellard Brady	04-06-1921	NOT STATED	£25.
Dave Fitzgibbon	08-06-1921	NOT STATED	£35.
John Donoghue	13-06-1921	‘L - Agreed to accept as British liability’	£350.
Michael Power	13-06-1921	‘L - British supporter’	£3,300.
Philip Dunne	16-06-1921	‘Agreed 50/50’	£350.
Michael Reilly	17-06-1921	‘L - Agreed to accept full liability’	£1,000.
Thomas Cunningham	18-06-1921	NOT STATED	£1,250.
Robert Pike	18-06-1921	‘L’	£40.
Leo Corby	19-06-1921	‘L - Accepted British liability’	£1,850.
Patrick D’Arcy	21-06-1921	‘Accepted as full British liability’	£600.
Patrick Maher	25-06-1921	‘Comission Award’	£935.
Thomas Smith	26-06-1921	‘L - Agreed British liability’	£1,000.
Hugh Newman	29-06-1921	‘Agreed to accept as British liability’	£2,500.
Richard Pearson	01-07-1921	‘Accepted as a British supporter’	£500.
Abraham Pearson	01-07-1921	‘Accepted as a British supporter’	£1,000.
Patrick Keelan	02-07-1921	NOT STATED	£175.
Peter Keyes	05-07-1921	‘L -Agreed to accept as British liability’	£2,500.
Andrew Knight	07-07-1921	‘L’	£1,250.
Alex McPherson	07-07-1921	‘Agreed British liability’	£2,000.
David Cummins	09-07-1921	‘Agreed 50/50’	£600.
George B. O’Conor	10-07-1921	‘Accept as British liability’	£5,000.
John Poynton	10-07-1921	‘Agreed British liability’	£1,200.
John Begley	11-07-1921	‘L’	£1,500.

The register of the Irish Compensation Commission may give an indication of how many, if any, of those killed by the IRA as suspected spies had actively assisted the British forces. Of the 186 suspected spies killed by the IRA, 94 are identifiable on the Commission’s register. As well as recording the compensation paid to their families, the register frequently commented on the British government’s liability for the killing. Since the 96 individuals listed on Table 4 above were all killed by the IRA, an admission of

‘British liability’ on the register may be a strong indication that the deceased had actively supported the British forces. No comment on liability was recorded in 13 cases (approximately 13%), liability is suggested in a further 16 cases (approx 16% of total) but no more detail is given. Of the remainder the British admitted partial liability for the deaths of 10 fatalities (approx 10%), 15 are identified as ‘British supporter’ which seemingly indicates that the deceased were targeted simply because they were identifiable as loyalists. The 41 remaining cases (approx 42% of total) were recorded as ‘British liability’, ‘full British liability’ or ‘full liability’ which is a strong indication that many, if not a majority of those identified had been actively assisting the British forces.[273]

The IRA appear to have had legitimate reasons to suspect those executed were spies, informers or British intelligence agents at the time of the Truce. However Hart claimed that one of those executed immediately prior to the Truce, Major O’Conor, was killed because he had refused to resign his position as a Justice of the Peace. Hart maintained that the IRA in Cork considered its opponents’ open loyalty to British authority reason enough to shoot them.[274] Yet, Hart offered no evidence to support his conclusion other than O’Conor’s status as a Justice of the Peace. Nor did Hart venture to explain why O’Conor and Alfred Reilly were alone targeted, when there were two dozen other serving JPs in Cork.[275] The IRA in Cork had abducted and released unharmed three other British legal officers at the time of the Truce. On 6 July 1921, the IRA abducted Mr P. Brady a resident magistrate at Ballylickey, Bantry. John J. O’Sullivan, a member of the IRA’s Bantry Battalion, stated that the IRA carried out an investigation into Brady’s activities before releasing him. According to O’Sullivan: ‘It later transpired that this man was friendly to our side and he was released within a couple of days.’[276] On 10 July, the IRA abducted Eugene A. Swanton, a JP, and Daniel M. J. O’Connell, a clerk of the peace

[273] The British acceptance of liability in these cases though not conclusive proof, is, in many cases, a strong indication that those killed were involved in espionage. Interestingly civcilians killed by the British forces such as Denis O’Donovan, a hotel proprieter killed by the RIC in Castleconnell, Co. Limerick, were also listed as ‘Agreed British Liability’. (Claims by the relatives of IRA members killed by the British forces, such as the Coffey brothers in Bandon, were rejected). In some cases there is additional evidence to corroberate the idea that suspected spies killed by the IRA and accepted as ‘British liabilities’ were assisting the British forces. For example William Latimer, who was killed by the IRA on 30 March 1921, is listed on the register as a ‘British Liability’. In her evidence to the Irish Grants Committee his widow stated that he had supplied information to the RIC before he was killed. Irish Grants Committee Claims (NAUK, CO 762 / 4).

[274] Hart, *IRA & its enemies*, p. 299.

[275] Borgonovo, Spies, informers and the Anti-Sinn Féin Society, pp 83 - 4.

[276] John J. O’Sullivan (NAI, BMH, WS 1578, p. 21).

at Skibbereen. Stephen O'Brien, adjutant of the IRA's Skibbereen Battalion, believed that Swanton had colluded in British reprisal killings: 'and though a civilian was one of the enemy's murder gang.' Swanton was armed at the time of his capture but did not attempt to use his weapon against his IRA captors.[277] O'Connell was later released unharmed and Swanton escaped after ten weeks in IRA custody.[278]

The IRA's treatment of Brady, Swanton and O'Connell imply that the IRA in Cork did not shoot political opponents on the basis that they held office as legal officials as Hart suggested. Major O'Conor and John Begley both appear to have had contact with, and demonstrable links to, the British forces to which suggest that they may have supplied them with information. The third, William Nolan, had demonstrated his active support for the British forces by applying to join the RIC. Police and military ties to the IRA's victims have been established in the cases of five of the six who were executed: Eric Steadman, Major O'Conor, John Poynton, William Nolan and John Begley. David Cummins' case is less clear cut. However it appears that he had been found guilty *in absentia* of spying - but what evidence (if any) they based this on is still unknown.

Timing - A rush for justice?

The Truce was formally agreed and publicly announced at 5:30pm on 8 July 1921. The IRA had abducted and interrogated Steadman prior to this, apparently on the suspicion that he was a spy. Furthermore there is evidence that the IRA had made previous attempts to kill several of those they targeted as suspected spies after the announcement of the Truce. The IRA in Cork attempted to kill Major O'Conor in February 1921. The IRA's Cork No. 1 Brigade posted IRA volunteers near his home to monitor O'Conor's movements for a week before he was killed on 10 July.[279] It seems that the IRA had valid reasons to believe that O'Conor was passing information to the British forces at the time of his killing. In John Poynton's case, the IRA would have regarded him as an active opponent and a potential spy, since his brief enlistment in the RIC seven months prior to

[277] Stephen O'Brien (NAI, BMH, WS 603, pp 3 - 4).
[278] Ungoed, *Jasper Wolfe*, p. 122.
[279] O'Mahony, *The maritime gateway to Cork*, p. 104.

his killing. Poynton had allegedly been warned by the IRA to leave the area after he came under suspicion of being a spy. Poynton's association with the RIC appears to have been the primary motivating factor in his killing. However, it is possible that the announcement of the Truce was a decisive factor in spurring Poynton's killers to act when they did.

Because of his association with the Shiels spy network, which had been responsible for the deaths of at least eight members of the IRA, John Begley became one of the most sought-after suspected spies to have come to the attention of the IRA in Cork by the summer of 1921. Séan O'Connell later stated that the IRA in Cork had been ordered to keep a watch for Begley.[280] The IRA report of Begley's killing states that he was 'a spy for whom we were on the look out.'[281] Given that he was associated with such an effective British spy network, it seems highly likely that Begley's abduction by the IRA minutes before the Truce came into effect was entirely opportunistic rather than premeditated. If the IRA in Cork had been in a position at any other time to abduct, interrogate and kill Begley, it is likely that they would have done so. As such, Begley's misfortune in being positively identified and followed by IRA volunteers on the day of his capture, and not the announcement of the Truce, seems to have been the primary factor that led to his death.

The previous IRA attempt to kill Major O'Conor, and the IRA's suspicion that Eric Steadman, John Poynton and John Begley had gathered intelligence for the British forces over a lenghty period suggests that rather than searching for any available 'soft targets' after the announcement of the Truce, the IRA specifically targeted those whom they were already suspicious of. Leonard's finding that most killings of ex-servicemen occurred at weekends and during public holidays also raises the possibility that some of the executions carried out on the weekend prior to the Truce may have been coincidental and were likely to have occurred regardless of whether or not a ceasefire was imminent. It is also significant that, after the announcement of the Truce in counties where these men were killed (Cork, Laois, Offaly and Tipperary) local IRA units expended far more effort, at much greater risk, attempting to attack armed members of the British forces than

[280] O'Connell (NAI, BMH, WS 1706, p. 9).
[281] Activity report of O/C G. Coy for Month, July 1921 (UCDA, RMP P7/A/23).

they did attempting to kill suspected spies.[282]

Non-fatal punishment of suspected spies by the IRA immediately prior to the Truce

Whether a suspected spy was sentenced to death, and executed or punished in some other way often depended on the value of the information they had given and whether it resulted in the capture of IRA arms and the deaths of IRA volunteers. The IRA did not attempt to kill all of those it suspected of spying at the time of the Truce. In a number of cases the advent of the Truce resulted in the death sentences imposed on suspected spies being commuted, or spies being issued with a verbal warning or threatening notice. During a mail raid in July 1921, members of the Tipperary No. 3 Brigade IRA discovered the identity of an informer who was writing letters to the RIC. This man, an elderly ex-soldier who lived in Carrick-on-Suir, received a warning to stop corresponding with the RIC but was otherwise unmolested. Denis O'Driscoll, a captain in one of the local IRA companies, believed that the man would have been shot had it not been for the Truce. 'No punitive action was however taken against him. I believe that the Truce coming at the time it did, was what saved him.'[283] Similarly, the IRA's Longford Brigade had identified through a mail raid a woman who was passing accurate intelligence to the British forces in the county. According to the local Brigade intelligence officer, Michael Francis Heslin, the suspected spy had 'a good knowledge of our movements, the places at which we stayed and the particular working of the organisation in general.' Heslin believed that the woman's action warranted execution but that the impending ceasefire saved her life.[284] The advent of the Truce apparently prevented the execution of a number of suspected spies being investigated by the IRA's East Limerick Brigade. When informing IRA GHQ of the execution of a suspected spy in Limerick prior to the announcement of the Truce the local intelligence officer stated: 'A few others would have met the same fate were it not for truce.'[285] A similar situation occurred in Kerry. Four suspected spies had been killed by the IRA's Kerry No. 1 Brigade during the conflict. According to William

[282] See Chapter Four.
[283] Denis J. O'Driscoll (NAI, BMH, WS 1159, p. 11).
[284] Michael Francis Heslin (NAI, BMH, WS 662, pp 15 - 7).
[285] East Limerick Brigade Intelligence Report to GHQ for July 1921, 29 July 1921 (UCDA, RMP, P7a/8)

Mullins, the brigade quarter master, they were planning to execute several others by July 1921: 'A few more were suspected and proof was being collected, but the Truce came and saved them … 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.'[286]

Acting upon the order they had received from the Head Quarters Staff of the 1st Eastern Division to take action against specified targets before the Truce came into effect, the Carnaross Company of the IRA's Meath Brigade organised an attack on the British Army at Moynalty Bridge, Kells for the morning of 11 July. In conjunction with this they planned to penalise C. W. Chaloner, a suspected spy who lived in the area.[287] Chaloner, a Protestant ex-soldier, was suspected of having given information to the British Army concerning an IRA ambush.[288] The previous month he and his wife were fired upon when they failed to stop when confronted by an IRA patrol, but escaped with relatively minor wounds.[289] Having tried him *in absentia* prior to the announcement of the Truce, the Brigade Council of the IRA's Meath Brigade ordered that the car Chaloner had used to warn the British Army be confiscated as a punishment for his actions.[290] Sean Farrelly led a group of seven armed and masked IRA volunteers who confiscated Chaloner's car at 10:30pm on 10 July. Before leaving, Farrelly and his comrades mocked Chaloner advising him to report the incident to the RIC saying: 'Perhaps they will help you as you helped them.'[291] Beyond being held at gunpoint and having his car commandeered Chaloner was otherwise unmolested.[292]

At 11 pm on 10 July, the IRA raided the home of Mrs Harriet Byrne, a Protestant who lived near Maryboro, Laois and accused her of passing information to the British forces. They then tore up a British flag and photographs of the RIC that were in the house and stole a sum of money. Before leaving they forced Mrs Byrne to sign a statement that she would not report the raid to the British forces and fired a revolver shot in her

[286] William Mullins (NAI, BMH, WS 801, p. 10).
[287] Farrelly (NAI, BMH, WS 1734, pp 50 - 1).
[288] Farrelly (NAI, BMH, WS 1734, p. 48).
[289] Summary of Outrages reported by the Police, June 1921. (NAUK CO 904 / 146).
[290] Farrelly (NAI, BMH, WS 1734, p. 48).
[291] Farrelly (NAI, BMH, WS 1734, pp 50 - 1). Chaloner recovered his car after it had been abandoned by the IRA The vehicle was again commandeered by the IRA after the implementation of the Truce but was later returned Chaloner intact. *Ibid*, pp 50 - 1.
[292] Summary of outrages reported by the Police, July 1921 (NAUK CO 904 / 146).

kitchen.[293] At 1am the same night, two armed and masked members of the IRA forced their way into the home of Miss A. Gleeson, a Catholic post mistress, who lived near Maryboro in Laois. The men then forced Miss. Gleeson and her nephew, Richard Harvey Cassidy, to sign a statement that in the future they would not give any information about the IRA to the British forces.[294] In East Limerick a group of masked men physically assaulted two women at Timothy Aherne's house and warned them against speaking to the British military.[295] At the time of the Truce the IRA had also planned to abduct Mr. William Ringwood, manager of the Munster & Leinster Bank at Bantry, Cork. Ringwood, a Protestant, was suspected of passing intelligence information to the British forces and was facing execution as a suspected spy but was saved after a Catholic priest intervened.[296]

At 2:00am on 11 July, the IRA abducted Christopher Farrell, a Catholic labourer who lived at Catherae, Meath.[297] Earlier that night Paddy Farley commander of the Meath No. 3 Brigade IRA had ordered Michael Govern to arrest Farrell.

> At 2 am Paddy Farley Brigade O/C, called and ordered me to go to Carnacross to arrest a man named Christopher Farrell a suspected spy ... We arrested Farrell and took him to a house in Salford where we placed two Volunteers to guard him. I arrived home at 7am on the morning of the Truce.[298]

Govern does not specify what happened to Farrell. There is no record of Farrell's death in the national press and his family did not make a claim to the Irish Compensation Committee. Farrell's name does not appear on either 'the missing list' compiled by the British Government and published in the *Irish Times* or the Irish Department of Justice's 'list of missing persons'.[299] It is therefore likely he was released unharmed some time after his abduction, possibly being forced into permanent exile as a punishment. On the morning of the 11 July, Patrick Shannon, a Catholic ex-RIC constable who lived near Castlerea in Roscommon, found a notice posted on the door of his house warning him that he was a convicted spy. Shannon had previously been threatened for failing to force

[293] Summary of outrages reported by the Police. July 1921 (NAUK CO 904 / 150).
[294] Summary of outrages reported by the Police. July 1921 (NAUK CO 904 / 150).
[295] Summary of outrages reported by the Police. July 1921 (NAUK CO 904 / 150).
[296] Hart, *IRA & its enemies*, p. 313.
[297] *Cork Examiner*, 13 July 1921.
[298] Michael Govern (NAI BMH WS 1625, p. 7).
[299] List of Missing Persons, Department of Justice Files, (NAI, H16, 1922 - 1926).

his son to resign from the RIC A month earlier Shannon's house had been raided by thirteen armed men who tied his daughter to a tree, interrogated her concerning her brother's whereabouts, and warned her to cease fraternising with members of the RIC in Elphin and Castlerea.[300]

Just a few hours before the Truce came into effect, the IRA's Mid-Limerick Brigade also took non-fatal action against George Ryan, a spy it had unmasked, and who had initially been sentenced to death. Ryan, a lieutenant in the Fedamore Company of the IRA, had been caught sending intelligence information by post to the RIC in Limerick city. The local IRA officers court-martialled Ryan *in absentia* and sentenced him to death. In accordance with IRA general orders, the Mid Limerick Brigade sent to IRA GHQ requesting permission to carry out Ryan's execution, this was refused. Instead the Mid Limerick Brigade was instructed to fine Ryan £100, destroy his house and sentence him to permanent exile, giving him just twenty-four hours to leave the country.[301] This sentence was carried out at 1am on 11 July when a group of armed and masked IRA volunteers raided Ryan's farm at Fedamore, burning his farmhouse and its associated farm buildings to the ground.[302]

The IRA in Donegal was holding two suspected spies at the time of the Truce. In July 1921 they arrested John Collins, an ex-soldier who worked as a travelling fishmonger. He was suspected of supplying information to the British forces that had resulted in a number of arms seizures and the arrest of an IRA volunteer. On 3 July, he had been observed accompanying a party of Auxiliaries who were conducting house searches in Dungloe. Collins was disguised as an Auxiliary, and was apparently acting as an 'identifier' for the patrol, pointing out to them for arrest active members of the IRA. Following this, Collins was arrested by the IRA and held captive by them for over a week. Under interrogation he admitted supplying Colonel McClintock, a British intelligence officer in Omagh, with information. Collins also gave the names of others who he claimed were British agents including an itinerant named McKeowan whom he claimed was giving information to the RIC. McKeowan was subsequently arrested and both men were charged with spying at an IRA court martial held about the time the Truce

[300] Summary of outrages reported by the Police, July 1921, (NAUK, CO 904 / 150).
[301] Sean Clifford (NAI, BMH, WS 1279 p. 3).
[302] Summary of outrages reported by the Police, July 1921, (NAUK CO 904 / 146).

was agreed on 8 July. McKeowan was exiled from the county and Collins was sentenced to death. Collins death sentence was commuted to exile when news of the Truce reached Donegal.[303]

The IRA's Mid Limerick Brigade was also holding two suspected spies prisoner at the time of the Truce. The pair had been in IRA custody for up to five months but it was felt that there was insufficient evidence of their guilt to warrant their execution and the men were both released as soon as the Truce took effect.[304] Two suspected spies who had been held prisoner by the Meath Brigade since October 1920 were also released unharmed once the ceasefire began.[305] After they learned of the Truce, the leadership of the 3rd Battalion, West Waterford Brigade warned three individuals they had been monitoring that, if they continued to associate with members of the British forces they would be executed as spies.[306]

Assessment

If the announcement of the ceasefire had led to a rush for justice or score settling on the part of the IRA, we would expect to see a much larger number of suspected spies killed in the historical record on the night of 10 and the morning of 11 July after provincial units of the IRA learned of the Truce. However, IRA attempts to kill suspected spies were only recorded in five counties: Cork, Dublin, Laois, Offaly and Tipperary. By contrast, in the same period, the IRA was responsible for at over fifty mail raids in fifteen counties; Carlow, Cavan, Clare, Cork, Dublin, Kerry, Kilkenny, Limerick, Monaghan, Offaly, Tipperary, Tyrone, Waterford, Wexford and Wicklow.[307] Since the primary objective of these mail raids was to uncover intelligence information, it is clear that between the announcement of the Truce and its implementation the IRA nationwide was far more

[303] Ó Duibhir, *Donegal awakening*, pp 295 - 9; Denis Houston (NAI, BMH WS 1382, p 17 - 9); Patrick Breslin (NAI, BMH, WS 1448, pp 31 - 4); Major General Joseph A. Sweeney, *Capuchin Annual* (Dublin, 1970), pp 444 - 5. Collins apparently remained in the area following the Truce and was killed by IRA in April 1922. Liam Ó Duibhir, *Donegal and the Civil War* (Cork, 2011), pp 94 - 5.
[304] Thomas Moynihan (NAI, BMH, WS 1452, pp 8 - 9).
[305] Patrick O'Reilly (NAI, BMH, WS 1650 p. 14).
[306] Tommy Mooney, *Cry of the curlew*, p. 315.
[307] Summary of outrages reported by the police July 1921 (NAUK CO 904 / 146) ; Summaries of DMP Reports (IMA, Oscar Traynor Collection, C.D. 120/3 C.D. 120/4).

engaged in gathering intelligence information than it was in tracking down and attempting to execute suspected spies. Of those who were killed by the IRA in this time period: David Cummins may have been abducted and killed by the IRA before the IRA leadership in Tipperary had discovered that the Truce had been agreed. It cannot be established if the IRA in Offaly was aware that the Truce had been agreed at the time of Eric Steadman's execution. The IRA units which killed Major O'Conor and John Poynton, and attempted to kill William and Michael Dillon Jr, but instead killed their sister Bridget Dillon, were undoubtedly acting in the full knowledge that a cessation of hostilities was only hours away. John Begley and William Nolan's executions after the ceasefire came into effect were undoubtedly a breach of the terms and spirit of the Truce.

It appears that no suspected spies were killed in the IRA's 1st Eastern Division despite the fact that this is the only divisional area where a written IRA order has survived which directed the local IRA brigade commanders to deal with suspected spies as they saw fit after the Truce was announced without recourse to higher authority. In fact, the available evidence suggests that, whilst the IRA in Meath took action against spies in its Brigade area at the time of the Truce, they were treated far more leniently than suspects in other areas. The number of suspected spies (six) who were abducted and later killed by the IRA at the time of the Truce was not exceptional when compared with the number of suspects killed during equally brief periods earlier in the War of Independence. The IRA in Cork killed five civilians they suspected of spying over the weekend of 18 - 20 February 1921.[308] Therefore there is nothing particularly unique, unusual or extraordinary about the level of violence used nationally against those the IRA suspected of spying in the three day period between the announcement, and the beginning of the Truce. This is highly significant given the escalation of the conflict during the spring and summer of 1921. If the IRA had intended to kill as many suspected spies as possible after the announcement of the Truce, a much higher number of killings and failed attempts to kill suspected spies would have been recorded. Furthermore, the IRA released unharmed after the Truce at least the same number of suspected spies (six) as they had killed in the period leading up to the ceasefire. The announcement of the Truce also seems to have saved the lives of an equal or greater number of spies whom the IRA

[308] These were Michael Walsh, Matthew Swetnam, Richard Connell, William Mohally and Michael O'Sullivan.

was monitoring in July 1921.

Two suspected spies were physically threatened by the IRA in Laois and another found a death threat pinned to the door of his house in Roscommon. There is evidence that the timing of the Truce prevented IRA action against at least two individuals in counties Tipperary and Longford whose communications with the British forces were discovered at the time. The IRA in Donegal commuted the death sentence they had imposed on John Collins, to permanent exile when they heard of the Truce. The IRA in Meath chose to arrest and interrogate Christopher Farrell, a suspected spy, rather than shoot him out of hand and the available evidence suggests that he was later released unharmed. Two other suspected spies the IRA's Meath Brigade had been holding prisoner were also released unharmed following the implementation of the Truce. A fourth individual suspected of spying by the Meath IRA merely had his car confiscated as a punishment. The IRA's Mid Limerick Brigade released two suspected spies it had held for several months on 11 July. A third suspected spy, George Ryan, who been sentenced to death by the IRA in Limerick, was instead forced into permanent exile at this time. Ryan's case is particularly interesting since the IRA brigade involved acted according to its organisation's protocol, contacting IRA GHQ seeking permission to carry out the death sentence, and accepting the order issued by IRA GHQ to commute Ryan's punishment to a non-fatal one even though the Truce was only hours away. Ryan's case shows that just because the Truce was imminent IRA brigades did not automatically abandon their usual protocols and procedures regarding suspected spies. If the IRA had intended killing as many suspected spies as possible after the announcement of the Truce, it would undoubtedly have attempted to kill all of the individuals mentioned above.

This study can find no body of evidence in support of the claim that the announcement of the Truce spurred the IRA nationally into a rash of unwarranted attempts to execute individuals it suspected of spying. In the cases of the six men killed at the time of the Truce, the IRA appear to have acted out of military concern in the belief that their victims were gathering intelligence for the British forces. The available evidence does not suggest that the announcement of the Truce was used as a pretext to carry out sectarian attacks on Protestants. Indeed whilst three Protestants suspected of spying were killed prior to the Truce, the IRA also inflicted non-fatal punishment on at

least three other Protestant suspects.[309] There was also little difference between the treatment of Catholics suspected of spying and Protestant suspects at the time of the Truce. One Catholic, John Begley, was killed by the IRA whilst attempts were made to kill at least three others.[310] There is little to suggest that individuals were marked for execution by the IRA at the time of the Truce purely on the basis that they were ex-servicemen. Whilst all six of the suspected spies executed by the IRA between 8 and 11 July were former soldiers or members of the RIC, non-fatal action was taken against at least four other veterans.[311] The IRA's sanction of lethal force, threats, warnings and other punitive measures against suspected spies after the announcement of the ceasefire appears to have been based on the degree to which it suspected that an individual was guilty. It was also based upon the importance of the information that the IRA believed the suspect had passed to the British forces. As such, the republican treatment of suspected spies immediately prior to the Truce did not amount to 'giving spies short shrift' or differ significantly from their standard operational procedure throughout the conflict which was, in most cases, based on the military norms, practices and standards of the day.

[309] These were: C. W. Chaloner, Harriet Byrne and William Ringwood.
[310] These were: Thomas Goulding, Willian Dillon and Michael Dillon Jr.
[311] These were: C. W. Chaloner, John Collins, Patrick Shannon and an ex-soldier at Carrick-on-Suir.

Chapter Four

IRA attacks on off-duty British troops following the announcement of the Truce

(I) *Introduction*

It has been established in the previous chapter that the announcement of the Truce did not result in exceptional action being taken by the IRA against civilians whom it accused of spying. However, the question arises as to whether the same is true with regard to the numerous IRA attacks on off-duty members of the British forces which occurred in the same period? The ceasefire despatch issued by the IRA's 1st Eastern Division, which ordered that action should be taken against civilians suspected of spying, also specified that the RIC should be the principal target of IRA attacks before the Truce came into effect, and that every opportunity should be taken to attack members of the British forces.[1] Sean Farrelly, a member of the Meath No. 3 Brigade IRA, remembered that Seán Boylan, the commander of the IRA's 1st Eastern Division, had issued an order 'to attack the enemy anywhere and everywhere we could find them on the previous night [before the Truce]'[2] Whilst the IRA's 1st Eastern Division did not kill any suspected spies as dictated by this order, at least ten separate attacks on the British forces occurred in the divisional area before the Truce came into effect. Only one of these attacks was made against the British military.[3] The other nine were all made against the RIC. These included four attacks on RIC barracks, three attacks on RIC patrols, and two attacks on RIC constables.[4] None of these attacks proved fatal.

The specification in the 1st Eastern Division's order that 'the old RIC' should be the IRA's primary target for these attacks indicates that the republicans fostered a particular grievance against the Irishmen who continued to serve in that force. This is borne out by James Creegan, adjutant of the IRA's Fingal Brigade:

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[1] Durney, *The volunteer*, p. 31.
[2] Sean Farrelly (NAI, BMH, WS 1734, pp 50 - 1).
[3] Michael Govern (NAI, BMH, WS 1625, pp 7 - 8).
[4] Summary of outrages reported by the police, July 1921 (NAUK, CO 904 / 146).

> Despite their acts of terrorism, we had no real spite towards the Black and Tans or Auxiliaries, whose position we understood. They were an alien force holding the country for their people. The RIC were in a different category. They were Irish in the enemy's uniform, and were really uniformed spies. Without them, the other forces of the enemy would have been worthless. We had no love for them.[5]

The specific order to target the 'uniformed spies' of the RIC in the dying hours of the conflict suggests that the IRA's attacks on off-duty members of the British forces were motivated solely by vindictiveness. The attacks on off-duty troops which occurred in the three day period between the announcement of the Truce and its implementation will now be examined in detail to examine if this was the case.

During the War of Independence, and for some time after, it was common for British politicians, veterans and military historians to dismiss the IRA's military campaign as a terrorist campaign that relied on barbaric methods and in particular the murder of 'soft targets', and bore no resemblance to 'civilised warfare'. In October 1920 Lord Curzon denounced IRA attacks on the RIC as barbaric, telling the House of Lords that the IRA's campaign was 'the warfare of the red Indian, of the Apache'.[6] In 1922 Pollard condemned the IRA as being a 'small executive body of criminals' with 'the paper formality of a regular force' which shunned the tactics of civilised warfare in favour of a campaign 'far more the nature of an organised murder gang than of an irregular body of patriots'.[7] The following year, the official British Army account of the conflict in Munster echoed Lord Curzon and Pollard's sentiments, declaring that the IRA 'in most cases, avoided anything in the nature of a pitched battle' and instead favoured the 'murder' of British troops.[8] Several decades later, in his 1958 memoir, Field Marshal Bernard Law Montgomery, a veteran of the conflict, stated that: 'the Sinn Féin War … developed into a murder campaign'.[9] In the late 1960's British military historian Colonel Walter Leonard Vale dismissed the war as 'a vicious form of large-scale gang warfare' that resulted in the 'wanton shooting of men separated from their comrades'.[10] In 1972 Hezlet denounced the IRA as 'terrorists' and 'ruthless fanatics' who murdered RIC

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[5] James Creegan, (NAI, BMH, WS 1395, p. 27).
[6] Chris Ryder, *The fateful split: Catholics and the Ulster Constabulary* (London, 2004), p. 14.
[7] Pollard, The secret societies of Ireland, pp 152, 157.
[8] 'The Irish rebellion in the 6th divisional area', p. 73.
[9] Bernard Law Montgomery, The memoirs of Field-Marshal, the Viscount, Montgomery of Alamein (London, 1958) pp 39 - 40.
[10] Colonel Walter Leonard Vale, *The history of the South Staffordshire Regiment* (London 1969), p. 399.

constables 'in a cowardly manner'. According to Hezlet, RIC constables: 'were shot down by a number of concealed gunmen. When resistance was put up even by one policeman, the IRA generally took to their heels. They [the IRA] preferred to catch their victims unawares or unarmed.'[11] Similar criticisim had been voiced by some pro-Treaty writers in Ireland who were uncomfortable with the nature of the IRA violence. O'Hegarty denounced the assassination of Alan Bell and Detective Hoey by the IRA as the work of 'irresponsible' and 'morally degenerate' gunmen.[12]

Some academic scholars have made similar claims in their research. David Fitzpatrick claimed that the last few months of the war saw a 'rapid extension of assassination and clandestine killings' and that almost half of those killed in this time period were British soldiers or members of the RIC.[13] Peter Hart described the War of Independence as a 'dirty war' in which murder was more frequent than battle.[14] Whilst Hart conceded that a large number of combatants died in military engagements, he maintained that; 'many more people died without a gun in their hands, at their doors, in quarries or empty fields shot in the back by armed men'.[15] Hart claimed that 'Guerrilla war in Cork in 1921 was not primarily an affair of ambushes and round-ups. It was terror and counter-terror, murder after murder, death squad against death squad, fed by both sides desire for revenge.'[16] Coleman found that the republican military campaign in Longford became increasingly brutal as the IRA adopted a more hard-line stance against Irish RIC constables.[17] Ernest McCall, in his study of the RIC Auxiliary Division, stated that although the IRA in Dublin had intensified their activities in 1921, the resulting attacks were; 'mainly on off-duty members of the Crown Forces when everything was in their favour.'[18] William Sheehan has claimed that by the summer of 1921 the British Army's counter-insurgency measures were so successful that the IRA adopted 'terrorist tactics rather than those of guerrillas.'[19] Most recently, Pádraig Yeates claimed IRA

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[11] Hezlet, *The 'B' Specials*, p. 4.
[12] O'Hegarty, The victory of Sinn Féin, p. 123.
[13] David Fitzpatrick, 'Militarism in Ireland 1900 - 1922', in Thomas Bartlett & Keith Jeffrey (eds), *A military history of Ireland* (Cambridge, 1996), p. 405.
[14] Hart, *The I.R.A & its enemies*, p. 18.
[15] Hart, *The I.R.A & its enemies*, p. 18.
[16] Hart, *The I.R.A & its enemies*, p. 96.
[17] Coleman, *County Longford and the Irish revolution 1910 - 1923*, p. 132.
[18] McCall, *The auxiliaries: Tudor's toughs*, p. 165.
[19] William Sheehan, *A hard local war: the British Army and the guerrilla war in Cork 1919 - 1921* (Gloucestershire, 2011), p.164.

assassinations of members of the British forces were 'more akin to Mafia-style killings' than conventional warfare.[20]

The 'soft target' theory has gained a foothold in the public consciousness as evidenced by the claims of retired members of An Garda Síochana who organised an event to mark the 90th anniversary of the disbandment of the RIC and DMP. Those organising the event claimed that:

> over 500 … police officers … were murdered by the IRA during and after the War of Independence and in 1916. These men were for the most part honorable and honest police officers and many were killed while off-duty, often in front of their families. …The circumstances of their deaths were in many cases exceptionally brutal.[21]

In addition to the assertion from various quarters that republicans deliberately chose 'soft targets', the claim that the IRA embarked on a series of reckless last minute attacks following the announcement of the Truce has created the impression that the IRA targeted off-duty British troops engaged in harmless activities in a spate of unjustifiable last minute killings. In recent years this claim has been embellished by writers who allege that these unjustifiable IRA killings included the execution of four teenage soldiers captured whilst shopping for sweets, the murder of an RIC constable in his front garden, the shooting of a Black and Tan immediately after his wedding ceremony and the assassination of an RIC sergeant who, being a devout Catholic, was on his way to Mass. The proximity of these killings to the Truce has resulted in their becoming so heavily mythologised that the most basic facts relating to them have become either largely obscured, or completely lost.[22]

This mythology was chiefly constructed around the deaths of those members of the British forces perceived to have been innocents. The attack on Sergeant King, the last member of the British Forces officially killed by the IRA in the conflict, who died less than two hours before the armistice began, has been significantly underplayed in comparison to Constable Clarke who was killed earlier the same day. This is because King's involvement in reprisal killings, carried out by the 'Castlerea Murder Gang', does not sit comfortably with the established narrative that republicans bent on gratuitous last

[20] Yeates, *A city in turmoil*, p. 50.
[21] *Irish Times*, 22 August 2012.
[22] See the accounts of Needham's killing in Abbott, *Police casualties*, p. 265, and Myers, *Irish Independent*, 22 June 2011.

minute violence launched a wave of unjustifiable attacks on men such as Clarke who were portrayed as benign members of the British forces. The mercy shown by the IRA towards some British soldiers and RIC constables who were captured and released unharmed in the same time period has also been omitted from what has become an overly simplistic and highly propagandised account of pre-Truce killings.

The Hague Convention of 1907 and guerrilla attacks on off-duty troops

The Hague Conventions of 1899 and 1907 established the accepted 'rules of war' in an attempt to form a chivalrous military code that would ostensibly be adhered to by all armies. This code was intended for international conflicts rather than internal struggles. The British insisted that the Hague Convention could not be applied to conditions in Ireland, yet paradoxically they made frequent complaints that the IRA failed to comply with these same terms. The British complained that their IRA opponents rarely wore uniform, used prohibited 'dum dum' ammunition, did not openly bear arms and failed to adhere to the 'laws of war'. (It is important to note that the British had made the wearing of IRA uniform and the purchase of regular ammunition illegal, that most of the 'dum dum' bullets fired by the IRA had been captured from the British forces and that the unauthorised possession of arms was punishable by death. Furthermore, when Irish republican combatants had attempted to comply to the 'laws of war' during the 1916 Rising they were refused 'prisoner of war' status after capture and their leaders had been executed after being taken prisoner.) These complaints concerning the military legitimacy of IRA's campaign were frequently employed as anti-republican propaganda in British accounts. Another claim that commonly featured in British accounts was the allegation that IRA attacks on off duty troops and the assassination of senior officers amounted to a 'murder campaign' that violated of the 'laws of war'. These claims were repeated in subsequent histories and persist in some recent academic works.[23] In light of these assertions, it is worth examining the Hague Conventions in detail to assess whether they are relevant to the debate surrounding the legitimacy of IRA attacks on so called 'soft

[23] See introduction to this chapter.

targets'.[24]

Neither the 1899 or 1907 Hague Conventions make specific reference to attacks on off-duty troops, or afforded them any specific protections. The convention does stipulate that 'it is especially forbidden … to kill or wound treacherously individuals belonging to the hostile nation or army.'[25] The key word in this phrase is 'treacherously' which implies elaborate deceit or trickery. Subsequent articles in the accord expand upon this point, specifically referring to the improper exploitation of a flag of truce or the exploitation of the enemy's flag or uniform. The agreement also forbids the killing of unarmed soldiers who have offered an unconditional surrender.[26] Since the Hague Convention of 1907 bestowed no special status or protection upon off-duty soldiers they could be considered legitimate targets unless they qualified for protection through having surrendered unconditionally and verifiably, or having already been taken prisoner.[27]

Cold blooded attacks on off-duty members of the British forces were a far remove from the lofty ideals of chivalrous warfare envisaged and implemented by the republican leaders of the 1916 Rising.[28] However, a clear distinction must be drawn between the fighting conditions that existed in a short-lived urban based insurrection where the enemy was rarely encountered and the fighting was largely devoid of intimacy and hatred, and guerrilla conflict where close-quarter fighting was the norm, killers were readily identifiable, and revenge was frequently sought by both sides. Michael Collins later claimed that during the War of independence the IRA had adhered to the rules of war 'as far as possible.'[29] In the final stages of the War of Independence, the nature of the conflict became so brutal and intense that Major Bernard Law Montgomery who served with the 17th Infantry Brigade in Cork, declared: 'My own view is that to win a war of this sort you must be ruthless'.[30] By 1921, some IRA volunteers, particularly those in

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[24] Kautt, *Ground truths*, pp 94 – 5, 194 -5. Neither the IRA nor the British forces were ever fully compliant with the terms of the convention and it is difficult to envisage how a military code of conduct which had been intended for use in large scale conflicts between regular, professional armies could have been applied to a relatively small scale but intense guerrilla war involving irregular forces on both sides. Although it attempted to regulate the status of militia units fighting an occupying force, the Hague Convention did not provide a set of unambiguous rules governing the conduct of guerrilla war. Sonke Neitzel and Harald Welzer, *Soldaten, On fighting, killing and dying: the secret World War tapes of German POWs* (London 2012), pp 77 - 8.

[25] Hague Convention 1907, (Hague IV), Laws and Customs of War on Land, Section II, Chapter I, Article 23.

[26] Hague Convention 1907, (Hague IV), Laws and Customs of War on Land, Section II, Chapter I, Article 23.

[27] Hague Convention 1907, (Hague IV), Laws and Customs of War on Land, Section II, Chapter I, Article 23.

[28] Fearghall McGarry, 'Violence and the Easter Rising', in David Fitzpatrick (ed.) *Terror in Ireland 1916 - 1923* (Dublin, 2012), pp 39 - 57.

[29] John A. Murphy in *Béal Na Bláth commemoration 90th anniversary booklet* (Cork, 2012), p. 70.

[30] Sheehan, *British voices*, p. 151. General Patton-Montgomery's contemporary in the US Army put the brutal necessities of war more

Cork, became increasingly ruthless in their treatment of British personnel because of the 'short shrift' being meted out to captured republicans. Initially the Cork IRA had refrained from attacks on off-duty troops, but as the conflict intensified, particularly after the killings of republican prisoners by members of the British Army, fatal attacks on off-duty British soldiers became increasingly common. Tom Barry, who was one of the first IRA officers to sanction such attacks, blamed the actions of his British opponents for forcing a shift in republican attitudes. He claimed that the republicans had no option but to respond in kind to what he believed was the ruthlessness which the British forces had introduced into the conflict: 'They said I was ruthless, daring; savage, bloodthirsty, even heartless …The British were met with their own weapons. They had gone down in the mire to destroy us and our nation, and down after them we had to go.'[31] Attitudes like Barry's were not confined to Cork. An IRA volunteer in Monaghan related how the killings of his comrades in British custody led to increasingly ruthless attacks: 'Through the years of struggle the hangings, and executions, and sufferings had generated in us something unchristian'.[32]

'Uniformed Spies' - IRA attacks on off-duty RIC personnel 8 -11 July 1921

During the War of Independence, IRA brigades had occasionally issued orders for coordinated attacks on members of the RIC. Following the death of Terence MacSwiney the IRA in Kerry received an order that Black and Tans were to be 'shot on sight'.[33] The IRA's Mid Clare Brigade ordered an attack on all available RIC targets for 31 March 1921. The date was specifically chosen because it was the pay day for RIC constables, and, consequently, it was expected that many members of the force would be spending their pay in local public houses.[34] It is significant that in the last days and hours of the conflict, the IRA mounted far more attacks on members of the RIC than on British

bluntly: '…remember that no son of a bitch ever won a war by dying for his country. He won it by making the other poor dumb son of a bitch die for his country.' Association of the United States Army. Army - Vol. 15, Part 1 (Washington, 1964), p. 32.

[31] Barry, *Guerrilla days*, p. 99

[32] McGarry, *Eoin O' Duffy*, pp76 - 77.

[33] Tom O'Connor (EOMN, UCDA P17b / 132).

[34] Ó Ruairc, *Blood on the banner,* p. 232.

military personnel. Animosity towards the 'old RIC' was widespread. When Stephen 'Paddy' Vaughan, an IRA Veteran from Roscommon, was asked, what his greatest regret arising from the conflict was, he replied:

> That we didn't kill more of the Irish police. The Irish police knew the land and the countryside as well as you know your own backyard. They are the ones who led the raids. The British Army couldn't have found my house if they'd had a map. We should have gone after the old policemen.[35]

IRA volunteers in Tralee spent the last night of the war pasting notices on lamp posts which listed 'Dublin Castle Gunmen'.[36] Those named, whom the notice stated were 'Wanted for Murder', included RIC Constable Patrick Culleton and a French-Canadian Black and Tan known as 'the Jewman de la Roi'. The posters threatened that those listed would be killed.[37] Recent research by Brian Hughes indicates that the IRA viewed Irish RIC Constables 'as the most obvious instrument of British oppression in Ireland. The eyes and ears of the enemy, spies and traitors to their country'.[38] This loathing for the members of the 'old RIC' was in many cases due to their effectiveness in intelligence work.

The majority of the RIC's constables were Irish born Catholics and, consequently, they understood the community they policed and were able to integrate into it far better than the Black and Tans and Auxiliaries recruited in Britain. The RIC practice of minimising transfers ensured that RIC constables spent prolonged periods in the same district, deepening their knowledge of the area.[39] Furthermore, their duties included the collection of agricultural statistics, census enumeration, the regulation of public houses and regular foot patrols, all of which gave them an in-depth knowledge of the local populace that was vital for intelligence work.[40] The importance of Irish members of the RIC to British intelligence operations was outlined by Lieutenant Grazebrook, a British military intelligence officer stationed in Cork, who noted: 'of all the sergeants, Donovan was one of the real old type of the RIC, absolutely invaluable, "the rat" he was called by

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[35] Interview with Stephen Vaughan on 6 February 1995, conducted by Kathleen Hegarty Thorne. Transcript in author's possession.
[36] Summary of outrages reported by the police July 1921 (NAUK , CO 904 / 146)
[37] Ryle Dwyer, *Tans, terror and troubles*, p. 320.
[38] Brian Hughes, *Persecuting the Peelers*, in David Fitzpatrick (ed.) *Terror in Ireland 1916 - 1923* (Dublin, 2012) p. 206.
[39] Hogan, *The Black and Tans in north Tipperary*, p. 9.
[40] Hogan, *The Black and Tans in north Tipperary*, p. 8.

many of the country folk and he certainly could rat out information impossible to the others in a most wonderful way'.[41] Similarly, Pollard pointed out that: 'Effective police work in … Ireland depends largely on one main principle, namely, an efficient local police force whose men know everybody in their area'.[42] Major General Douglas Wimberly recalled that IRA attacks on the RIC proved effective in countering British intelligence: 'Soon they would no longer identify suspicious rebels we produced … as they knew that to do so meant revenge'.[43] The following anecdote from Patrick O'Brien, an IRA commandant from Cork, succinctly sums up the attitude of many republicans towards the members of the 'old RIC':

> Early in August, 1920, the local Military O.C. in Liscaroll a Lieut. Honeywood sent a message to me to call up to the post … He came out and, following a discussion on some general topics, he informed me that he would hold me personally responsible for any attacks being made on the RIC. I immediately got my back up and enquired from him whether he had service in the Great War. He stated he had and I then enquired from him what their normal procedure was in dealing with spies. He replied "Shoot them", and I then politely informed him that we intended to follow similar action with the RIC.[44]

IRA GHQ, whilst approving these assassinations, were, at the same time also keenly aware of public indignation and outrage that the circumstances of these killings could incite. Jack Fitzgerald, an IRA officer from Kilbrittan, Cork, recalled that he and his comrades were restricted to targeting only the most active and effective members of the RIC for assassination: 'they [the British military] didn't stir out then without a policeman. He was their intelligence officer and guide. We would only be allowed to shoot a bad RIC man'.[45] For example, IRA GHQ sanctioned the assassination of an RIC sergeant who was actively involved in intelligence work in Bandon. The plan was that the IRA would kill the sergeant as he was en route to Sunday Mass. Both Cathal Brugha and Michael Collins, who was not known for his religious piety, expressed outrage that the man was killed at the church doorway, thereby breaching the sanctity of the building.[46] It is also worth noting that some provincial IRA officers, who were perfectly happy to use physical force and mount ambushes on the British forces, objected to the assassination of

[41] Grazebrook Diary, 7 April 1921 (Soldiers of Gloucestershire Museum).
[42] Pollard, *The secret societies of Ireland*, p. 181.
[43] Sheehan, *British voices*, p. 178.
[44] Patrick O'Brien, (NAI, BMH WS 764, p. 15).
[45] Jack Fitzgerald (UCDA, EOMN, P 17b / 112).
[46] Liam Deasy (UCDA, EOMN, P17b / 086).

RIC men on moral grounds. Bill Brennan an IRA officer in Tipperary, who had refused to carry out the killing of an RIC man, was deprived of his command as a result:

> I objected to it … taking a life. Just walk in, meet a fellow in a pub or the like … I thought it was very wrong to take the life point blank. I was prepared to … give them a fair fight rather than the other way. I didn't go along with it … my captainship didn't last … No matter. There was always a hard man somewhere, cared less what he'd do.[47]

Some, local IRA leaders took an even harsher stance regarding the RIC and Black and Tans. Donnochadh O'Hannigan, leader of the East Limerick Brigade flying column, had two members of the RIC captured after the Dromkeen Ambush, a Black and Tan named Samuel Adams and RIC Constable Patrick Foody, summarily executed.[48] In justification for this action, O'Hannigan cited a directive he claimed to have received from IRA GHQ ordering the court-martial, and if necessary execution, of all Black and Tans captured by the IRA. This order was supposedly issued in reaction to the summary execution of IRA volunteers who had been captured by the British forces.[49] The possibility cannot be discounted that O'Hannigan invented this alleged order because of a division amongst the participants in the ambush who were divided over whether or not the captured members of the RIC patrol should be executed.[50]

The shooting of Constable Needham

Constable Alfred Needham was shot and fatally wounded by the IRA in Ennis on 8 July 1921. Since Needham's death occurred so close to the end of the War of Independence it has been subject to a great deal of embellishment. In *Police casualties in Ireland 1919 - 1922*, the historian Richard Abbott incorrectly states that Constable Needham was shot on 10 July - the last full day of the conflict, and less than twenty four hours before the

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[47] Hogan, *The Black and Tans in north Tipperary*, pp 279 - 281.

[48] Toomey, *War of Independence in Limerick*, pp 515 - 6.

[49] he only other possible reference to this alleged GHQ directive comes from an interview with IRA veteran Broddie Malone, conducted by Ernie O'Malley, during which O' Malley declares 'The Tans should have been shot anyhow for that was a General Headquarters order'. In this instance it is not clear wheather O'Malley is referring to an order he had received himself at the time, or heard of later from another interviewee. Other than this fleeting reference by O'Malley, there is no record of IRA GHQ issusing such an order as outlined by O'Hannigan. Furthermore, IRA GHQ issued a booklet during the Truce which contained the text of all twenty-eight 'General Orders' issued by IRA GHQ - none of these orders directs IRA volunteers to court-martial and execute captured members of the RIC. Cormac K. H. O'Malley and Vincent Kane (eds), *The men will talk to me: Mayo interviews by Ernie O'Malley (Cork, 2014), p. 187*; General Orders, IRA (NAI, BMH CD, 105 / 02 / 19); Toomey, *War of Independence in Limerick*, pp 515 - 6.

[50] O'Callaghan, *Revolutionary Limerick*, p. 140.

Truce. According to Abbott's narrative, Needham had gotten married the same morning, and he and his new bride were both attacked by the IRA.[51] Newspaper columnist Kevin Myers gave a far more colourful account of Needham's killing in an article marking the 90th anniversary of the Truce:

> with the Truce just hours away, an RIC man named Alfred Needham, aged 20, clearly thought that finally he could marry his sweetheart. But a clerk in Ennis tipped off the IRA that the groom's profession was "constable". So a beaming Alfred and his teenage bride emerged from the registry office, and two gun men shot him dead. [52]

Myers declared that Needham's death was part of 'the cycle of psychiatric futility that is Fenianism' and cited this killing as evidence of 'the fiction that "the War of Independence" was honorable and necessary and largely worthwhile.'[53] Most recently a similar narrative has been put forward by O'Halpin:

> The RIC suffered the most casualties at IRA hands. In March 1920 Constables Charles Healy and James Rock were shot dead as they left devotions at …Toomevara, Tipperary…They were the first police to be killed leaving a religious service, but they weren't to be the last … And what about twenty year old RIC Constable Alfred Needham? Who, having just exchanged vows with his bride, was shot dead in front of her, the killing took place on the eve of the Truce.[54]

However, the verifiable facts regarding Constable Needham's shooting bear no relation whatsoever to these highly fanciful and emotive accounts.

Constable Alfred G. Needham was a Black and Tan from London. He had enlisted in the RIC on 14 December 1920. He was an ex-soldier and worked as a telegraph operator before joining the RIC.[55] He was stationed in Tiermaclane, near Ennis, Co. Clare and on 8 July 1921, Needham was granted eight hours leave from duty, and travelled to Ennis with two other RIC constables. At 4:30pm Needham was standing at the gate of a stable in Upper O'Connell Street, Ennis talking with a Miss Corry when he was attacked. The IRA approached from behind Miss Corry. They were armed with revolvers and fired two shots at Needham wounding him in the neck. The wounded constable attempted to draw his revolver and return fire but suffered a second gunshot

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[51] Abbott, *Police casualties*, p. 265.
[52] *Irish Independent*, 22 June 2011.
[53] *Irish Independent*, 22 June 2011.
[54] O'Halpin, 'In the name of the Republic'.
[55] RIC Register, (NLI, Microfilm).

wound to the abdomen before he could so. His female companion immediately alerted the British military and Needham was removed to the County Infirmary where he was operated on by two doctors. He died at 3:00pm on 10 July and his body was brought to England for burial.[56]

There is no evidence to support the claim that Needham had gotten married on the morning he was shot. RIC service records indicate that Needham was single at the time of his death.[57] The Civil Registration Office in Ennis has no record of an Alfred Needham marrying on 8 July 1921.[58] Contemporary police and press reports make no reference to a marriage preceeding the shooting. The RIC county inspector's report of the incident refers to Miss Corry as 'a girl friend' of Needham's.[59] A detailed newspaper report on Needham's shooting, death and funeral arrangements in a local newspaper simply refers to Miss Corry as 'a young lady acquaintance' of the deceased.[60] In October 1921, the Ennis Quarter Sessions awarded the constable's mother £1,200 compensation for his death, plus £25 expenses.[61] In normal circumstances a spouse or fiancée would have been the primary person considered for a compensation payment. The claims of a dependent parent would only have been considered if the deceased was unmarried and there was no other next of kin. The fact that Needham's mother received such a large award is further proof that Constable Needham was single at the time of his death. The story that Needham had gotten married just hours before his death appears to have been invented later for propaganda purposes or melodramatic effect in storytelling, or both. Far from being gunned down leaving a church or registry office immediately after getting wed, Needham was actually shot whilst standing at the entrance to a stable. It is therefore impossible that a clerk processing marriage papers tipped off the IRA as to Needham's profession and arranged the assassination. Needham's shooting occurred early on 8 July, before the Truce had been formally agreed or announced. At the time of Needham's shooting, none of the IRA in Clare knew that a ceasefire had been agreed in Dublin. Michael Brennan, the leader of the IRA's East Clare Brigade and commander of the

[56] *Clare Champion*, 16 July 1921.
[57] RIC Register, (NLI, Microfilm).
[58] Information from the Civil Registration Office, Ennis.
[59] RIC County Inspector's Report, Clare July 1921 (NAUK, CO 904 / 115).
[60] *Clare Champion*, 16 July 1921.
[61] *Saturday Record*, 5 November 1921.

IRA's 1st Western Division only discovered that a truce had been agreed when he received a despatch from IRA GHQ in the days after Needham's shooting.[62] Therefore there is little possibility that the shooting of Constable Needham was a knee jerk reaction to the advent of the Truce.

The shooting of Constable Cormer

The killing of Constable Cormer at Rathdrum, Co. Wicklow was apparently the basis for a melodramatic account, written by Fr. Pat Twohig of an illusory incident where an RIC constable was killed in a breach of the Truce.[63] Constable Frederick Cormer was a Black and Tan from Middlesex. He had enlisted in the RIC on 23 November 1920, he was unmarried and had previously been employed as a footman. Upon completing training, he was posted to Rathdrum, Co. Wicklow.[64] Shortly after 7:00pm on 8 July Constable Cormer, accompanied by RIC Constable Reilly, went to Neary's shop at the Fairgreen in Rathdrum to buy cigarettes and groceries.[65] It is unclear if Cormer and Reilly were armed at the time, but the initial press reports of the incident stated they were not.[66] Upon entering the shop they met another RIC constable who was armed.[67] Cormer and Reilly called for a round of drinks before ordering groceries. The RIC constable who had been in the bar before them went towards the toilet whilst Mrs Neary was occupied filling the grocery order.[68] Moments later Mattie O'Brien entered Neary's shop accompanied by two other IRA volunteers. They opened fire on the two RIC constables who were seated, drinking at the shop counter.[69] The attackers fired approximately six shots, one of which wounded Constable Reilly in the arm. Constable Cormer raced from the shop into the street pursued by the gunmen who fired a further five shots at him. He was struck by three bullets which hit him in the forehead, mouth and left clavicle. Cormer collapsed in

[62] Brennan, *The war in Clare*, p. 104.
[63] Twohig, *Green tears for Hecuba*, p. 335 - 6.
[64] RIC Register, (NLI, Microfilm).
[65] PMCILCI on Frederick Cormer (NAUK, WO 35 / 148).
[66] *Irish Tines*, 9 July 1921.
[67] PMCILCI on Frederick Cormer (NAUK, WO 35 / 148).
[68] PMCILCI on Frederick Cormer (NAUK, WO 35 / 148).
[69] Christopher M. Byrne (NAI, BMH, WS 1014, p. 16); PMCILCI on Frederick Cormer (NAUK, WO 35 / 148).

the street and died instantly.[70] O'Brien and his comrades escaped on bicycle to Maud Gonne MacBride's cottage in Glenmalure.[71]

Constable Cormer was killed just two hours after the Truce had been agreed in Dublin; however his killers would have been completely unaware that a ceasefire had been agreed. They were motivated to act by local factors and not the political and military developments that had occurred in Dublin. Wicklow was the quietest county in terms of political violence during the War of Independence.[72] For months prior to July 1921, IRA GHQ had been pressurising the IRA brigades in Wicklow to begin a sustained guerrilla offensive. Christopher Byrne, the quartermaster of the IRA's East Wicklow Brigade, claimed that this process had already begun when Sean MacBride was appointed in late June 1921 by IRA GHQ to organise the area.

> We were getting things into active shape when Sean Mc Bride arrived … and he proceeded to arrange ambushes and shooting of policemen - one in every district - for the following Sunday week. There was to be shooting in every district from Woodenbridge to Greystones ... However the whole thing ended up in the shooting of one policeman.[73]

Despite MacBride's best efforts to launch a coordinated republican offensive only one member of the British forces, Constable John Fitzgerald, was killed in Wicklow on the appointed date of Sunday 3 July. An attempt to ambush an Auxiliary patrol at Cusheen a few days later also ended in failure.

Far from becoming despondent at this lack of success, MacBride proposed that the IRA in Wicklow undertake even larger operations.[74] Local IRA leaders resented MacBride's presence in the area and Byrne suggested to O'Brien and his men that they should act on their own initiative by going to Rathdrum, where there was a large RIC garrison, and 'try to get after the Tans'.[75] The result was the attack on the three RIC constables in Neary's shop. Byrne's account makes it clear that Cormer's shooting, though premeditated, was an opportunistic attack motivated by local factors and was not

[70] PMCILCI on Frederick Cormer (NAUK, WO 35 / 148).
[71] Christopher M. Byrne (NAI, BMH, WS 1014, p. 16).
[72] O'Haplin, 'Counting terror, Bloody Sunday and the dead of the Irish revolution', in David Fitzpatrick (ed.) *Terror in Ireland 1916 - 1923* (Dublin, 2012), p. 152.
[73] Byrne (NAI, BMH, WS 1014, p. 14).
[74] Byrne (NAI, BMH, WS 1014, p. 14).
[75] Byrne (NAI, BMH, WS 1014, pp 14 - 6).

in any way related to the announcement of the Truce.[76] MacBride who was in overall command of the IRA in Wicklow, appears to have been wholly unaware that a ceasefire was imminent, and there is no evidence to suggest that he had ordered the killing in reaction to the announcement of the Truce.[77] The RIC county inspector for Wicklow's report for July 1921 bears this out: 'Things had been getting worse in the county, and early in July [there had been] two murders of police constables in Wicklow [town] and Rathdrum and there were other signs of attempts to stir up trouble in this county, which up to that period had been comparatively free from very serious outrage.'[78]

The shooting of Constable Clarke

Constable Alexander T. Clarke was shot dead by the IRA in Townshend Street, Skibbereen a few hours before the Truce began. Like the shootings of Constables Needham and Cormer, the timing of Clarke's killing has ensured that his death has received significant attention in contrast to other members of the RIC killed during the war. The erroneous claim is frequently made that Clarke was the last casualty of the War of Independence.[79] In fact, the last fatality of the war was a woman who was killed by members of the RIC.[80] The killing of Constable Clarke has been a recurrent feature in opinion columns written by Kevin Myers. In a 1994 article in the *Irish Times*, Myers claimed that Clarke was 'shot in his front garden in Skibbereen' just minutes before the ceasefire. He cited this as part of 'a wave of monstrous violence' preceding the Truce.[81] In an article marking the 80th anniversary of the Truce, Myers returned to the subject of Clarke's killing:

> Eighty years ago this morning as the seconds to the Truce ticked by, Alexander Clarke a middle-aged RIC man, was returning to his digs in Townsend [sic] Street Skibbereen. … The terms of the truce had been signed two [sic] days before and it was now mere moments away from enactment. Did he perform a little skip of joy as he approached his lodging

[76] Byrne (NAI, BMH, WS 1014, pp 14 - 6).
[77] Nic Dháibhéid, *Seán MacBride*, p. 50.
[78] RIC County Inspector's Report for Clare, July 1921 (NAUK, CO 904 / 115).
[79] Diarmuid Kingston, *Beleaguered: a history of the RIC in West Cork during the War of Independence* (Cork, 2013), p. 191.
[80] Jasper Ungoed-Thomas, *'Jasper Woulfe of Skibbereen'* (Cork, 2008), p. 123.
[81] *Irish Times*, 27 August 1994.

> house, as he felt for his keys? Why not? The promise of peace and retirement into old age lay before him. What Joy! At which point he was shot down, the last [sic] formal victim of the Troubles of 1919 - 1921. In the coming years how did his killer feel? Did he grow warm at the thought of how he had shot a harmless man, for no purpose but for the killing itself? …Did he sit his grandchildren on his knee and tell them how one morning in July 1921 he had gloriously shot a policeman dead yards away from his front door and minutes away from peace?[82]

Marking the same anniversary a decade later Myers stated Clarke was a popular man: 'who always went unarmed … [and] studiously declined to engage in political work'. [83]

Constable Clarke was a native of North Tipperary. He had joined the RIC in 1887 aged eighteen, and had no previous employment. Clarke's father, William, and brother, Samuel, were also members of the force. At the time of his death Clarke was fifty two years-old and had thirty four years service in the RIC. He was married with six children and had been stationed in Skibbereen since 1894.[84] At 8:20am on 11 July Constable Clarke left the RIC Barracks at High Street, Skibbereen to return to his lodgings in Townshend Street. He proceeded along Bridge Street turning left at the junction with Townshend Street and Mardyke Street. Up to four IRA volunteers were loitering in the Townsend street area waiting for him.[85] These included Cornelius 'Neilus' Connolly, commander of the local IRA battalion, and Timothy O'Sullivan.[86] At approximately 8.25am Clarke entered Townshend Street. He was fired on by one of the IRA party and wounded in the face. He attempted to escape his attackers by fleeing into Coffey's shop but was pursued by one of them. The proprietress of that business, Mrs Ada Coffey, witnessed Clarke's death:

> I heard a noise outside my shop and thought my window had been broken. I then ran from the kitchen into the shop. I then saw a policeman in uniform stagger into the shop from the street. A man was close behind with a smoking revolver in his hand, he fired 3 shots at the Constable in my presence, the Constable then staggered into the inner room & collapsed, the man with the revolver put the revolver back in his pocket and ran out of the shop.[87]

Constable Clarke's attackers rushed back down a laneway and along 98 Street and

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[82] *Irish Times*, 11 July 2001.
[83] *Irish Independent*, 22 June 2011.
[84] RIC Register, (NLI, Microfilm).
[85] Summary of outrages reported by the Police, July 1921. (NAUK, CO 904 / 146).
[86] Cornelius Connolly (NAI, BMH, WS 602, p. 2). Connolly took the pro-Treaty side during the Civil War and was elected TD for pro-Treaty Sinn Féin in West Cork. He resigned his seat after a short period in office and returned to work as a farmer. O'Sullivan took the pro-Treaty side during the Civil War and later joined An Garda Síochana. He was killed by an IRA trap-mine in County Clare on 11 June 1929. Brendan K. Colvert, *On my honour: one man's lifelong struggle to clear his name* (Cork, 2011), p. 12.
[87] PMCILCI on Alexander Clarke (NAUK, WO 35 / 147 A).

escaped into the fields bordering the town. The first members of the British forces to arrive at the scene were a group of British soldiers from the King's Regiment who were stationed nearby. The soldiers found Constable Clarke's body lying face down in a back room of the shop. He had been shot three times. His remains were placed on a stretcher by the British military and were handed over to the RIC.[88]

The report of the British military inquest into Constable Clarke's killing makes it plain that the story that Clarke was 'shot in his front garden' is incorrect.[89] Furthermore the assertion that Constable Clarke always went unarmed and refused to carry out his duties in relation political policing is questionable. The available British records for Clarke's killing do not specify whether or not Clarke was armed at the time of his death.[90] Neilus Connolly, who led the IRA volunteers involved in the attack claimed that Clarke had been targeted specifically because he had been involved in intelligence work. Connolly stated that Clarke was the 'chief intelligence man to the British [in Skibbereen] and was very much wanted by us.'[91] The circumstances of the shooting support Connolly's assertion that Clarke had been specifically targeted for assassination. The IRA were waiting in ambush on the street where Clarke lived, and appear to have planned their attack in anticipation of his arrival. Other potential targets were also available to the IRA in Skibbereen. Sergeant Michael Leane had left Skibbereen RIC barracks unaccompanied just prior to the attack but was able to walk the streets unmolested. It is unclear if the IRA volunteers were aware of Sergeant Lehane's movements, but given that they were apparently monitoring Clarke so closely it seems likely they would have been watching the barracks that morning. If the IRA was searching for any available 'soft target' in Skibbereen the killing of an RIC sergeant would surely have been a bigger coup than the shooting of a constable.[92] Clarke was shot whilst returning to his lodgings on Townshend Street, less than one hundred yards from the Central Hotel where a garrison of British soldiers from 1st Battalion, King's Regiment was stationed. Had the IRA in Skibbereen been searching for any available 'soft target' in the final hours before the Truce, it would surely have sought a potential victim a safer distance away from this

[88] PMCILCI on Alexander Clarke (NAUK, WO 35 / 147 A).
[89] PMCILCI on Alexander Clarke (NAUK, WO 35 / 147 A).
[90] PMCILCI on Alexander Clarke (NAUK, WO 35 / 147 A).
[91] Cornelius Connolly (NAI, BMH, WS 602, p. 2).
[92] PMCILCI on Alexander Clarke (NAUK, WO 35 / 147 A).

outpost. If Connolly's assertion that the IRA targeted Clarke because he was involved in intelligence operations is accurate, then Clarke's assassination had as much to do with his activities in the local area over the previous two years as it did with the announcement of the Truce. Nonetheless, the timing of Clarke's shooting suggests that although local republicans may have had cause to target Clarke for some time, the announcement of the Truce probably acted as a catalyst spurring the local IRA into action once a deadline had been imposed.

The shooting of Sergeant James King

In stark contrast to Constable Clarke's shooting, the assassination of Sergeant James King has elicited very little comment, despite the fact that he was the highest ranking member of the force killed in the final days of the conflict. King, a native of County Clare, joined the RIC in 1898. He had no prior employment before joining the force. King was initially posted to Galway and later transferred to Roscommon after marriage. In December 1920 he was promoted to the rank of sergeant. He was shot and fatally wounded by two IRA volunteers on 11 July 1921. At the time of his death, King was forty-four years-old and had fathered four children. He had twenty-three years' service in the RIC and had spent the previous eight years in Castlerea.[93]

King's long service in Castlerea would have given him an intimate knowledge of the local populace, and this would have proved invaluable to the British forces in the area during the War of Independence. According to local IRA veterans, King used this knowledge with great effect and was the leading member of what was dubbed the 'Castlerea Murder Gang.'[94] Paddy Egan, intelligence officer with the 1st Battalion, South Roscommon Brigade, was a British intelligence agent.[95] Egan's activities were discovered by the IRA in July 1921 but he fled before they could exact retribution. Egan had been passing information to the RIC which had resulted in the capture and summary execution of a number of local IRA volunteers. Thomas Crawley, the vice-commandant

[93] RIC Register, (NLI, Microfilm).
[94] Thomas Crawley (NAI, BMH, WS 718, p.13).
[95] Interview with Stephen Vaughan (4 June 1996).

of the 1st Battalion, South Roscommon Brigade IRA, claimed that Egan's activities crippled the republican war effort locally:

> We were damned right from the start by having traitors and agents amongst us and in the area and we were never really able to get control over this situation or eliminate that danger. Our Brigade Intelligence officer was found to be an Intelligence agent for the British. He cleared out of the country and was never got. Quite a number of men in the Castlereagh area were either shot in their beds by the RIC and Tans or taken out of their beds and shot, and all of these can be put down to the activities of that ruffian.[96]

Egan's information resulted in the arrest of IRA Volunteer Patrick Conroy at his home at Tarmon in April 1921. He was shot dead in a field by members of the RIC minutes later.[97] Two months after Conroy's killing, information supplied by Egan led to the capture of IRA Volunteers, Michael Carty and Peter Shannon, by the RIC at a republican safe house in Aughadrestan. Carty was shot dead and Shannon, though wounded eight times, survived.[98] Local republicans maintained that King was involved in these killings.[99] On the 22 June 1921, a force of RIC and Black and Tans led by Sergeant King raided the Vaughan family home at Cloonsuck, surprising three IRA volunteers inside. Two of these, Ned Shanahan and John Vaughan, were killed by the RIC as they attempted to escape, and the third Martin Ganly, was taken prisoner.[100] During the search of the house that followed, Sergeant King beat Vaughan's grieving mother unconscious with a rifle butt, and before leaving shot dead the family's dog.[101]

As the leader of the 'Castlerea Murder Gang', King would have been the primary target for the IRA's South Roscommon Brigade long before July 1921. According to Thomas Crawley, there had been several attempts to kill King prior to the Truce: 'Sergeant King of the RIC was the principal man in the murder gang that was organised in the RIC in Castlereagh and was responsible for a number of killings around the area. He was badly wanted by us. On the morning of the Truce, 11th July, we made a final effort to get this man.' [102] At about 9:30am that morning Crawley, and another IRA

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[96] Thomas Crawley (NAI, BMH, WS 718, pp 14 - 5).
[97] Hegarty Thorne, *They put the flag a-flyin*, p. 92.
[98] Hegarty Thorne, *They put the flag a-flyin*, p. 101.
[99] Micheál O'Callaghan, *For Ireland and freedom: Roscommon's contribution to the fight for Independence 1917 - 1921* (Boyle, 1991), p. 136.
[100] Hegarty Thorne, *They put the flag a - flyin*, p. 106.
[101] Interview with Stephen Vaughan (6 February 1995).
[102] Thomas Crawley (NAI, BMH, WS 718, p. 13).

volunteer, Ned Campion, went to Castlerea to mount a last ditch attempt to kill King. The pair went to a shop in Patrick's Street, a very short distance away from their intended target's home on the opposite side of the street. They had only been there a few minutes when King emerged from his home with a bicycle to attend a 10:00am parade at the barracks.[103] Crawley describes what happened next:

> We went into a shop to get a drink of lemonade and when only a few minutes there Sergeant King came out of his own house on the opposite side of the street and proceeded to get on his cycle as if to go to the barracks. We left the shop. Ned Campion and I let him have it. He died immediately.[104]

King was struck in the chest by three bullets, but despite receiving prompt medical attention he died at approximately 10:30am.[105] Whilst King's assassins would have known that a truce was imminent, had they been in a position to kill King at any other time in the preceding weeks and months they would undoubtedly have taken it. It is clear that this attack was carried out to avenge the deaths of local republicans over the previous three months in which the sergeant had actively participated. Sergeant King was a longstanding thorn in the side of the Castlerea IRA, and from its perspective he was its most active and dangerous opponent. The attack on King had been planned by the IRA as a deliberate attempt to assassinate one of its leading opponents and not as part of a last minute effort to kill any available soft target. The fact that the IRA had made repeated efforts to assassinate King but was only successful hours before the end of the conflict suggests that the announcement of the Truce spurred his killers into action.

Planned attack on the Special Constabulary at Newry and the killing of Draper Holmes

Early on the morning of 9 July, the IRA set up an ambush at Lisdrumliska, Newry for a group of off-duty members of the Ulster Special Constabulary 'B Specials', who were travelling to work. However, the planned ambush resulted in the death of a civilian who

[103] Myers' assertion that King, being motivated by his deep religious faith, was en-route to Mass in the local Catholic church at the time of his shooting is incorrect. *Irish Times*, 27 August 1994.
[104] Thomas Crawley (NAI, BMH, WS 718, p. 13).
[105] PMCILCI on James King (NAUK, WO 35 / 153 A).

entered the ambush position before the 'B Specials' arrived, and the operation was abandoned immediately afterwards. According to John Grant, captain of the Mullaughbawn Company of the IRA who led the botched ambush, the operation was the direct result of an order issued by the leadership of the IRA's 4th Northern Division to kill members of the Special Constabulary in revenge for the killing of four republicans a few days previously.[106] On 6 July a small group of armed men raided the homes of several Catholic families in the Newry area. These men were not in uniform and travelled in a civilian touring car. They stopped at Cloghoge, calling to the home of John O'Reilly an ex-RIC sergeant, forced their way inside at gunpoint and abducted two of the family's sons, John O'Reilly Jr. and Thomas O'Reilly. The raiders next called at the McGennity family farm a short distance away and arrested Peter McGennity at gunpoint. A few minutes later the McGennity family heard a volley of shots and discovered the bodies of all three men lying on the roadside. All had suffered single gunshot wounds to the head, inflicted at point blank range. At 4:30am the raiders fired a volley of shots into the McQuaid home at Carnegap killing Patrick Quinn.[107] The inquest into the killings ruled that the four had been 'murdered by some person or person's unknown' but there can be little doubt that the killings were the work of the British forces.[108] Although the families of the deceased denied those killed had any political involvement, it appears that all four victims were members of the IRA.[109] These were the latest in a series of reprisal killings in the Newry area. A member of the 'B Specials, Hugh Gabbie, was killed by the IRA in Newry town on 3 June.[110] The following month, a mixed force of RIC and 'B Specials' arrested, and later killed, William Hickey, a Catholic civilian with no republican connections.[111] On 6 July, Teresa McAnuff was shot dead in her brother's home in Newry during another police raid.[112] In the wake of these killings and the reprisal killings of the four republicans in early July, the IRA's 4th Northern Division ordered that a

[106] John Grant (NAI, BMH, WS 658, p. 15).
[107] PMCILCI on Patrick Quinn; John O'Reilly; Thomas O'Reilly and Peter McGennetty (NAUK, WO 35 / 158).
[108] PMCILCI on Patrick Quinn; John O'Reilly; Thomas O'Reilly and Peter McGennetty (NAUK, WO 35 / 158).
[109] Edward Fullerton, (NAI, BMH, WS 890 p. 18); Jack McElhaw (NAI, BMH, WS 634, p. 27).
[110] Sam Trotter, *Constabulary heroes 1826 - 2011: incorporating the RUC GC / PSNI and their forbears in the USC* (Colraine, 2012), p. 26.
[111] Fullerton (NAI, BMH, WS 890, pp 18 - 9).
[112] RIC County Inspector's Report for Down, July 1921, (NAUK, CO 904 / 116).

revenge attack on the 'B Specials' should be carried out.[113]

John Grant, a local IRA officer, received specific orders to: 'carry out a reprisal for the shooting of our four comrades by shooting a number of B Specials from Altnaveigh who worked as linesmen on the Great Northern Railway.'[114] Early on the morning of 9 July, Grant and six other IRA Volunteers took up ambush positions near the railway line at Lisdrumliska, a mile from Newry.[115] At approximately 7:40am, Draper Holmes, a 48 year-old railway ganger employed by the Great Northern Railways, entered the ambush position.[116] He was a member of Altnaveigh, Loyal Orange Lodge No. 37 but was apparently otherwise uninvolved in politics.[117] According to Grant, their intention was to hold him prisoner until after the proposed ambush had ended, but Holmes panicked and began shouting. The IRA shot their captive several times before abandoning their planned ambush and withdrawing from the area. Holmes died from his wounds later that day.[118] Holmes' cries had attracted the attention of at least two passers by, Samuel McKee and Edward Little.[119] Whilst Holmes had jeopardised the planned ambush, the IRA's decision to shoot him, was counter productive as the noise of the shots placed the IRA ambushers in jeopardy, and resulted in the abandonment of the ambush. This suggests that Holmes, an unarmed civilian prisoner was shot by the IRA in a sectarian reprisal. Grant later said of Holmes' killing: 'We carried out our orders as far as he was concerned … It was purely accidental that the unfortunate man - Holmes - came along first and was the only victim.'[120] However, the evidence of Samuel McKee, one of the witnesses to Holmes shooting implies that the decision to kill Holmes was more deliberate and calculated. McKee stated that he saw Holmes, being held by the throat whilst a group of men stood over him saying 'Say your prayers before you die.'[121]

Holmes was a Protestant from a loyalist community. John Grant's rationale behind the decision to shoot Holmes suggests that the act was purely sectarian:

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[113] John Grant (NAI, BMH, WS 658, p. 15).
[114] Grant (NAI, BMH, WS 658, p. 15).
[115] Grant (NAI, BMH, WS 658, pp 15 - 7).
[116] PMCILCI on Draper Holmes (NAUK, WO 35 / 152).
[117] *Irish Times*, 2 June 1995.
[118] PMCILCI on Draper Holmes (NAUK, WO 35 / 152).
[119] *Cork Examiner*, 11 July 1921.
[120] Grant (NAI, BMH, WS 658, pp 15 - 7).
[121] PMCILCI on Draper Holmes (NAUK, WO 35 / 152).

> There was … ample evidence to prove that he [Holmes] had such an intense hatred for everything republican that he would go to extreme limits to destroy the movement. In this, the man was no different from his other unionist neighbours in his local village. I wish however to record that he suffered not for anything he himself had done but for a deadly danger to the lives and freedom of our companions in arms, which men of his class represented.[122]

Grant's assertion that Holmes was shot, 'not for anything he himself had done' but because of the religious and political group he belonged to, seems to confirm that the attack on Holmes was a sectarian killing. Prior to this the IRA in Newry had been keen to avoid sectarian violence and, with the exception of a number of arson attacks on loyalist homes in Killylea that April, had refrained from intentionally targeting Protestant civilians. Attacks on the Special Constabulary had proven an attractive target for the local IRA because they were both members of the British forces and representatives of local unionism.[123]

The significance of the death of Draper Holmes is that it was apparently the first time that the IRA in that area had engaged in a deliberate sectarian killing as a reprisal for the deaths of IRA volunteers and sectarian attacks on the Catholic-Nationalist community. There is no doubt that the aborted ambush at Lisdrumliska which resulted in Holmes death was planned as a reprisal simply to avenge the killings of local people by the B Specials and had no other tangible military objective. Whilst it is possible that news of the Truce could have reached Newry by the time the attack took place, there is no evidence to suggest that the IRA volunteers involved had any knowledge of the impending ceasefire. Furthermore, the killing of Draper Holmes appears to have been entirely motivated by local factors and had no relation to political developments nationally as previously claimed.[124]

Non-Fatal attacks on off-duty members of the RIC

During the last days and hours of the conflict, the IRA mounted a number of non-fatal attacks on off duty members of the RIC. At 10:30am on 9 July, in Sarsfield St., Kilmallock, IRA Volunteer Jimmy Costello attacked Constable Charles Bullock, a Black

[122] John Grant (NAI, BMH, WS 658, pp 15 - 7).
[123] Correspondence with Dr. William Matthew Lewis, Queen's University Belfast, 13 Oct. 2009.
[124] *Irish Times*, 27 August 1994.

and Tan from Herefordshire. Bullock escaped unharmed and sought refuge in the town's RIC barracks.[125] He was alone and unarmed when Costello attacked him firing three shots. The evidence suggests that this incident was a haphazard affair; had the IRA set out to assassinate Constable Bullock it is likely they would have sent several IRA volunteers and not a single gunman.[126] The following day an RIC constable was attacked at 1:00pm in Annacarty, Tipperary.[127] Another off-duty member of the RIC, Constable Massey, was shot near Cappoquinn, Co. Waterford on 10 July; he suffered a wound but escaped his attackers and survived.[128] At Tagmon, Wexford a large group of IRA volunteers fired shots at a group of RIC Constables who were swimming in a pond. The attackers made off with their clothing but none of the RIC suffered any injuries.[129] In the last hour of the conflict an RIC constable was shot and seriously wounded at 11:20am in Edenderry, Offaly.[130] Seamus Babington one of the leaders of the IRA's Tipperary No. 3 Brigade would later deride an attempt made on the morning of the Truce by a group of IRA volunteers in Carrickbeg to kill a local man named Prout who was a member of the RIC. A group of IRA volunteers waited in ambush for him outside a pub he visited on a daily basis. Prout appears to have been a relatively inoffensive man, and as far as Seamus Babington was concerned the unsuccessful plan to kill Prout was: 'A good job, [for] he was a Protestant and it would have been said that that was why he was shot.'[131]

The attack on Constable Farmiloe

On 10 July members of the IRA's Kerry No. 1 Brigade attacked four off-duty Black and Tans as they were returning to Tarbert RIC barracks. One of the four, Constable Farmiloe, suffered serious gunshot injuries; his comrade, Constable Dent, received minor wounds.[132] Rather than being a last minute attack on available 'soft targets', this

[125] *Irish Times*, 11 July 1921.
[126] Mainchín Seoighe, *The story of Kilmallock* (Kilmallock, 2012), p. 285.
[127] Summary of outrages reported by the police, July 1921 (NAUK, CO 904 / 146).
[128] RIC County Inspector's Report for Waterford, July 1921,(NAUK, CO 904 / 116).
[129] Summary of outrages reported by the police, July 1921 (NAUK, CO 904 / 146).
[130] Summary of outrages reported by the police, July 1921 (NAUK, CO 904 / 146).
[131] Babington (NAI, BMH, WS 1595, pp 149 - 50).
[132] Summary of outrages reported by the police July 1921 (NAUK, CO 904 / 146); John Ahern (NAI, BMH, WS 970, p. 7).

operation was deliberately premeditated with a view to assassinating Constable Farmiloe. Farmiloe, a Black and Tan from Gloucestershire, was a member of the RIC motor patrol that had shot IRA Volunteer John Sheehan in Coilbhee, Listowel on 26 May 1921. Sheehan had been sitting outside his home with his brother when the patrol approached; he fled in panic, was spotted by the patrol and shot dead.[133] After this incident, Farmiloe boasted that he had killed Sheehan, and consequently came to the attention of the IRA:

> We subsequently heard through an RIC man that the Tan responsible for his [Sheehan's] death was a man named Farnlow [sic], who was stationed in Tarbert. From then to the Truce we were determined to shoot Farnlow. We received reports of him now and again from the Tarbert Volunteers. Eventually on the night prior to the Truce, we decided to go into Tarbert and attack the Tans again in the hope that we might get Farnlow.[134]

At 10:30pm on the night of 10 July, a dozen armed IRA volunteers under the command of John Aherne assembled in Tarbert in the hope of avenging Sullivan's death. The main IRA party remained half a mile outside the town whilst Con Brosnan and Dan O'Grady accompanied Aherne into Tarbert.[135] A republican scout, who had been monitoring Farmiloe's movements, informed them that that he was drinking in Mulcahy's pub with a handful of other Black and Tans. Aherne ordered Brosnan and O'Grady to summon the main IRA party whilst he kept watch for Farmiloe. Aherne was waiting for reinforcements when Farmiloe and three other Black and Tans left Mulcahy's pub for their RIC barracks at 11 pm Fearful that he would miss this opportunity Aherne, opened fire on Farmiloe:

> I was in the open street near the pub on the opposite corner and had to think quickly what to do. There were four of them so I opened fire with the revolver on the four Tans. They did not return the fire but ran for the barracks and opened fire from there, but by this time I was on my way to join my friends. This action took place one hour before midnight on the eve of the Truce.[136]

It is clear from the accounts of Aherne and Brosnan that this attack was made with the specific intention of killing Constable Farmiloe. Although the attack was made in the knowledge that a Truce would shortly be in effect, the operation was undoubtedly

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[133] Gaughan, *Listowel and its vicinity*, p. 393.
[134] Con Brosnan (NAI, BMH, WS 1123, pp 7 - 8).
[135] Con Brosnan (NAI, BMH, WS 1123, pp 7 - 8).
[136] John Ahern, (NAI, BMH, WS 970, p. 7).

motivated by Farmiloe's involvement in the killing of Sheehan six weeks earlier. Whilst the timing of the Tarbert shooting could be interpreted as a haphazard attack on a 'soft target' made in a callous effort to exploit the imminent Truce, the reality is that the attack was a deliberate assassination attempt to kill a specific member of the Black and Tans in order to avenge the death of a local IRA volunteer. As such the announcement of the Truce was not the primary motivational factor in the attack.

Constables Atwell, Doyle, and Special Constable Sinnamon

On the morning of 11 July the IRA captured three members of the RIC in Tyrone during a planned IRA operation to burn a loyalist-owned creamery. The Dunamore Company of the IRA's Tyrone Brigade had been planning to burn Doon's Creamery in reprisal for the destruction of Dungate Sinn Féin Hall, destroyed by the British forces two weeks earlier. The republicans undertook a great deal of planning to ensure that the proposed burning would be a success since the creamery was situated a mile from the local RIC barracks. Their plans were near completion when news reached the Tyrone IRA on 10 July that a Truce had been agreed. In spite of this development, the local IRA officers decided to carry out the burning of the creamery before the ceasefire would come into effect.[137] Four IRA volunteers who had mobilised for the attack were waiting for motor transport to their rendezvous when they saw RIC Constable Doyle approaching from Draperstown on a motorcycle. The four held up Doyle, took him prisoner and commandeered his vehicle.[138] A short time later, the IRA captured a second member of the RIC. As they approached Doon's Creamery, the republicans saw Constable George Atwell, a Black and Tan from Middlesex, standing in front of the building. Initially there was a sense of panic when some of IRA wrongly assumed Atwell was part of an RIC protection force guarding the creamery.[139] Upon seeing Atwell, James McElduff, one of the IRA volunteers, roared out 'Christ would you look at that old peeler!' and opened fire. Atwell immediatedly

[137] Patrick McKenna (NAI, BMH, WS 911, pp 10 - 2).
[138] Thomas J. Kelly (O'Fiaich Library Armagh, LOK IV B 06, pp 2 - 3).
[139] Patrick McKenna (NAI, BMH, WS 911, pp 10 - 2).

surrendered and was taken prisoner.[140] The IRA raided the creamery as planned, and captured its manager, Henry L. Sinnamon. Sinnamon was a member of the Special Constabulary. Although armed when captured, he was not ill-treated by the republicans.[141] The IRA immediately withdrew following the destruction of the creamery, taking their captives with them, all of whom were released unharmed a short time later.

There is some conflict in witness accounts as to the manner of Atwell's release. Patrick McKenna, captain of the IRA's Donoughmore Company, stated that the IRA celebrated the operation and the Truce by treating Constable Atwell to a few drinks before setting him free: 'We kept him in close custody until we had burned the creamery. Afterwards we took him with us to our home area where we gave him both liquor and other refreshments before we allowed him to depart for his home.'[142] Another participant in the attack, Patrick Diamond, gives a conflicting account of Altwell's release. Diamond states that he had been ordered to execute Atwell. He claimed that as he was about to carry out the execution he discovered that Atwell, an English Protestant, was wearing a 'Sacred Heart' scapular given to him by his Catholic Irish girlfriend. Diamond claims that he decided, based upon his strong personal religious convictions, that he could not kill his prisoner and released him after they shared a quantity of brandy.[143] After being held for a short period, Constable Doyle was also released. The IRA kept Doyle's motorcycle but permitted him to keep £50 they discovered on his person. One of his captors, Thomas Kelly, recorded that Doyle was released shortly afterwards and parted with his captors on good terms: 'so very relieved that he still had his money he walked back to Draperstown barracks. He was one of the friendly RIC in Draperstown, and we did not wish to harm him.'[144] It is not recorded if Sinnamon was also afforded the same hospitality that Atwell and Doyle received. Regardless, all three members of the RIC captured by the Tyrone IRA were released unharmed a few hours after the Truce came into effect.[145]

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[140] Uinseann Mac Eoin, Survivors, (Dublin, 1980), pp 175 - 6.
[141] Mac Eoin, *Survivors*. pp 175 - 6.
[142] Patrick McKenna (NAI, BMH, WS 911, pp 10 - 2).
[143] Patrick Diamond, (O'Fiaich Library Armagh, LOK IV B 01, pp 29 - 31).
[144] Thomas J. Kelly (OFL, LOK IV B 06, pp 2 - 3).
[145] RIC County Inspectors Report Tyrone, July 1921 (NAUK, CO 904 / 116).

Other IRA actions taken against off-duty members of the RIC

On the morning of the Truce seven IRA volunteers from Ballylongford Company laid an ambush near Ballylongford village for a group of Black and Tans that was stationed in the area. The local IRA unit had monitored their movements for some time and noted that Black and Tans made regular trips to a section of the River Forde to bathe. A local woman noticed the IRA preparing their ambush positions and informed the RIC, and the Black and Tans duly cancelled their daily swim. The republicans waited in ambush for the Black and Tans until noon when the Truce came into effect. The decision to mount this ambush was made prior to the announcement of the Truce and the attack was not planned as a 'knee jerk' reaction or in response to the order issued by the IRA leadership in Kerry to mount attacks on the British forces before the conflict ended.[146]

Of course, not all of the final actions taken against off-duty members of the RIC in the final days and hours before the Truce involved physical attacks. On 10 July two RIC constables had their bicycles stolen whilst attending a religious service at Drumagarner near Coleraine, Derry.[147] A similar incident occurred in Wicklow where three RIC constables had their bicycles stolen from Hollywood post office.[148] At 10.45 pm the same evening, four republicans held up two members of the RIC at gunpoint in Market Street, Sligo. Having deprived them of their revolvers, their captors released them unharmed.[149] Had the IRA nationally been acting on instructions to inflict as many fatalities as possible on the RIC before the Truce came into effect, the republicans would have shot these RIC constables instead of releasing them after seizing their firearms and transport. Like the cases of the eight British military personnel released unharmed by the IRA after the announcement of the Truce, the IRA's capture and subsequent release of the two RIC constables in Sligo, and Constable Atwell and Special Constable Sinnamon suggests that in many areas the IRA treated their captives mercifully and the announcement of the Truce did not lead to a uniform reaction employing the use of lethal violence against captured British personnel. In particular the chivalrous treatment

[146] Thomas Carmody, (NAI, BMH, WS 996, p. 11).
[147] Summary of outrages reported by the police, July 1921 (NAUK, CO 904 / 146).
[148] Summary of outrages reported by the police, July 1921 (NAUK, CO 904 / 146).
[149] Summary of outrages reported by the police, July 1921 (NAUK, CO 904 / 146).

afforded to Constable Atwell illustrated that the treatment of captured or off-duty members of the RIC varied significantly from area to area and the levels of IRA aggression used against them depended very much upon the intensity of the conflict in the area.

IRA attacks on off-duty British military personnel 8 - 11 July 1921

The dominant historical narrative is that by the final stages of the conflict the IRA's military campaign had been rendered so ineffective through improved British tactics and counter insurgency measures that republicans were forced to carry out attacks on off-duty members of the British forces, captured British soldiers and other 'soft targets'. Subscribers to this theory often classify these attacks and killings as 'acts of terror' or IRA 'terrorism'. The 'soft target' narrative is probably best summarised in John Dorney's chapter entitled 'Terror and Counter-Terror' in *The story of the Irish War of Independence*:

> By the Spring of 1921 the British rarely travelled in convoys of less than two lorries, sometimes accompanied by an armoured car. Their barracks were also by now formidably defended. The IRA simply could not take on these forces in combat. But what they could do was take revenge for the British assassination of their men with assassinations of their own. In Clare for instance three British soldiers were found unarmed apparently having deserted in February 1921. With little hesitation the local IRA men shot them and dumped them on the roadside. [150]

Dorney referenced *Blood on the banner: the republican struggle in Clare* in support of the example used to illustrate the 'soft target' theory. However, the book clearly stated that the three British soldiers executed in northwest Clare in February 1921 were shot by local IRA volunteers who believed the trio were spying for the British military. There is no evidence to suggest that these soldiers were killed as the result of a local vendetta. On the contrary, there is strong evidence suggesting that these soldiers had left their barracks on an intelligence gathering mission when captured by the IRA.[151] A number of British soldiers in counties Clare, Cork and Kerry were executed after capture by the republicans in late 1920 and early 1921. These soldiers frequently claimed that they were deserters

[150] John Dorney, *The story of the Irish War of Independence* (e-book, 2010).
[151] Pádraig Óg Ó Ruairc, 'The Woodford Incident', in *Bugle & sabre: military history in Oxfordshire & Buckinghamshire*, iv (Oxford, 2010), pp 24 - 6.

from the British Army, or were engaged in non-military activities when captured. In most cases, the IRA rejected these claims as falsehoods and executed the soldiers for spying.[152] Cases where the IRA executed British soldiers who were suspected of intelligence gathering should be considered separately to IRA attacks upon off-duty British soldiers who appear to have been engaged genuine in non-offensive military activity at the time of their deaths.[153]

During the War of Independence, republicans rarely justified their actions with reference to the Hague Conventions and international law. Instead, they qualified their actions in reference to existing local conditions. In effect, combatants on both sides did not feel bound by the 'rules of war' so much as the 'customs of war'. They frequently cited the deeds of their opponents as setting a precedent, which they felt justified their own actions. Members of the British forces justified their reprisals on the basis that the IRA fought a dirty war: 'Is it to be wondered … that men … seeing their comrades shot down in cold blood, sometimes took the law into their own hands and indulged in unofficial reprisals[?].'[154] In turn Tom Barry and other IRA veterans complained that the nature of the British campaign had dragged them 'down in the mire'. When IRA leaders in Munster first proposed drastic measures be taken against off-duty troops and captured British soldiers, they cited specific British practices which they felt justified their proposals. In January 1921 the leadership of the Tipperary No. 3 Brigade, the East Limerick Brigade and three Cork Brigades made the following submission to IRA GHQ:

> 1. That GHQ issue a proclamation to effect: - In areas where hostages are taken by the enemy in lorries and otherwise: the enemy whether armed or unarmed will be shot at sight.
>
> 2. That GHQ issue a proclamation to effect: - In view of the enemy proclamation that our troops will be shot if found armed. The enemy will be similarly dealt with by our troops.[155]

IRA GHQ procrastinated in issuing a response to this proposal and after growing impatient with their superiors, those who had proposed these measures began implementing them without receiving official approval. The following month members of

[152] Pádraig Óg Ó Ruairc, 'Missing in Action' in *History Ireland*, November / December 2012.
[153] Pádraig Óg Ó Ruairc, *Revolution, A photographic history of revolutionary Ireland 1913 - 1923* (Cork, 2012), p. 163.
[154] Sheehan, *Hearts & mines*, pp 41 - 2.
[155] John M. McCarthy (NAI, BMH, WS 883, p. 129).

the IRA's East Limerick Brigade executed two members of the RIC captured after the Dromkeen Ambush. The practice of targeting off-duty members of the British forces in response to the deaths of IRA volunteers in British custody developed in Cork about the same time. Prior to this, attacks upon, and the summary execution of British soldiers had been considered taboo by the Cork IRA. Tom Barry held the Essex Regiment responsible for the summary killings of a number of captured IRA volunteers and subsequently issued orders to:

> shoot every member of the Essex at sight, armed or unarmed, and not to accept their surrender under any circumstances. Up to then those troops were immune from attack when unarmed and off-duty. On their return from a foray where they might have killed unarmed Irishmen and burned out houses, they would go out immune to public houses or promenade outside the suburbs with the few unfortunate women who alone would consort with them. They felt they were safe while unarmed as we had tried to play the game of war by the rules accepted by the civilised world but now immunity was at an end.[156]

On 23 February 1921, the Cork No. 3 Brigade's Flying Column captured four off-duty members of the British forces in Bandon. Lance-Corporal Stubbs and Private Knight, the two members of the Essex Regiment captured, were executed.[157] The captured Royal Marines were released unharmed with a communication addressed to the commander of the Essex Regiment.[158] This communication listed eleven republican prisoners said to have been killed whilst prisoners of the Essex Regiment. Barry's message stated that from then onwards captured members of the regiment would suffer the same fate as Stubbs and Knight if any other republican prisoners were killed in their custody.[159]

Five days later, on 28 February, the IRA's Cork No. 1 Brigade issued orders for widespread attacks to avenge the deaths of five IRA volunteers who had been executed by the British Army in Victoria Barracks, Cork. At nightfall the IRA attacked off-duty soldiers throughout the city, many of whom had left their barracks unarmed to court local girls. Six British soldiers were killed, and another ten wounded.[160] Prior to this the IRA in Cork had not considered unarmed British soldiers a legitimate military target. The British military reacted to this new 'policy of murdering unarmed soldiers' by organising units of armed plain clothes British Army personnel to patrol areas frequented by off-duty

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[156] Tom Barry, *Guerrilla days in Ireland* (Dublin, 1981), p. 99.
[157] 'The Irish rebellion in the 6th divisional area', p. 87
[158] William McCarthy, (NAI, BMH, WS1255, p. 7).
[159] Barry, *Guerrilla Days*, pp 103 - 4.
[160] Borgonovo, *Anti-Sinn Féin Society*, p. 88.

soldiers.[161] The motivation and timing of the IRA's attack was not lost on British officers like Major Reginald Graham: 'six men [sic] … [were executed,] that same night the Shinners went out and picked six British soldiers who were courting girls and shot them. So it was tit for tat.'[162]

However, this reprisal did not prevent the British military carrying out the execution of another two IRA volunteers captured at Clonmult. In retaliation for these executions, a series of coordinated republican attacks on British troops were launched by the IRA's 1st Southern Division on 14 May 1921.[163] Six off-duty British soldiers were attacked near Castletownbere, Cork; four of them were wounded, three fatally.[164] Private Shepard of the Essex Regiment was killed when the Cork No. 3 Brigade's Flying Column machine-gunned a group of soldiers playing a soccer match.[165] Lance-Corporal Madell of the Essex Regiment was killed at Courtmacsherry, Cork.[166] Two members of the Royal Marine Artillery were killed at Ballinacurra, Cork.[167] In total fifteen members of the British forces were killed by the IRA's 1st Southern Division that evening. Although attacks had taken place in Kerry and Limerick, these shootings were almost exclusively a Cork affair.[168] The attacks on off-duty soldiers in February and May 1921 had been sanctioned and carefully planned by the leadership of the Cork IRA in retaliation for the execution of republican prisoners. On 19 June 1921, Ernie O'Malley ordered the execution of three British officers captured by the IRA as a reprisal for the killings of IRA members captured by the British forces.[169] A similar situation occurred in Dublin where the IRA mounted the 'Battle of Brunswick Street', an attack in which two RIC Auxiliaries were killed, as a deliberate reprisal for the execution of captured IRA volunteers.[170] The last major attack on off-duty soldiers during the War of Independence known locally as 'The Ellis Quarry shootings' occurred in Cork city the night before the Truce came into effect. This incident differed significantly from previous attacks on off-

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[161] 'The Irish rebellion in the 6th divisional area', p. 87.
[162] Sheehan, *British voices*, pp 211 - 2.
[163] Borgonovo, *Anti-Sinn Féin Society*, p. 88.
[164] *Irish Independent*, 16 May 1921.
[165] *Irish Independent*, 16 May 1921.
[166] *Irish Times*, 16 May 1921.
[167] *Freeman's Journal*, 16 May 1921.
[168] 'The Irish rebellion in the 6th divisional area', p. 147; Abbott, *Police casualties*, pp 237 - 40.
[169] Ernie O'Malley, *On another man's wound* (4th ed., Dublin, 2008) p. 371.
[170] Nic Dháibhéid, *Seán MacBride*, pp 44 - 7.

duty soldiers since it was entirely opportunistic and was not sanctioned by a senior IRA officer.

The 'Ellis Quarry shootings' - Historiography

Undoubtedly, the best known and most controversial incident associated with the Truce is the capture and execution in Cork of four off-duty British soldiers; Lance-Corporal Harold Daker, Private Henry Albert Morris, and Sappers Alfred G. Camm and Albert Edward Powell.[171] The incident remembered locally as the 'Ellis Quarry shootings' is well-known in Cork today and has become engrained in the city's oral tradition and folklore. This is partly due to a photograph of the soldiers' bodies taken shortly after the incident which has been used in several recent publications.[172] The RIC reported that the soldiers 'being influenced by the news of the impending truce thought they were safe, but were trapped by the IRA.'[173] The British military officers cited the killings of these soldiers as proof of an IRA murder campaign launched in reaction to the announcement of the Truce.[174]

During the Civil War, supporters of the Treaty exploited the incident for propaganda effect to depict members of the anti-treaty IRA as a ruthless band of murderers motivated by criminality. IRA veteran Connie Neenan recalled:

> As a result of this unfortunate incident a priest who had been on our side … turned violently against us during the Civil War. He strongly denounced the shooting of the four soldiers and QUITE RIGHTLY so … In 1924 this same priest came to me asking me if I would use my influence to get our boys back into the Confraternity … I told him straight out that he lionised our [Free State] opponents although he knew perfectly well that those who shot the four soldiers were members of that very opposition of ours. Still the priest continued his accusations that we were all murderers, bank robbers and common criminals … It clearly showed the deeply engrained hypocrisy of some of our spiritual leaders.[175]

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[171] Daker was a member of the 2nd Battalion, South Staffordshire Regiment. His military service number was 4905129. He was born in 1893 and lived at Chasetown, England. He is buried in Saint Ann's Churchyard, Chasetown. Morris was a member of the 2nd Battalion, South Staffordshire Regiment. His military service number was 4905221. He was born on the 20 January 1900, the eldest son of Henry Alfred Morris and his wife Lucy (nee Williams) of 57 Pool Street, Walsall, England. He is buried in Ryecroft Cemetery Walsall. Camm was a member of the Royal Engineers. His military service number was 1856603. He is buried in Cork Military Cemetery. Powell was a member of the Fortress Company, 33rd Battalion, Royal Engineers. His military service number was 1853916. He was the son of Henry Arthur and Jane Powell of 28 Abbott Road, Poplar, London. He is buried in Nunhead All Saints Cemetery.

[172] See for example the cover of Sheehan's *A hard local war* and in McKenna's *Guerrilla warfare in the Irish War of Independence 1919 - 1921*. Eoghan Harris references this photograph in his account of the killings in the *Sunday Independent*, 31 March 2013.

[173] RIC County Inspector's Report Cork ER, July 1921 (NAUK, CO 904 / 115).

[174] 'The Irish rebellion in the 6th divisional area', p. 130.

[175] Neenan (Cork City & County Archives, Neenan Memoir, pp 70a - 71).

In the 1950s Republicans in Cork were taunted by their detractors by mention of the 'Ellis Quarry' killings.[176] This was in spite of the fact that the IRA captain who ordered the killings, and his lieutenant who was complicit in the execution, had afterwards been treated as pariahs by the IRA in Cork. Both were stripped of their command and were arrested by the IRA after they had applied to join the Civic Guard.[177] The incident was not mentioned in any of the Witness Statements collected from Cork IRA veterans by the Bureau of Military History and was ignored in popular histories of the period such as *Rebel Cork's fighting story*.[178]

Consequently, knowledge of the incident had begun to slip from public consciousness until Neenan publicly denounced the killings in an interview published in the 1980s.[179] Neenan was not involved in the soldiers' executions, and had not witnessed their capture. However he was active on the south side of Cork city at the time and immediately set out to secure the soldiers release upon learning of their capture:

> Around midnight my mother called me to inform me that there were four young British soldiers who had just been taken prisoner by our fellows. I felt alarmed. They were I suppose, out for the first time in months with their guard down. One of them had gone into a shop to buy sweets. With my brother in law and a few more I went out and searched the fields from here to Togher. Around two in the morning we met some of our lads. The news is bad, they said; I was astounded. But surely no one would shoot anyone at a time like this? I crept into a house, exhausted and filled with remorse, the chap with me a bundle of nerves.[180]

In his memoirs Neenan described the act as: 'a most senseless, and a deeply regrettable incident, something that did considerable harm to the image of the IRA'.[181]

In recent years accounts of this incident have become increasingly melodramatic and factually inaccurate, mixing elements of Neenan's account with local rumour and folklore. Local historian Richard Henchion wrote in 2003 that the incident was the foulest deed to ever befall the district and implied that the killings were 'evil'.[182] He claimed that the soldiers had been buying sweets at Mrs Martin's shop at No. 49 Bandon Road when

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[176] Information from personal recollection related by Christóir de Barróid, Cork.
[177] Diary of Liam de Roiste TD, 23 March 1922 (Cork City & County Archives, De Roiste Papers).
[178] *Rebel Cork's fighting story 1916 - 1921* (Cork, 2010).
[179] MacEoin, *Survivors*, p. 241.
[180] MacEoin, *Survivors*, p. 241.
[181] Neenan (Cork City & County Archives, Neenan Memoir, pp 70a - 71).
[182] Richard Henchion, *The land of the finest drop: the story of life, love and labour in the districts of the Lough, Togher, Pouladuff, Friars Walk and Ballyphehane over a period of 400 years* (Cork, 2003), pp 81 - 2.

captured by four members of the IRA who had left the nearby Fr O'Leary Total Abstinence Hall. According to Henchion's narrative, the soldiers were taken towards Cork Lough and executed in a quarry at Croughtamore. Henchion states that two of the IRA volunteers he claims were involved, William Barry and Denis Twomey, developed 'qualms of conscience' and refused to take part in the executions with the result that all four soldiers were executed by a single member of the IRA. Henchion implies that responsibility for the killings ultimately lay with Neenan, and completely dismissed his claim to have attempted to save their lives:

> While Neenan by his own words clears himself of involvement … the traditional story is adamant that he was in the Hall that night playing billiards and was well acquainted with the preliminaries that led to the shooting. His version has never been accepted by the non-aligned general public, it being felt that four ordinary Volunteers would not assume so great a responsibility without some nod of approval from a higher authority. [183]

Gerrard Murphy cited the killings in his book '*The year of disappearances'* as an indicator of the 'degradation' to which he claimed the IRA's military campaign had sunk by 1921:

> What idealistic young patriot could imagine, while on a route march to Blarney on a Sunday morning in the autumn of 1919, that a year and a half later he would pick up four unarmed teenage soldiers who had gone out to buy sweets in view of the impending Truce, when all IRA units had been informed of the ceasefire, take them into a field in Togher, shoot them and leave their bodies in the sad rigor of death, to be found the next morning?' [184]

More recently the polemicist and political activist Eoghan Harris, has described the incident in the *Sunday Independent.*Harris claimed to have received information about the incident from his grandfather, an IRA veteran, who in turn had allegedly spoken to several eyewitnesses:

> he was sickened by some of the IRA actions … he would get angry telling me what happened to four young British soldiers on July 9 [sic], 1921, the eve before the Truce[sic] … At 10:30pm on a fine summer's night, they stopped at a sweetshop on the Bandon Road and bought a bag of bullseyes. They were still sucking on the sweets when they were seized by a party of IRA men and frog marched towards the Lough. My grandfather who lived in Barrack Street nearby and got good eyewitness accounts, told me that people on the street called on the IRA party to let the four lads go. But the IRA in Cork was in the grip of a blood lust. The four frightened soldiers were brought to Ellis's Quarry and shot in the head.

[183] Henchion, *The land of the finest drop,* pp 81 - 2.
[184] Murphy, *The year of disappearances*, p. 16.

> You can google a grim photo of their four bodies sprawled on the grass. Some mothers' sons.[185]

These accounts contain a great deal of misinformation and inaccuracies. Henchion's suggestion that Neenan ordered the killing is without foundation. The executions were carried out by members of H Company, 1st Battalion, Cork No. 1 Brigade. Neenan was an officer in the 2nd Battalion, Cork No. 1 Brigade and would have had no command over IRA volunteers from a different battalion. There is no reliable evidence linking Neenan to the shootings. Harris's version of events is also misleading, despite his claim that it was based upon 'good eye witness accounts'. As well as getting the location of the incident wrong, Harris also errs with regard to its timing. He gives an incorrect date for the killings, before stating authoritatively that the four soldiers were captured exiting a sweet shop on the Bandon Road at 10:30pm. This contradicts the IRA report of the incident which specified that the four were captured at 8:00pm by an IRA patrol operating on the Western Road, and that all four soldiers were dead by 9 pm.

Murphy's retelling of the incident emphasised the brutality and callousness of killing 'teenage' soldiers. However, none of those killed were teenagers; all four were over twenty years of age.[186] There was nothing particularly remarkable about the soldiers' youth. The British Army had reduced the age of enlistment from eighteen to seventeen years in 1919.[187] Consequently by 1921, a significant proportion of the British soldiers serving in Ireland would have been aged in their late teens or early twenties.[188] The Cork IRA volunteers were contemporaries of their youthful British foes. IRA Volunteer Pat Deasy was just sixteen when he was killed in the Kilmichael Ambush whilst Tom Barry, who led the engagement, was twenty-three years-old. Neither the contemporary RIC reports nor press reports of the killings, commented upon the soldiers' ages. Furthermore, the relative youth of the four soldiers executed by the Cork IRA does not mean that they were 'raw recruits' One of the four, Henry Morris, had considerable military experience. In 1914, at the age of fourteen Morris left his employment as a filer to enlist in the Brirish Army. In 1916 he fought on the Western Front, where he was

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[185] *Sunday Independent*, 31 March 2013.
[186] Cannim and Powell were both aged 20, Morris was 21 and Dacker 28 years old.
[187] Jeffery, *Crisis of empire*, p. 16.
[188] Sheehan, *Hard local war*, p. 49.

wounded twice and survived a gas attack.[189] The other member of the South Staffordshires killed, Harold Daker, presumably had similar military experience since he was seven years older than Morris and was a NCO, having been promoted to the rank of Lance-Corporal. Further details of Daker's military service are not available since the South Staffordshire Regimental records giving the enlistment details of recruits at the time Daker enlisted are incomplete.[190]

The recent accounts of the killings state that the soldiers were buying sweets at the time they were captured. This detail has been used to emphasise their youth, innocence and supposed child like demeanour. Murphy stated all four 'teenage soldiers' left their post to buy sweets. In his memoirs, Connie Neenan recalled that he had been told one of the soldiers was 'carrying some sweets in his hands' however Neenan did not witness this himself, and there is no evidence to support the claim that the soldiers had embarked on an errand to buy confectionary when captured and killed.[191] One of the earliest accounts of the incident written by Phillips states that the soldiers 'were being 'treated' by a friendly publican in celebration of the Truce.'[192] If Phillips account is accurate then the soldiers were captured whilst drinking alcohol rather than buying sweets, but this possibility has been erased from the most recent and highly emotive accounts of the incident.

The 'Ellis Quarry shootings' - Factual Narrative

The verifiable facts are that all four soldiers left the British Army post at Cork jail on 10 July. They were travelling on foot and were unarmed.[193] At 8:00pm the four soldiers were captured by a patrol of seven IRA volunteers led by Daniel Hallinan, Captain of H Company 1st Battalion of the IRA's Cork No. 1 Brigade.[194] Hallinan and his men had been patrolling an area from Donovan's Bridge along the Western Road in search of a

[189] Morris's Service number when he joined the British Army was 14789. Details of his early military career are available online at: www.cairogang.com/soldiers-killed/cork-jul-21/morris/morris/.html (accessed 17 August 2014).
[190] Register of enlisted men Ref: 8416 (Staffordshire Regimental Museum Library)
[191] Neenan, (CCCA, Neenan Memoir, pp 70a - 71).
[192] Phillips, *Revolution in Ireland*, p. 216.
[193] RIC County Inspector's Report for Cork ER, July 1921 (NAUK, CO 904 / 115).
[194] Activity report of O/C, H Company, 1st Battalion, Cork No. 1 Brigade to IRA GHQ, July 1921 (UCDA, RMP P7 / A / 23).

suspected civilian informer. After capture the British soldiers were searched before being taken to an isolated area and executed about 9:00pm.[195] The bodies of the four soldiers were discovered at 10:00am the following morning.[196] Three of the four were found blindfolded.[197] All four had been shot through the head.[198] Neenan was with Bob Aherne, a fellow IRA officer, when the soldiers were captured, and he attempted unsuccessfully to locate the soldiers and prevent their execution which he feared would trigger a wave of British reprisals:

> Aherne … was hiking along with me to the Lough area, where we were trying to hunt up a place to shelter and sleep. Approaching the Bandon Rd. we were told that H Company, 1st Battalion had captured four young British soldiers attached to the Cork Jail Guard and that they were to be executed. Immediately Bob and I set out to find our IRA men and their four prisoners; I planned to release the soldiers right away since I knew only too well that any harm done to them would result in a wholesale spree of arrests and executions of many of our people and of innocent civilians by the British. We searched everywhere and in several different areas of the city but, unfortunately, we did not find them. Finally, at about 1:30am we gave up and shortly after met some men belonging to H Company, 2nd Battalion that was in Togher, and the men told us that they had been told that the soldiers had been shot. Bob and I just could not believe it and still hoped it was a false rumour and that the soldiers were still alive … our efforts had been in vain, the soldiers had been executed and we had been unable to prevent it.[199]

The text of a letter written by Captain Hordern of the South Staffordshire Regiment to the family of Private Morris provides some additional details:

> As far as can be found out your son and his friends were shot together. From what I saw myself when they were brought to the barracks, I am convinced that they could not have suffered, but died instantly. Your son was blindfolded and taken to a field about two to three miles from where he had been walking with his friends.[200]

The RIC report on their killings states that Daker, Morris, Camm and Powell, 'being influenced by the news of the impending truce they thought they were safe'.[201]

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[195] Activity report of O/C, H Company, 1st Battalion, Cork No. 1 Brigade to IRA GHQ, July 1921 (UCDA, RMP P7 / A / 23). The British forces' official account of the incident issued by Dublin Castle on 11 July 1921 stated that the soldiers were kidnapped at 10:30pm but it is likely that this refers to the time the alarm was raised about their disappearance when they failed to return to their posts. The O/C of H Company who ordered the men's execution would undoubtedly have been better placed to recall accurately what time the men were captured and killed. There is some debate as to the location of the execution site but it appears to have been somewhere between St. Finbarr's Cemetery and 'The Lough'. The 1900 Ordinance Survey Map for Cork shows several gravel pits in fields in that area. One of these gravel pits, located where the Ashwood Estate and Hillside Grove meet today, was apparently known as 'Ellis's Quarry'. *Plan of Cork city 1900* (Cork 1989). Information from local resident and author Barry Keane to writer 6 May 2014.

[196] Summary of outrages reported by the Police, July 1921 (NAUK, CO 904 / 146).

[197] *Cork Examiner*, 12 July 1921.

[198] Summary of outrages reported by the Police, July 1921. (NAUK, CO 904 / 146).

[199] Neenan (CCCA, Neenan Memoir, pp 70a - 71).

[200] www.cairogang.com/soldiers-killed/cork-jul-21/morris/morris/.html (accessed 17 August 2014).

[201] RIC County Inspector's Report for Cork ER, July 1921 (NAUK, CO 904 / 115)

This would have been a somewhat foolhardy assumption since the situation in Cork city was far from peaceful at that time. A week earlier the IRA had confronted three off-duty British soldiers out walking near Victoria Barracks. The trio were fired upon by the IRA; one of them was killed and the remaining two were wounded. On 9 July, IRA Volunteer Denis Spriggs was taken from his home and killed by British soldiers. The same night British troops also shot a fourteen year old boy in the face, critically wounding him. A few hours before the four soldiers made their fatal decision to leave Cork prison the IRA had raided a house on College Road adjacent to the prison and attempted to kill an ex-soldier they suspected of spying. In light of these shootings, especially those that occurred in the previous twenty-four hours, the four soldiers misread the situation if they assumed they were afforded protection by a ceasefire which was not yet operative, and did not yet guarantee them immunity.[202]

The 'Ellis Quarry shootings' was an extraordinary event. It was the only occasion during the conflict that four off-duty British soldiers were captured and killed together. A similar multiple execution occurred at Ovens, Cork the previous month when three off-duty members of the Manchester Regiment were captured by the IRA, executed and secretly buried.[203] However, this incident is not directly comparable with the 'Ellis Quarry shootings' since the executions of the Manchester bandsmen were carried out on the assumption that they were on an intelligence gathering mission when captured.[204] There is no suggestion that there was an intelligence aspect to the killing of the soldiers at Ellis Quarry. The only event comparable to the shooting of the four soldiers on the eve of the Truce happened when the IRA in Cork city attacked off-duty soldiers on 28 February 1921.[205] However the February shootings differ from the 'Ellis Quarry shootings' since the former were part of a carefully planned operation, organised by the local IRA leadership which involved dozens of IRA volunteers from different units.

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[202] RIC County Inspector's Report for Cork ER, July 1921 (NAUK, CO 904 / 115); PMCILCI on Denis Spriggs (NAUK, WO 35 / 159A); *Cork Examiner*, 11 July 1921, RIC County Inspector's Report, Cork July 1921 (NAUK, CO 904 / 115).
[203] Fergus A. D'Arcy, *Remembering the war dead: British Commonwealth and international war graves in Ireland since 1914* (Dublin, 2007), p. 50.
[204] D'Arcy, *Remembering the war dead*, p. 50.
[205] Borgonovo, *Anti-Sinn Féin Society*, p. 88.

The 'Ellis Quarry shootings' - Theories

None of the interviews with IRA veterans conducted by either the Bureau of Military History or by Ernie O'Malley contain information about the killings. The only surviving account of the executions by an IRA participant is the official report sent to IRA GHQ by its author Daniel Hallinan, captain of H Company 1st Battalion, Cork No. 1 Brigade.[206] This report gives no indication as to on what grounds the execution was carried out. It simply reads: 'We held up four soldiers (2 Royal Engineers 2 Staffs) and searched them but found no arms. We took them to a field in our area where they were executed before 9 pm'. Hallinan does not explain his rationale for ordering the execution. Given the highly unusual nature of the incident, and the fact that other off-duty British soldiers captured by the IRA that weekend were released unharmed, it must be assumed that there was probably a definite motivation for such a brutal action. The regiments the soldiers belonged to may provide a clue to this.

In many districts vendettas had developed between local IRA units and British regiments operating in the same territory. For example, Tom Barry of the Cork No. 3 Brigade's Flying Column held the Essex Regiment responsible for the summary killings of a number of his comrades and he issued orders that soldiers from the regiment were not to be shown any mercy if arrested.[207] Barry differentiated between the Essex and other British units such as the King's Liverpool Regiment whom he felt 'had behaved reasonably'. This pattern was repeated throughout Ireland and regimental identity was often a decisive factor in the treatment meted out to captured British troops by local IRA units. On this account the Cork No. 1 Brigade IRA would have had little reason to target the two younger soldiers executed in the 'Ellis Quarry shootings'. Sappers Camm and Powell, were both members of the Fortress Company, 33rd Battalion, Royal Engineers. The Royal Engineers had been regarded as relatively inoffensive troops engaged in fatigue duties by the IRA.[208] By contrast, the regimental identity of the two other soldiers executed is more likely to have been a factor in the fate of all four men. Lance-Corporal

[206] Activity report of O/C, H Company, 2nd Battalion, 1st Cork Brigade to IRA GHQ, July 1921 (UCDA, RMP P7 / A / 23).
[207] Barry, *Guerrilla days*, p. 99.
[208] Hittle, *Collins and the Anglo Irish War*, p. 121; Jane Leonard, 'English dogs or poor devils?: the dead of Bloody Sunday morning', in David Fitzpatrick (ed.) *Terror in Ireland 1916 - 1923* (Dublin, 2012), p. 116.

Dacker and Private Morris were both members of D Company, 2nd Battalion, South Staffordshire Regiment. The South Staffordshires had a particularly odious reputation in Cork city and had been involved in a number of controversial killings.

The regiment had a long and very poor reputation in Ireland. During the 1916 Rising, the South Staffordshire Regiment perpetrated the 'North King Street Massacre' during which fifteen unarmed civilians were killed in controversial circumstances.[209] Members of the regiment attempted to cover-up the incident by burying their victims in shallow graves.[210] On 19 July 1920, a British military patrol in Cork killed an ex-British soldier named James Burke. This incident sparked a riot between local ex-soldiers and British troops from Victoria Barracks which lasted two days. The rioting was finally quelled in a bloody finale when British soldiers fired on a crowd of unarmed civilians killing two people and wounding twenty others. A body of 5,000 ex-soldiers marched in Burke's funeral cortege.[211] Shortly afterwards, graffiti appeared at the spot where Burke had been killed reading: 'Murdered by Stafford Regt'.[212] Traditionally, the only explanation offered by local historians as a motivation for the 'Ellis Quarry shootings' is that they were a possible reprisal for the Staffordshire Regiment's role in these riots.[213]

However, the actions of the Staffordshire Regiment a year earlier, whilst possibly a contributory factor, are unlikely to have been the sole motivation for the abduction and execution of the four soldiers. A more likely explanation is that the four soldiers were executed in retaliation for the deaths of a number of republicans killed by the South Staffordshire Regiment in the preceding weeks. In late June 1921, a civilian named William Horgan was arrested at his home by the South Staffordshire Regiment and was shot dead a short time later whilst 'attempting to escape from military custody'.[214] The same night IRA Volunteer Charlie Daly was beaten to death by British soldiers in Victoria Barracks, Cork.[215] Eleven days later, the night before the 'Ellis Quarry shootings', another member of the IRA named Denis Spriggs was arrested at his family

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[209] Fergal Tobin, The *Irish revolution an illustrated history 1912 - 1925* (Dublin, 2014) pp 120 - 1; Fearghal McGarry, *The Rising: Ireland, Easter 1916* (Oxford, 2010), p. 187.
[210] Séan Enright, *Easter Rising 1916: the trials* (Dublin, 2014), pp 18, 32.
[211] Borgonovo, *Anti-Sinn Féin Society*, p. 82.
[212] Goddard Lieberson, *The Irish uprising 1916 - 1922* (New York, 1968), p. 133.
[213] Henchion, *The land of the finest drop*, pp 81 - 2.
[214] PMCILCI on William Horgan (NAUK, WO 35 / 152).
[215] Borgonovo, *Anti-Sinn Féin Society*, p. 110.

home in Strawberry Hill on the north side of Cork city by the South Staffordshire Regiment. A short time later, Spriggs was shot dead whilst allegedly attempting 'to escape from military custody'.[216]

A probable link between this final killing and the 'Ellis Quarry Shootings' is that Hallinan, who ordered the multiple execution, is likely to have known Spriggs personally. Both men worked as plasterers in the same area and belonged to the same IRA battalion. The known facts suggest that the 'Ellis Quarry Shootings' and Spriggs' killing are related. Firstly, members of the South Staffordshire Regiment abducted and killed an IRA volunteer who worked as a plasterer. The following night an IRA officer who also worked as a plasterer ordered the abduction and killing of two members of the South Staffordshire Regiment. It is highly unlikely that these two events were entirely coincidental and unrelated. There is a very strong probability that Hallinan had a political, personal or professional connection with Spriggs and carried out the execution of the four soldiers as a direct reprisal for Sprigg's killing. This explanation conforms to the established pattern whereby all previous multiple killings of off-duty British soldiers in Cork were enacted to avenge the deaths of local IRA men.

Hallinan's report of the incident makes it clear that he was leading members of his IRA Company on an operation to locate a suspected informer when the soldiers were captured. This would have been a routine task for an IRA unit in Cork city.[217] Therefore the killing of the four soldiers appears to have been entirely opportunistic rather than premeditated. Despite the callousness of this action, there is no evidence suggesting that the soldiers were deliberately 'trapped by the IRA' and killed as part of a premeditated campaign orchestrated by republicans to exploit the announcement of the ceasefire as 'an opportunity for attacking and murdering people when vigilance would obviously be relaxed, and … the murderers could not possibly be punished.'[218] Daniel Hallinan and his subordinates in H Company who carried out the executions would have been fully aware that the Truce was about to come into effect. In light of this, rather than showing their captives clemency, the IRA volunteers involved apparently used the opportunity to 'even the score' before the war ended. Beyond a general desire to inflict the maximum number

[216] PMCILCI on Denis Sprigs (NAUK, WO 35 / 159A).
[217] Activity report of O/C, H Company, 2nd Battalion, Cork No. 1 Brigade to IRA GHQ, July 1921 (UCDA, RMP P7 / A / 23).
[218] 'The Irish Rebellion in the 6th divisional area', p. 130.

of casualties upon the British forces, there appears to have been no other military necessity or rationale for the killings.

Undoubtedly the IRA volunteers involved were enraged when their own comrades, like Daly and Spriggs, were executed after capture by the British forces, and would have insisted on being treated as 'Prisoners of War' if captured themselves. The decision by Hallinan to summarily execute four unarmed British soldiers after the announcement of the Truce must rightly be regarded as vengeful in nature and militarily unjustifiable even if it was carried out as a direct reprisal for the killings of Denis Spriggs and other prisoners killed by the Staffordshire Regiment. Other IRA attacks targeting off-duty British troops that weekend were of an entirely different nature to the 'Ellis Quarry Shootings' in that none of them involved the IRA executing British soldiers who had been taken prisoner.

Private Richard Edward Larter

At approximately 7:00pm on Sunday 10 July two members of the IRA's Cork No. 2 Brigade shot and killed Private Richard Edward Larter at Doneraile in north Cork.[219] Larter, a nineteen year-old member of the Machine Gun Corp stationed at Ballyvonaire Military Camp, was out walking with another soldier when they came under fire. Larter was fatally wounded but his comrade managed to escape uninjured.[220] Private Larter was unarmed at the time of his death, but it is not clear whether or not the soldier accompanying him was.[221] Following the shooting, the British military carried out widespread searches of the area but were unable to capture the attackers.[222] Larter's body was repatriated to England and buried in Swainshorpe Churchyard, Norwich. There is scant additional information in the accounts of IRA veterans relating to this incident. William C. Regan, the commandant of the IRA's Castletownroche Battalion, told the Bureau of Military History: 'On the same date [10 July 1921] a British soldier was

[219] Cork No. 2 Brigade, Operations Report for July 1921, (UCDA, RMP, P7 / A / 20).
[220] RIC County Inspector's Report, Cork ER, July 1921 (NAUK, CO 904 / 115).
[221] Summary of outrages reported by the Police July 1921 (NAUK, CO 904 / 146).
[222] *Cork Examiner*, 13 July 1921.

captured in the Doneraile area and executed in the vicinity of Ballyvonaire camp.'[223] Although the date and location appear to relate to Larter's killing, the contemporary British accounts cited above suggest that Larter's death occurred as the result of an ambush and that he was not 'captured and executed' as Regan maintained.

Apart from the nature of the conflict as 'a war of attrition' in which it was necessary to keep a constant pressure on the enemy by inflicting fatalities, there appears to have been no other military rationale for the attack on Private Larter and his comrade. Whilst Private Larter was personally unarmed and presumably off-duty at the time of his killing, the fact that he was a belligerent soldier seemingly made him a legitimate target under the 'rules of war' as established by Hague Convention of 1907 and the specific 'conditions of war' as understood by the IRA at that stage of the War of Independence. Although Private Larter's attackers would undoubtedly have been aware that a Truce had been agreed, and would soon come into effect, his killing was not exceptional by the standards of warfare that existed in North Cork at the time. Given the lack of additional evidence, it is impossible to say if the attack was premeditated, having been planned in advance of the armistice, or if it was an opportunistic, spur of the moment, affair launched in an effort to inflict the maximum number of fatalities on the British forces before the ceasefire took effect.

Sergeant Edward Mears

The very last attack on the British Forces in Kerry occurred minutes before the Truce. At 11:45am on 11 July, just fifteen minutes before the ceasefire was due to start, the IRA attacked two members of the 1st Battalion Royal Fusiliers, Sergeants Edward Mears and F. G. Clarke, at High Street, Killarney. Both men were apparently unarmed and proceeding to their barracks on mess duty.[224] Sergeant Mears' wound proved fatal and he died shortly afterwards in the Kerry Military Hospital.[225] The attack on Mears and Clarke

[223] William Regan (NAI, BMH, WS 1069, p. 13).
[224] Summary of outrages reported by the Police, July 1921 (NAUK, CO 904 / 146); PMCILCI on Hannah Carey (NAUK, WO 35/ 147 A).
[225] *Kerry People*, 16 July 1921.

occurred after two local IRA leaders, Humphrey Murphy and John Joe Rice, issued an order to carry out attacks on the British Forces the night before the Truce. However, almost all of the attacks carried out in response to this order were large-scale operations on active British troops in specific locations where attacks had been planned for some time, not small scale opportunistic attacks on off-duty soldiers. (See Chapter Four).[226]

The shooting of Sergeant Edward Mears attained in Kerry a similar level of notoriety as the 'Ellis Quarry Shootings' garnered in Cork. The official history of the British Army's 6th Division cited Mears' killing as an example of the campaign of last minute murders carried out by the IRA following the announcement of the Truce: 'within fifteen minutes of the Truce, the inhabitants of Killarney, who had never summoned up courage to strike a blow for freedom during the progress of the war, attacked two sergeants of the Royal Fusiliers in the street, one of whom died.[227] Eoin O'Duffy later used the incident to question the military record of his Republican opponents in Kerry.[228] The attack on Sergeants Mears and Clarke appears to have had no military object other than inflicting casualties on the enemy. The timing of the attack, just fifteen minutes before a ceasefire was due to come into effect, was callous in the extreme. Other IRA units which mounted 'eleventh hour' attacks on the British forces were careful to halt these attacks at 11:45am sharp to ensure that they would not breach the Truce. In light of this, the killing of Sergeant Mears appears all the more futile and reckless.[229]

Attack on British Army officers near Kilmallock

At 5:20pm on 10 July, two British Army officers travelling by car from Kilmallock to Kilfinnane in Limerick came under fire from IRA volunteers hidden in ambush at Ballingaddy near Kilmallock. The officers, who were wearing civilian dress, managed to escape from the ambush after returning fire.[230] One of the officers, Lieutenant Harold Brown, was wounded in the attack. Brown was an intelligence officer attached to the

[226] Tom O'Connor (UCDA, EOMN, P17b / 132).
[227] 'The Irish rebellion in the 6th divisional area', p.130.
[228] Ryle Dwyer, *Tans, terror and troubles*, p. 7.
[229] See Chapter Five.
[230] Summary of outrages reported by the Police, July 1921 (NAUK, CO 904 / 146).

garrison of the Machine Gun Corps stationed at Kilmallock.[231] He was a very effective intelligence officer and the IRA had made several previous attempts on his life. [232] James Malone, the IRA intelligence officer who had plotted Brown's assassination, recalled 'He had a little motor car that had steel plates all round. He travelled about the countryside as if he didn't give a damn about anything. Sometimes a soldier or policeman accompanied him, but often he travelled alone. He was often fired on but always got safely away.'[233]
In December 1920, the IRA had succeeded in shooting Brown during an ambush at Red Gate, in the Kilmallock district, but he emerged unscathed from this attack, apparently because he had been wearing body armour under his clothes.[234] The nature of the attack at Kilmallock on 10 July, and in particular Brown's presence, indicates that this operation was a planned assassination attempt rather than an opportunistic attack on any available 'soft target'. Lieutenant Brown's role as an intelligence officer ensured his status, from an IRA perspective, as a high profile, legitimate military target, regardless of whether or not the war was due to end. Furthermore, the clandestine nature of Brown's intelligence activities would have made it impossible for the IRA to tell at any given time if he was off-duty or actively engaged in intelligence work. As a result there can be little doubt as to the legitimate military nature of this attack. It was the type of attack which had occurred frequently in county Limerick, and was motivated by the necessities of the IRA's intelligence war. As such, it appears that the timing of this attack, and its proximity to the Truce, were entirely coincidental although news of the impending ceasefire had probably reached Brown's ambushers at the time.

British troops captured by the IRA prior to the Truce and released unharmed

The IRA treated with leniency a number of other British soldiers they had captured in the final days and hours before the Truce. In Cork the IRA released unharmed William Dickson, a British Army Bugle Boy they had captured on 8 July. Dickson was released

[231] Toomey, *War Of Independence in Limerick 1912 - 1921*, p. 471.
[232] Various, *Limerick's fighting story* (3rd ed., Cork, 2009), pp 194 - 5.
[233] James Malone, Patrick J. Twohig (ed.) *Blood on the flag: autobiography of a freedom fighter* (Cork, 1996), pp 117 - 8.
[234] Ned Tobin, (NAI, BMH, WS 1451, p. 73).

from IRA custody on 15 July and was 'deported' to England.[235] With the exception of the one infamous incident mentioned above when three bandsmen attached to the Manchester Regiment were executed by the IRA, the republicans generally treated British Army musicians as non-combatants and did not consider them legitimate targets. Bandmaster Frederick Joseph Ricketts, and members of the Argyll & Southern Highlanders Regimental Band were captured by the IRA near Cobh and released unharmed after they were able to prove their status as musicians.[236] On the night of 10 July the IRA captured two off-duty members of the RAF at Ballycottage House near Oranmore, Galway.[237] The pair were out of barracks courting local girls when they were taken prisoner.[238] Following the disappearance of the soldiers, the British forces raided a number of houses belonging to local republicans but failed to find any trace of the two men, and were still searching for them the following morning when the Truce came into effect. When the ceasefire began the missing soldiers celebrated in a local pub, having been released by the IRA several hours earlier.[239] On the morning of 10 July, the IRA released three British soldiers they had captured and disarmed during an attack on a party of British soldiers at Mitchelstown Creamery.[240] A few hours before the Truce, the IRA in Waterford city held up at gunpoint a British soldier who was conveying mail to a local British Army garrison. The soldier was released unharmed after the IRA seized some of the letters he was carrying.[241]

At the time of the Truce the Kerry No. 2 Brigade IRA was also holding captive Major Coombes, a Lands Officer in the British Army, whom they suspected of being an intelligence officer. Coombes was captured on board a train at Ballybrack station on 7 July 1921.[242] The major was held prisoner for several weeks, but the local IRA brigade intelligence officer did not feel that there was sufficient evidence to sanction an execution.[243] Major Coombes was eventually returned to the British military in exchange

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[235] Activity report of O/C, F Company, Cork No. 1 Brigade to IRA GHQ, July 1921 (UCDA, RMP P7 / A / 23).
[236] Information from John Wade, grandson of Frederick Ricketts, lodged at Charles Fort National Monument, Kinsale, Cork. See also: John Trendall, *Colonel Bogey to the fore* (London, 1991).
[237] Summary of outrages reported by the Police July 1921 (NAUK, CO 904 / 146).
[238] Frederica Sophie Cheevers, T*he Cheevers of Killyan* (National University of Ireland, Galway Archives, LE 20 1), p. 20.
[239] Chevers, *The Cheevers of Killyan* (NUIGA, LE 20 1), p. 21.
[240] William Roche, (NAI, BMH, WS 1362, pp 7 - 9).
[241] Summary of outrages reported by the Police, July 1921 (NAUK, CO 904 / 146).
[242] *Irish Times*, 22 August 1921; Michael J. O'Sullivan, (NAI, BMH, WS 862, pp 29 - 30).
[243] Daniel Mulvihill, (NAI, BMH, WS 938, p. 14).

for the release of IRA Volunteer Jack Shanahan who was being held prisoner by the British forces.[244] That this was the only prisoner exchange to take place in Kerry is testimony to the Major's importance to the British forces in that county, and a possible indication that he had been involved in intelligence work. Had the IRA embarked on a policy of killing 'soft targets' at the time of the Truce, as previously claimed, these soldiers and Major Coombes would undoubtedly have been killed by their captors. Instead these soldiers were shown compassion, and in some cases great generosity and hospitality, by their republican opponents. The mercy afforded to the soldiers in these cases clearly indicates that there was a great dichotomy in the attitudes of local IRA volunteers towards captured British troops, and that it is folly for historians to talk in terms of a blanket attitude towards, or coordinated national campaign against, off-duty British soldiers in reaction to the announcement of the Truce.

The Dublin 'Hit Up'

The largest IRA operation planned for the weekend of the Truce was to have been a series of attacks on off-duty members of the British Forces in Dublin city centre on 8 July. However this operation, described by some of the IRA volunteers detailed to take part as 'a general hit up', was cancelled at the last moment.[245] This attack had been planned for the date that the Auxiliaries would receive their pay checks and it was anticipated that the maximum number of British forces would be visible in the streets.[246] The attacks were due to involve dozens of IRA volunteers from four battalions of the Dublin Brigade as well as the 'Dublin Guard'.[247] The intended action was to have been on such a large scale that it would have dwarfed an IRA attack on off-duty British troops in Grafton Street the previous month which had claimed the lives of two RIC Auxiliaries.[248] The 'general hit up' could have rivalled the IRA attacks on 'Bloody Sunday' in terms of British fatalities, and the burning of the Custom House in terms of

[244] O'Sullivan, (NAI, BMH, WS 862, pp 29 - 30).
[245] James Fulham (NAI, BMH, WS 630, pp 23 - 4).
[246] McKenna, *Guerrilla warfare in the Irish War of Independence, 1919 - 1921*, p. 108.
[247] Various, *The Dublin Brigade review* (Dublin, 1939), pp 20, 24, 52, 82.
[248] Abbott, *Police casualties*, p. 258.

operational scale. Such a large-scale, coordinated surprise attack on off-duty targets would almost certainly have surpassed the Cork IRA's 'shoot up' of February 1921 which resulted in the deaths of six British soldiers. Although information about this planned operation has been in the public domain for several decades, it has received scant attention from historians. The last minute cancellation of this onslaught, which would have resulted in attacks on dozens of off-duty members of the British forces, has not been taken into consideration by those who have accused the IRA of mounting a series of unjustifiable attacks on 'soft-targets', in reaction to the announcement of the Truce.[249]

The leadership of the IRA's Dublin Brigade had mounted a similar operation. A few weeks previously, at 6:00pm on 24 June 1921, several groups of IRA volunteers from the 2nd Battalion of the IRA's Dublin Brigade were to converge on Grafton Street, a favourite haunt of off-duty British troops. They were armed with small arms and grenades and, at a given signal, were to launch a wave of simultaneous attacks on any members of the British forces in sight. Members of the Dublin Brigade ASU armed with a Thompson machine-gun were to provide covering fire for the republican gunmen on Grafton Street if British reinforcements reached the area before the operation had been completed.[250] The ASU was waiting nearby for the operation to begin in an armour plated van disguised as a commercial lorry.[251] However, this operation was aborted at the last minute due to a heavy British military presence in the area that prevented most of the IRA volunteers from occupying their positions. A handful of IRA volunteers who were already in-situ attacked and killed two RIC Auxiliaries before retreating.[252]

It is clear that the 'general hit up' planned for 8 July 1921 was much larger in scale than its ill-fated predecessor. According to one veteran of the Dublin Brigade ASU, the operation: 'was planned on similar lines to that carried out in June … but on a bigger scale. It was designed to cover the entire city and to involve every company of the [Dublin] Brigade.'[253] Members of the 1st Battalion had been ordered to raid the La Scala

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[249] Although detailed accounts of the planned operation were published in *The Dublin Brigade Review* (Dublin, 1939) it was not mentioned in the vast majority of subsequent studies including Townshend's, *The British Campaign in Ireland 1919 - 1921*; Valiulis, *Portrait of a revolutionary*; Fitzpatrick's, 'Militarism in Ireland 1900 - 1922'; Francis Costello's *The Irish revolution and its aftermath 1916 - 1923* or Hart's, *Mick : the real Michael Collins.*

[250] Abbott, *Police casualties*, p. 258.

[251] Abbott, *Police casualties*, p. 258; Patrick McCrae (NAI, BMH, WS 413, p. 43).

[252] Abbott, *Police casualties*, p. 258.

[253] Pádraig Ó Conchubhair and Paddy Rigney, 'The Active Service Unit' in *The Dublin Brigade Review,* p. 82.

Theatre, which was popular with members of the Black and Tans, and to shoot any members of the RIC they found attending that evening's show.[254] The 2nd Battalion had been assigned similar targets, including other theatres, pubs, restaurants and cafés frequented by the British troops.[255] A large number of IRA volunteers from the 3rd Battalion was to assemble at Stephen's Green under the guise of playing a football match. As soon as the signal was given, they were to attack every member of the British forces within range. Alphonsus Sweeney, a lieutenant in G Company, 3rd Battalion, was instructed that his men were not to take prisoners under any circumstances.[256] The sentries on duty at Dublin Castle would be attacked by an IRA force drawn from the 4th Battalion. When this first group of attackers retreated up George's Street still firing at any visible British troops, a second group of IRA volunteers armed with grenades were to step forward ready to bomb any motorised patrols and armoured vehicles that might emerge from the Castle to engage in a pursuit.[257] Ship Street Barracks was also due to be attacked in a synchronised operation.[258]

To reduce the risk to the republicans involved, and to prevent British troops from being rushed to the city centre, IRA volunteers were posted close to the military barracks on the south side of the city. Material for blockading the streets leading to the city centre was prepared and ready to be placed in position at very short notice.[259] IRA riflemen were to be positioned in tenements by the canal to snipe British patrols attempting to advance over the bridges toward the city centre.[260] A sophisticated ambush for the British forces was set at Crumlin Cross. The IRA planned to deploy two large landmines and three Thompson machine guns in this attack, which was likely to have caused heavy British casualties.[261] At least one Cumann na mBan field hospital had been set up to provide medical assistance for republicans who might be wounded in the operation.[262]

The IRA battalions involved held several rehearsals leading up to the attack to ensure that each IRA volunteer knew what position they were to occupy, where they

[254] John Kenny (NAI, BMH, WS 1693, pp 20 - 1).
[255] *The Dublin Brigade Review*, p. 24.
[256] Alphonsus Sweeney (NAI, BMH, WS 1147, pp 8 - 9).
[257] Fulham (NAI, BMH, WS 630, pps. 23 - 4).
[258] *The Dublin Brigade Review*, p. 52.
[259] Joseph O'Connor (NAI, BMH, WS 487, pp 58 - 9).
[260] Moira Kennedy O'Byrne (NAI, BMH, WS 1029, pp 12 - 3).
[261] O'Connor (NAI, BMH, WS 813, p. 44).
[262] Moira Kennedy O'Byrne (NAI, BMH, WS 1029, pp 12 - 3).

would seek their targets and what their escape route would be.[263] The attacks were due to begin at 7:00pm sharp on 8 July 1921.[264] The Truce was formally agreed at the Mansion House, Dublin at 3 pm that day, and the leadership of the IRA's Dublin Brigade issued an order to cancel the attack at approximately 4:00pm.[265] However, the order was delayed in reaching some of the IRA officers directing the planned attack. Dozens of armed IRA volunteers were in position observing their targets when news of the cancellation reached them with just minutes to spare.[266]

The decision by de Valera and the IRA's Dublin Brigade to cancel the operation was significant. Had the IRA been intent on inflicting the maximum number of fatalities on the British forces in the final days and hours of the conflict before the Truce came into effect, the 'general hit up' would have served as the perfect vehicle to satisfy any residual blood lust. Instead, the announcement of the Truce led the IRA in Dublin to cancel its planned operations, thus sparing the lives of an unquantifiable number of British troops, IRA volunteers and civilians. It is a remarkable testimony to IRA discipline in Dublin that armed IRA volunteers who had mobilised for an attack, and were within striking distance of off-duty British troops received news of the Truce calmly and resisted the urge to pick off 'soft targets' that were quite literally in their sights.[267]

Assessment

In total there were four separate attacks on off-duty British Army personnel and eleven separate attacks on off-duty members of the RIC after the Truce was announced. In

[263] 'The Fourth Battalion', in *The Dublin Brigade Review,* p. 52.
[264] O'Connor (NAI, BMH, WS 487, pp 58 - 9).
[265] 'The Fourth Battalion', in *The Dublin Brigade Review,* p. 52.
[266] Alphonsus Sweeney (NAI, BMH, WS 1147, pp 8 - 9).
[267] According to a veteran of the Dublin Brigade ASU the operations were cancelled because: 'it was thought that an operation of the magnitude of that contemplated would stop any overtures for peace.' IRA Veterans who had mobilised for the 'general hit up' later held divergent attitudes as to the wisdom of the proposed attacks. Colonel Joe Leonard, took the view that the Dublin IRA were so critically short of ammunition that those taking part in the attacks would have been embarking on a suicide mission: 'we had not enough ammunition to fill our guns and would of necessity have all been wiped out by their fire, but for the job being called off at the last minute there would have been no Truce.' John Kenny, F Company, 1st Battalion, was given 'a meagre supply' of ammunition in preparation for the attack and was ordered to collect the side arms of members of the British forces killed in the attack - presumably with the intention of using these to secure their retreat. A Lieutenant in the 3rd Battalion, Alphonsus Sweeney believed that the prospects for the attacks success were much greater and believed that the 'hit up' was: 'an operation which, if carried out completely, was well calculated to be the most sensational and sanguinary since the Rebellion of 1916.' Leonard (NAI, BMH, WS 547, p. 24); John Kenny (NAI, BMH, WS 1693, pp 20 - 1); Alphonsus Sweeney (NAI, BMH, WS 1147, pp 8 - 9, 23 - 4).

addition to these, there was a planned ambush of off-duty members of the 'B Specials' which was called off after the shooting of a civilian, Draper Holmes. In total these attacks resulted in eleven deaths (six British soldiers, four members of the RIC and one civilian). The fact that ten off-duty members of the British forces were killed by the IRA over the weekend prior to the Truce does not seem exceptional when compared with the numbers of other off-duty British personnel killed during equally brief periods earlier in the conflict. At least fifteen off-duty members of the British forces (six British soldiers and nine members of the RIC) were killed by the IRA between Friday 13 and Monday 16 May 1921.[268] Six off-duty members of the British forces (one British soldier and five members of the RIC) were killed in IRA operations between Friday 24 and Monday 27 June.[269]

There was a far higher instance of IRA attacks against off-duty members of the RIC by comparison with the number of attacks on off-duty British troops after the announcement of Truce. This may have been because members of the RIC were more readily available as targets, but it seems more likely that orders were issued by local IRA leaders to target the RIC specifically, and that this was done because the RIC, rather than the British military, had been the driving force in the fight against the republican guerrillas. A number of the RIC men attacked were specifically targeted because of their involvement in intelligence work and the reprisal killings of local republicans. In the case of the planned attack at Newry, the off-duty members of the Ulster Special Constabulary were to be killed as a reprisal to avenge killings carried out by members of that force, rather than the specific individuals being targeted. In total the ten attacks against off-duty members of the RIC resulted in the deaths of four off-duty members of the force. There was nothing unusual about this death toll by the spring and summer of 1921. At least four off-duty members of the force were killed each weekend over the weekends 11 - 14 March, 8 - 11 April, 28 April - 2 May and 24 - 27 June, 1921.[270]

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[268] These were: Private J. Hunter, Private R. McMillan, Private D. Chalmers, Private F. Sheppard, Lance-Corporal R. Maddell, Gunner B. Francis, Gunner W. Parker, Constable J. Kenna, Sergeant E. Coleman, Constable R. Redmond, Constable T. Bridges, Head Constable F. Benson, District Inspector H. Biggs, Constable H. McClean, Constable J. Nutley, District Inspector A. Blake. For details see; *Irish Independent*, 16 May 1921, *Irish Times*, 16 May 1921, *Freeman's Journal*, 16 May 1921, Abbott, *Police casualties*, pp 237 -42. Although many of these fatalities on off-duty troops were the result of the order issued by the IRA's 1st Southern Division to launch a series of coordinated attacks on British troops on 14 May in revenge for the execution of a number of IRA Volunteers in Cork, fatal attacks also occurred in Dublin, Galway, Limerick and Tipperary.

[269] *Freeman's Journal*, 29 June 1921, Abbott, *Police casualties*, pp 258 - 9.

[270] Abbott, *Police casualties*, pp 206 - 208, 219 - 221, 226 - 228, 258 - 9.

The assertion that the IRA reacted to the announcement of the Truce by launching a concerted series of attacks on 'soft targets' including unarmed and off-duty members of the British forces is ill-founded. Of the ten off-duty members of the British forces killed the weekend before the Truce came into effect at least two, Constables Needham and Cormer, were killed by IRA volunteers who could not have known that a Truce had been agreed. Consequently, their deaths were completely coincidental to the announcement of the Truce and not a direct result of it as has been claimed. There is little doubt that some of the IRA's final operations, including the attacks upon Private Larter, Sergeant Mears and Constable Bullock were opportunistic attacks on available soft targets made in the knowledge that the Truce had been agreed. However there is strong evidence to suggest that in a number of the other attacks the IRA were targeting men who had been deliberately marked for assassination for some time, because of their military activities.

A number of those attacked in the final hours of the conflict were legitimate military targets who had been deliberately selected for assassination by the IRA. Constable Clarke's killing may have been motivated by his involvement in intelligence work, and the non-fatal attack on Lieutenant Brown and his companion almost certainly was. Sergeant King's assassination and the attack on Constable Farmiloe were carried out because they were responsible for the deaths of IRA volunteers. In these instances the members of the British forces attacked had been marked down for assassination long before the political developments which led to the Truce. Although there is evidence that previous attempts had been made on the lives of these men, the timing of the attacks indicates that they were made by IRA volunteers who were fully aware that a Truce was due to come into effect. These men were probably motivated by a desire to complete their mission before the ceasefire began. In these cases, the Truce can be seen as a catalyst - speeding up a process that was already in motion.

The killing of Private Larter and the attack on his comrade appears to have been an opportunistic attack on two 'soft targets'. However it is important to note that this type of attack had become increasingly common throughout Cork since the spring of 1921 as a direct reprisal for the killing of captured IRA volunteers by the British forces. Prior to this the IRA had not considered off-duty soldiers legitimate military targets. Whilst the IRA attack on two British NCOs in Killarney which led to the death of Sergeant Mears

was similar in nature to the attack on Private Larter, its timing a quarter of an hour before the start of the Truce puts it in an entirely different context and its use in anti-republican propaganda is unsurprising. Undoubtedly the most questionable action undertaken by the IRA following the announcement of the Truce was the killing of the four British soldiers in Cork. There is an important distinction and significant difference between the death of Private Larter and this incident. Larter and his comrade were attacked whilst off-duty, regardless of whether they were armed or not, but they had an opportunity to escape their attackers. By contrast all four of the British soldiers killed in Cork were definitely unarmed when captured. They had surrendered, were in IRA custody and completely defenceless at the time of their execution. There is a very strong probability that two of the four were executed because their regiment was responsible for the killing of an IRA Volunteer the previous night in similar circumstances. The additional execution of two other soldiers who were apparently unconnected with Spriggs' death, and the fact that the IRA volunteers involved knew that a Truce was imminent, suggests that the execution of these four soldiers was a gratuitous act with little or no military justification.

On a national level the IRA cannot be said to have made an effort of attempting to kill as many enemies as possible before the Truce took effect as claimed by Hart.[271] At least seven members of the British Army and five members of the RIC captured after the announcement of the Truce were released unharmed. Furthermore, the 'general hit up', a widespread series of coordinated attacks against RIC personnel that had been planned, was cancelled at the last moment precisely because of the Truce. The currently accepted historical narrative is that by July of 1921 the IRA nationally had been so weakened by the actions of the British forces that the republicans were incapable of continuing a military campaign against legitimate military targets and had instead switched their focus to 'soft targets'. In fact there were far more IRA attacks on British Army convoys, RIC curfew patrols and barracks than there were on off-duty members of the British forces in the same time period and these will be examined in detail in the next chapter.

[271] Hart, *Mick*, p. 277.

Chapter Five

Pre-Truce offensives and IRA military operations, 8 - 11 July 1921

(I) Introduction

As outlined in the previous chapter, the IRA mounted just sixteen attacks on off-duty members of the British forces in the time period between the announcement of the Truce and its implementation. These attacks resulted in eleven deaths. To date the historiography of the Truce has focused almost exclusively on these killings. During the same brief time period, the IRA expended far greater time, effort, manpower and munitions attacking more regular military targets, which resulted in a greater number of fatalities as shown in Table 5.[1] The dominance and popularity of the 'soft target' theory has ensured that a few IRA attacks on off-duty British troops have received far greater attention than a multitude of the large-scale military IRA operations against well fortified British barracks and well-armed and active British patrols. These IRA operations against 'hard targets' were far more common in the final days and hours of the conflict.

Table 5:
Fatalities inflicted during IRA attacks on 'hard' and 'soft' targets 8 - 11 July 1921

Fatalities which occurred as a result of IRA attacks on active British troops 8 – 11 July 1921	Fatalities which occurred as a result of IRA attacks on off-duty British troops 8 - 11 July 1921
• 6 - British Army. • 1 - Royal Irish Constabulary. • 4 - IRA Volunteers. • 1 - Civilian. **Total =** 12 fatalities	• 6 - British Army. • 4 - Royal Irish Constabulary. • 0 - IRA Volunteers • 1 - Civilian **Total =** 11 fatalities

[1] Namely - British military troop transports, British military, curfew-patrols, RIC patrols, RIC barracks and Coastguard stations.

The IRA made at least 64 attacks on the British forces in the time lapse between the announcement of the Truce and its implementation. These included at least 21 attacks on British patrols, 27 attacks on British barracks and several other operations. Due to the large number and frequency of these attacks, they have been grouped together below based on their location in an effort to ascertain whether provincial IRA units launched these attacks in response to the announcement of the Truce. It is clear that the announcement of the ceasefire caused the local IRA leadership in some areas to organise 'last minute' attacks on the British forces. In stark contrast to this other IRA Brigades issued no such orders and the attacks that did occur in their operational areas had been planned for some time previously by local IRA officers who were unaware that a Truce was imminent. The official despatch issued by IRA Chief of Staff, Richard Mulcahy, announcing the Truce was ambiguous about whether or not local IRA units should proceed with the military operations that had been planned previously. Mulcahy's communication stated that the IRA would cease its military operations as of noon on 11 July and observe in full the ceasefire that was to come into effect at that time. However, it did not specify what action, if any, local IRA units were to take in the interim. Essentially, this left local IRA commanders free to decide what action they should take and whether or not they should proceed with planned operations. This in effect allowed the leadership of each IRA Brigade to organise 'eleventh hour' attacks if they so chose.[2]

The 1st Eastern Division IRA pre-Truce offensive.

The only IRA division to have issued a surviving written command ordering a spate of last minute attacks against the British forces was the IRA's 1st Eastern Division. The IRA despatch issued by the 1st Eastern Division in relation to the Truce, stated unambiguously that the ceasefire would have to be obeyed once it came into effect.[3] The wording of that particular order leaves no doubt that the instructions calling for republican attacks on a wide range of targets were motivated by the announcement of the Truce. Whilst the

[2] Patrick Dunleavy Collection (IMA, BMH, C.D 248/1/16, Group 1).
[3] Durney, *The volunteer*, p. 31.

IRA's 1st Eastern Division did not kill any suspected spies as dictated by the order, or carry out any attacks on off-duty members of the British forces, at least ten separate attacks on active British troops after the order was issued. These included the ambush of a joint British military / RIC patrol, four attacks on RIC barracks, three attacks on RIC patrols, and two attacks on RIC constables. None of these attacks proved fatal.[4]

The first of these operations was an IRA ambush of a nine-strong RIC patrol at Streete, Mullingar, Westmeath at 9:30pm on 9 July. One RIC Constable was wounded in the engagement, which lasted about half-an-hour.[5] The following morning at 3:45am, the IRA ambushed a seven-man RIC patrol at Baileboro, Cavan wounding one of them. Two IRA volunteers were wounded and taken prisoner in the ensuing firefight.[6] Although this ambush occurred only a few hours before the Truce, the operation had been planned for some time and had been approved at a meeting of the IRA officers from the East Cavan Brigade held on, or about, 4 July.[7] When the local IRA battalion officers learned from a newspaper report, published 9 July, that a Truce was imminent they cancelled the ambush. However, this decision was reversed when they discovered that neighbouring IRA units had not followed suit and were planning to carry out a series of last minute attacks.[8] This decision was to prove a costly one, and the IRA was fortunate not to incur fatalities as a result. All of the IRA volunteers involved in this engagement were armed with shotguns which were useless as a military weapon except at point blank range. The attackers did not have the ammunition for a sustained firefight and the IRA officers who planned the ambush apparently gave little consideration to the possibility that British reinforcements might arrive unexpectedly. One of the IRA volunteers present, Francis Connell, describes what happened:

> **W**e took up sniping positions near the barracks - and had just opened fire when we received word that a motor patrol of Tans were approaching the town from Virginia. We immediately retreated …A running fight now ensued in which three of our men were wounded, two of whom were captured … By the time we reached open country, all our ammunition was exhausted. [9]

[4] Summary of outrages reported by the police, July 1921 (NAUK CO 904 / 146); Farrelly (NAI, BMH, WS 1734, pp 51 - 2).
[5] Summary of outrages reported by the police, July 1921 (NAUK CO 904 / 146).
[6] Summary of outrages reported by the police, July 1921 (NAUK CO 904 / 146).
[7] Francis Connell, (NAI, BMH, WS 1663, p. 10).
[8] Connell, (NAI, BMH, WS 1663, p. 10).
[9] Francis Connell, (NAI, BMH, WS 1663, p. 10).

Seán Boylan, the commander of the 1st Eastern Division, issued an order to increase attacks on the British forces in all circumstances before the Truce took effect.[10] This order encouraged a rash of 'eleventh hour' attacks on RIC barracks by members of the 1st Eastern Division on 10 - 11 July. At 2:10am. On 11 July, the IRA mounted an attack on the RIC barracks at Nobber, Co. Meath. The barracks' roof and windows were pierced by gun shots fired by the IRA and the RIC garrison inside the building promptly returned their fire. The attack continued for about thirty-five minutes. Neither side suffered any casualties.[11] At about the same time the Cavan IRA attacked Arva RIC barracks. This attack was very brief and consisted of the IRA volunteers involved firing just a few rifle shots, and throwing a number of hand grenades at the barracks. Other than the bullet holes in the barracks' windows and protective shutters, the building was not damaged and its garrison was unharmed.[12] Another simultaneous attack was launched by the IRA on Longwood RIC barracks, Meath. The garrison there came under sustained rifle and revolver fire for twenty minutes which caused a minimal amount of damage to the barracks building. The RIC opened a 'vigorous' barrage of rifle fire upon their assailants, but did not inflict any casualties.[13] James Maguire a veteran of the IRA's Mullingar Brigade, stated that he received instructions from Boylan: 'that every barracks in the area was to be attacked on the day of the Truce.'[14] Acting upon this order, Maguire organised and led an attack on Castlepollard RIC barracks, Westmeath at 11:20am on 11 July. A handful of IRA volunteers equipped with just five rifles mobilised for the operation.[15] The attack lasted over twenty minutes, ending at approximately 11:45am.[16] The RIC county inspector for Westmeath claimed that this attack involved a deliberate attempt to assassinate specific members of the garrison and reported: 'fire was directed chiefly on an office occupied by the district inspector and Head Constable showing [a] deliberate attempt to take their lives one hour before commencement of the Truce.'[17] In

[10] Farrelly (NAI, BMH, WS 1734, pp 50 - 1).
[11] Summary of outrages reported by the police, July 1921 (NAUK, CO 904 / 146).
[12] Summary of outrages reported by the police, July 1921 (NAUK, CO 904 / 146).
[13] Summary of outrages reported by the police, July 1921 (NAUK, CO 904 / 146).
[14] James Maguire, (NAI, BMH, WS 1439, p. 29).
[15] Maguire, (NAI, BMH, WS 1439, p. 29).
[16] *Cork Examiner*, 13 July 1921.
[17] RIC County Inspector's Report for Westmeath, July 1921, (NAUK, CO 904 / 116).

his account of this attack, Maguire, who led the republicans involved, made no reference to a plan to kill either of the senior RIC officers at the barracks. He simply stated: 'We gave them a royal salute until the bell rang the Angelus, and [we] went off.'[18]

This was just the first of at least four 'eleventh hour' attacks on the RIC which occurred in the 1st Eastern Division's area that morning. A six-strong RIC motor patrol was ambushed at Maudlin Bridge near Kells, Meath when it stopped to collect water.[19] A party of twenty IRA volunteers armed with shotguns opened fire on the patrol from the cover of a nearby house.[20] The RIC returned fire, escaped from the ambush position and reached their barracks safely. The RIC returned to Maudlin Bridge with a larger body of reinforcements equipped with two machine guns, and began searching for their attackers.[21] At 11:20am on the 11 July the IRA shot an RIC constable at Edenderry in Offaly.[22] The IRA's final 'parting shot' was aimed at an RIC patrol at Kingscourt, Cavan at 11:55am on 11 July. The shot was fired by a group of IRA volunteers travelling in a car that was passing through the town in the direction of Carrickmacross.[23] One of the republicans leaned out of the car and fired a single revolver shot at an RIC patrol at it passed Farrelly's Corner. The RIC were initially unaware that they had been attacked, having mistaken the noise of the shot for that of a car back-firing.[24] The Irish Office in London stated that this shot was officially considered to have been the last fired in the conflict.[25] In addition to the IRA attacks described above the RIC county inspector for Westmeath alleged that 'three other [IRA] ambushes [were] laid which did not materialise.'[26] Whilst the leadership of the IRA's 1st Eastern Division ordered a spate of fevered last minute attacks on the RIC in the final days and hours of the conflict, some of its junior officers did just the opposite and responded to the announcement of the Truce by cancelling operations which had been planned for some time.[27] The 5th Mullingar, Battalion of the IRA's Meath Brigade cancelled a planned attack on two members of the

[18] Maguire, (NAI, BMH, WS 1439, p. 29).
[19] Summary of outrages reported by the police, July 1921 (NAUK, CO 904 / 146).
[20] Michael Govern, (NAI, BMH, WS 1625, p. 7).
[21] Summary of outrages reported by the police July 1921 (NAUK, CO 904 / 146).
[22] Summary of outrages reported by the police July 1921 (NAUK, CO 904 / 146).
[23] O'Donnell, *Royal Irish Constabulary and the Black and Tans in County Louth*, p. 181.
[24] Summary of outrages reported by the police July 1921 (NAUK, CO 904 / 146).
[25] O'Donnell, *Royal Irish Constabulary and The Black and Tans in County Louth*, p. 181.
[26] RIC County Inspectors report Westmeath July 1921, (NAUK, CO 904 / 116).
[27] Seamus Finn (NAI, BMH, WS 1060, p. 58).

RIC stationed at Navan.[28] A planned ambush by the IRA's Fingal Brigade on an RIC patrol at Yellow Furze near Balbriggan in Dublin was also abandoned following the announcement of the armistice.[29]

Not all IRA volunteers in the area were willing to engage in military action once they learned that a ceasefire was imminent. Two IRA volunteers were ordered to attack Mullingar RIC barracks the night before the Truce; yet they did not carry out their mission.[30] Another IRA volunteer named Joe Lynch mutinied when he was ordered to take part in the Maudlin Bridge ambush. A confrontation with his commanding officer Sean Farrelly, ensued. During the heated exchange which followed, Lynch asked 'Do you think we are mad to go and get killed and a Truce being signed tomorrow, after all the fighting we have done?' Several of his comrades sided with Lynch against their commanding officer, resulting in a mutiny by the Carnaross Company. The IRA volunteers involved were later disciplined by the IRA for their stand. This incident is evidence that at least some republican guerrillas were motivated by self-preservation rather than bloodlust, and the opportunity to exact last minute retribution on their opponents.[31] Of the ten attacks the IRA's 1st Eastern Division made against the British forces after the announcement of Truce, it appears that at least two had been planned for some time previously, and that their proximity to the end of the conflict was entirely coincidental. Of the remainder, there can be little doubt that they were conceived and carried out as a result of the order issued by the 1st Eastern Division. However, all of these attacks were relatively brief engagements in which the IRA aggressors withdrew before inflicting any fatalities. These 'eleventh hour' attacks appear to have been organised as a last minute show of strength, in order to display military prowess and as a propaganda exercise designed to send the message that the IRA had not been defeated. These operations were seemingly more political in their intent than military; this was in line with the IRA's Eastern Divisional order which emphasised that these attacks would ultimately strengthen the hand of republican representatives in the political negotiations

[28] Finn (NAI, BMH, WS 1060, p. 71).
[29] Michael Rock (NAI, BMH, WS 1398, p. 20 - 1).
[30] James Maguire, (NAI, BMH, WS 1439, p. 29); RIC Co. Inspectors report Westmeath July 1921, (NAUK, CO 904 / 116); Summary of outrages reported by the police July 1921 (NAUK CO 904 / 146).
[31] Sean Farrelly (NAI, BMH, WS 1734, pp 51 - 2).

then envisaged to take place with the British Government.'[32]

The 3rd Tipperary Brigade IRA's pre-Truce offensive.

The 1st Eastern Division was not the only IRA unit to issue a despatch ordering an increase in IRA activities before the Truce. The Tipperary No. 3 Brigade circulated an order after the announcement of the cessation, calling for attacks on British barracks.[33] Andrew Kennedy, a veteran of the brigade's flying column, recalled:

> On the morning of 11 July, the general order that was issued to all IRA units was carried out in every company area. This order was to the effect that intense activity should be shown everywhere, such as sniping enemy posts or any such operation that would indicate the presence of the IRA up to 12 noon that day when the Truce would come into operation. So from daylight until 12 noon on 11 July every Volunteer who had a gun sought for means to use it, and the truce came with intense IRA activity over the area. I understand that this order came from General Headquarters in Dublin and was issued to us by the Brigade Headquarters, but I don't know anything about it except what I have stated. During that morning a lot of shooting at enemy posts took place, it was not a serious affair, as a lot of the shooting was done at long range and the enemy remained strictly indoors. [34]

Kennedy's description of the order he received as being a 'general order' is interesting since the term was normally reserved for orders issued by IRA GHQ to all IRA units nationwide. However there is no other evidence suggesting that such an order was issued by IRA GHQ. It is more likely that the order Kennedy is referring to was conceived and issued independently of IRA GHQ by the leadership of the Tipperary No. 3 Brigade.[35] The despatch Kennedy received resulted in a spate of sniping attacks on RIC barracks since these were usually smaller and more vulnerable than British military barracks. Kennedy's comment that these last minute attacks were 'not a serious affair' is a gross understatement. Just four attacks on the British forces took place in the 3rd Tipperary Brigade's operational area. These attacks were extremely ineffective. One RIC constable was fired upon by members of the IRA in Annacarty, Tipperary on 10 July but escaped

[32] Durney, *The volunteer*, p. 31.
[33] Andrew Kennedy (NAI, BMH, WS 963, p. 30); Bertie Scully (UCDA, EOMN P17 / 102).
[34] Kennedy (NAI, BMH, WS 963, p. 30).
[35] Andrew Kennedy (NAI, BMH, WS 963, p. 30).

unharmed.[36] Later that night a fusillade of rifle shots was fired at two RIC men, Constables David Maxwell and John Coyle, from a ruined building about 150 yards from Cappawhite Barracks. Both men escaped injury and their assailants withdrew after fire was returned from the RIC barracks.[37] Dundrum RIC barracks was the subject of a prolonged IRA sniping attack which started at 11:45pm on 10 July. One British soldier was wounded in the attack which was reported to have lasted for two hours.[38]

At 3:00am on 11 July, the IRA began a sustained sniping attack on Annacarty RIC barracks.[39] The RIC reported that they were attacked by a force of fifty republicans and that the attack lasted for a full hour before the IRA withdrew. The IRA returned to Annacarty a few hours later and launched a second sniping attack on the same barracks. The latter attack began at 11:00am and lasted for approximately forty-five minutes before stopping just a quarter of an hour before the Truce came into effect.[40] Michael Davern, commander of the Republican Police in Cashel, was one of those who took part:

> We decided that we would give the enemy a farewell party at Annacarty Barracks, so we got into position early in the morning, unobserved, and continued to snipe the Barracks until 12 o'clock. Although the Truce was to be observed from 12 o'clock on, the RIC and Tans continued to fire at us when they saw us retreating. We observed the Truce and did not reply. [41]

The final operation of the War of Independence mounted in Tipperary was literally a 'last minute' attack. Members of the Galtee Battalion were determined to make a defiant, if wholly futile, attack on the British forces in Galbally. However, they were equally determined not to breach the letter of the Truce and intend to rigidly observe the ceasefire the second it came into effect. Since none of the local IRA volunteers possessed a watch, they tasked a local woman with ringing the bell of the local church at 11:45am sharp as a signal to begin the attack. The same woman received strict orders to stop sounding the bell promptly at noon to indicate the beginning of the Truce.[42] In the interim period the local IRA unit planned to unleash a frenzied attack upon the British garrison in Galbally.

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[36] Summary of outrages reported by the police, July 1921 (NAUK, CO 904 / 146).
[37] Summary of outrages reported by the police, July 1921 (NAUK, CO 904 / 146).
[38] Summary of outrages reported by the police, July 1921 (NAUK, CO 904 / 146).
[39] *Cork Examiner*, 13 July 1921.
[40] Summary of outrages reported by the police, July 1921 (NAUK, CO 904 / 146).
[41] Michael Davern (NAI, BMH, WS 1348, p. 56).
[42] Michael Quirke, 'My life and times', p. 36. Unpublished memoir Cashel War of Independence Museum.

Michael Quirke, a participant in that attack, describes what ensued:

> Some time around 11am on that day the same 20 men came down from the Galtees in small groups, and took up concealed positions North, South, East and West around the police and military posts in Galbally, and at about 400 yards range. We lay there under cover until the bell started to toll, and then opened a rapid fire on the windows, sandbags and barbed wire defences for a full ten minutes, then hell was again let loose, with rifle and machine gun fire from the police and military, who made no attempt to get out and locate us. When silence took the place of the machine gun fire we hastily left for the Galtees where we hid our rifles, revolvers and ammunition.[43]

These operations consumed a large amount of ammunition which the IRA could not easily replenish. None of these attacks inflicted any fatalities upon the British forces, or resulted in the capture of enemy ammunition and equipment, the destruction of an enemy post, or achieved anything approximating a tangible military objective. In later years Seamus Babington, a member of the Tipperary No. 3 Brigade's staff, was critical of the order to launch 'eleventh hour attacks' and the operations that resulted from it: 'Bravery appeared to be immediately awakened in the heart and soul of every IRA man, and dozens of them who had been noted for their absence from normal duty were on the warpath for a major attack all day, July 10th and well up to noon the Truce hour, seeking the enemy anywhere and everywhere, to top off his head.[44] The republicans also launched simultaneous attacks on two RIC barracks in North-East Tipperary on the morning of 10 July. At 1:30am the IRA mounted a sniping attack on Gortderrybeg RIC barracks. The RIC reported that: 'Attackers used only rifles and at long range. Damage to barracks slight.' There were no RIC casualties.[45] A short time later, at 2:00am, a second attack was made on Templetuohy RIC Barracks. The local RIC garrison came under a barrage of sustained rifle, shotgun and revolver gunfire which it claimed lasted up to fifty minutes. Like the earlier attack there were no RIC casualties.[46] On the morning of 11 July, a third RIC barracks was attacked at Goulding's Cross in North Tipperary. This attack began at approximately 00.45am and resulted in two members of the RIC being hospitalised with serious wounds.[47]

The similarities between the attacks on RIC barracks in North and South

[43] Quirke, 'My life and times', p. 36.
[44] Babington (NAI, BMH, WS 1595, pp 149 - 50).
[45] Summary of outrages reported by the police, July 1921 (NAUK, CO 904 / 146).
[46] Summary of outrages reported by the police, July 1921 (NAUK, CO 904 / 146).
[47] Summary of outrages reported by the police, July 1921 (NAUK, CO 904 / 146).

Tipperary suggest they had all been organised by the local republican leadership in reaction to the announcement of the Truce. However whilst IRA veterans from the South Tipperary Brigade stated that they had received a definite order to launch 'eleventh hour' attacks on RIC barracks and other targets, similar evidence from North Tipperary is not forthcoming.[48] The final attacks by the IRA in Tipperary, though fewer in number than those carried out by the 1st Eastern Division, were similar in nature. In both areas the attacks were launched in reaction to the announcement of the cessation and primarily took the form of ineffectual barracks attacks, launched in the final hours of the conflict with little or no chance of success. These operations were likely to have been intended to send a political and military message to the British authorities that the IRA was still active locally and capable of taking offensive action. In this respect there seems to have been little difference between the tactics adopted by both the Tipperary No. 3 Brigade IRA and the 1st Eastern Division IRA in reaction to the announcement of the Truce.

The Kerry IRA Brigades' pre-Truce offensive

No county saw so much fevered IRA activity on the eve of the Truce as Kerry. In total the Kerry No. 1 and Kerry No. 2 Brigades launched a total of eight separate attacks on the British forces in the period between the announcement of the Truce and its commencement, resulting in eight fatalities (five British Army and three IRA). These last minute IRA operations included a sniping attack on a British military barracks, two attacks on RIC barracks, several ambushes of British patrols, and two attacks on off-duty members of the British forces. A planned assault upon Killorglin RIC barracks was cancelled at the last moment. In contrast with the actions in Tipperary and the 1st Eastern Division's area, the majority of the final IRA attacks in Kerry targeted the British Army rather than the RIC. Furthermore, a significant proportion of the Kerry attacks had apparently been conceived before the IRA leadership in Kerry knew that a Truce had been agreed. The first attack to take place in Kerry after the Truce had been agreed occurred at Kenmare at 1:15 am on 9 July when the IRA launched sniping attacks on the

[48] Kennedy (NAI, BMH, WS 963, p. 30).

two British military outposts in the town.[49] At 3:00am the IRA launched a sniping attack on Listowel RIC barracks; they fired a grenade and several rifles shots at the building before withdrawing. After the attack, a grenade was found affixed to the barracks gate.[50] Another attack occurred at Gortnacoriaga, near Killarney.[51] Shortly after midnight on 8 July, a ten-strong RIC foot patrol led by a district inspector and an RIC sergeant left Killarney to investigate a report that Farranfore RIC barracks was under attack. At 9:30am the following morning, they were ambushed whilst returning to Killarney. The RIC patrol returned their attackers' fire and managed to escape from the ambush unscathed.[52] Given the timing of these attacks it is far from certain that those taking part would have been aware that a Truce had been agreed. These attacks appear to have been planned for some time beforehand and their occurrence so close to the Truce was apparently coincidental.

In the following two days, when news of the ceasefire had become common knowledge, the IRA in Kerry launched a series of much larger scale military operations. These appear to have been largely, though not wholly, organised in response to an order issued by the combined leadership of the Kerry No. 1 and Kerry No. 2 Brigades which called for 'last minute' attacks on the British forces. Tom O'Connor, commandant of the 6th Battalion, Kerry No. 2 Brigade IRA, recalled that the leaders of the IRA in Kerry planned a series of coordinated attacks on the British forces for 10 July 1921: 'The night before the Truce was a Sunday. We were in Kerry 2 Bde [Brigade,] Free [Humphrey] Murphy and John Joe Rice were in charge and they decided to attack [the British forces in] Castleisland, Killorglin and Kenmare.'[53] O'Connor's second in command, Seán 'Bertie' Scully, stated that Humphrey Murphy issued an order the night before the armistice 'to attack all barracks.'[54]

The ambushes in Kenmare and Castleisland came about as a result of long-term intelligence work, carried out in the days and weeks before the Truce was agreed, involving the observation of British curfew patrols to identify potential targets for future

[49] Summary of outrages reported by the police, July 1921 (NAUK CO 904 / 146).
[50] Summary of outrages reported by the police, July 1921 (NAUK, CO 904 /146); Gaughan, *Listowel and its vicinity*, p. 394.
[51] Summary of outrages reported by the police, July 1921 (NAUK CO 904 / 146).
[52] RIC County Inspectors report Kerry, July 1921 (NAUK, CO 904 / 116).
[53] Tom O'Connor, (UCDA, EOMN, P17b / 132).
[54] Scully, (UCDA, EOMN, P17 / 102).

ambushes. As such, they should not be dismissed as a 'knee jerk' reaction in response to the announcement of the Truce as has been claimed. A meeting of the Kerry No. 2 Brigade's Brigade Council held shortly before the Truce was agreed decided that at least three large-scale attacks on the British forces should be carried out simultaneously at Kenmare, Killorglin, and Castleisland. The date selected for these attacks was 10 July.[55] These would entail an attack on a British military curfew patrol in Kenmare, an attack on the RIC barracks in Killorglin, a simultaneous 'feint attack' on Rathmore RIC barracks and the ambush of a British military curfew patrol at Castleisland.[56] No IRA attacks on the British forces or their barracks were made by the IRA's Kerry No. 3 Brigade following the announcement of the Truce and there is no evidence that the leadership of that Brigade issued an order calling for attacks at the time.[57] In contrast with the IRA actions in Tipperary and the 1st Eastern Division's area, the majority of the final IRA attacks in Kerry targeted the British Army rather than the RIC. Furthermore, a significant proportion of the Kerry attacks had apparently been conceived before the IRA leadership in Kerry became aware that a Truce had been agreed.

The Kenmare attack was led by Denis Hegarty, the commander of the 3rd (Kenmare) Battalion, Kerry No. 2 Brigade. The local IRA had observed the nightly route taken by the British soldiers who patrolled the town enforcing the curfew imposed by martial law. The IRA planned to attack the British troops as they assembled for this duty outside the Landsdowne Hotel.[58] However things did not proceed according to plan. The British troops deviated from their normal routine, and instead of setting out in one large body, split their force into two smaller patrols. This was probably a result of the IRA attacks on the British military garrison in the town the previous night. A party of six IRA volunteers ambushed one of these groups in the town as they passed along Rookery Lane but the republicans were forced to break off their attack and beat a hasty retreat when they were outflanked by the second section of the curfew patrol.[59] The British soldiers opened fire on the republicans using rifles and machine guns. One British soldier, Private

[55] Thomas McEllistrim (NAI, BMH, WS 882, p. 33); O'Connor, (UCDA, EOMN, P17b / 132).
[56] McEllistrim (NAI, BMH, WS 882, p. 33); O'Connor, (UCDA, EOMN, P17b / 132).
[57] Summary of outrages reported by the police, July 1921 (NAUK, CO 904 / 146); RIC County Inspector's Report Kerry, July 1921, (NAUK, CO 904 / 116).
[58] O'Sullivan, (NAI, BMH, WS 1191), pp 12 - 3.
[59] O'Sullivan, (NAI, BMH, WS 1191), pp 12 - 3; Kerry No. 2 Brigade IRA Operations Report, July 1921 (UCDA, RMP, P7 /A/ 20).

William Finch, was wounded in this attack which began at approximately 10:00pm and lasted for about half an hour.[60]

The planned attack on Killorglin RIC barracks differed significantly from all of the other barrack attacks planned for the weekend before the Truce because it was the only one that had a tangible military objective such as the destruction of the barracks, the capture of war material, the chance of inflicting heavy casualties on the enemy and/or forcing their surrender. All of the other barracks attacks that occurred after the announcement of the Truce were sniping attacks which served little purpose other than to indicate an active IRA presence in the area and as a test of the morale of those garrisoned at the outpost. The planned attack on Killorglin RIC barracks was a more ambitious operation modeled on successful Barracks attacks which had occurred at Ballytrain, Co. Monaghan, Kilmallock Co. Limerick and Roscarbery Co. Cork.[61] As a diversion to lure potential British reinforcements away from the Killorglin area, a second group of IRA volunteers under the command of Captain Jeremiah Kennedy was to mount a simultaneous sniping attack on Rathmore RIC Barracks. The decision to carry out these attacks was apparently made in the knowledge that a Truce was looming and consequently proved controversial. At least one of those present at the meeting of the Brigade Council which approved the attack, Tom McEllistrim, voiced his concerns about the operation.[62]

McEllistrim continued to be plagued by doubts about the prudence of the Killorglin attack. The assault on the barracks had been scheduled to begin with the detonation of an improvised land mine made from guncotton explosive, constructed by the local IRA Battalion Engineer - Oliver Mason. When McEllistrim questioned him about the power of the mine and the risk of civilian casualties, Mason replied that it was 'likely to kill anything within 50 yards of it.'[63] McEllistrim was very disturbed at the prospect of an IRA operation causing civilian fatalities in the final hours of the conflict 'because it might have involved the lives of some of the people of Killorglin, and when

[60] RIC County Inspector's Report Kerry, July 1921 (NAUK, CO 904 / 116); War Office Papers (NAUK, WO 141 / 54) Lieutenant Frederick Coleman and Private William Finch were both decorated for their role in repelling the IRA's attack at Kenmare. Ibid.
[61] Hopkinson, *Irish War of Independence*, pp 147, 113, 119.
[62] McEllistrim (UCDA, EOMN P17b / 102).
[63] McEllistrim (UCDA, EOMN, P17b / 102).

the Truce was so near the risk to human life would not be justified.' [64] With the attack on Killorglin RIC barracks cancelled, there was no need to proceed with the diversionary attack which was planned for Rathmore. However it was by then impossible for a despatch cancelling that operation to reach the IRA at Rathmore in time. Consequently about twenty IRA volunteers, unaware that the operation was then entirely redundant carried out their orders to the letter. They fired upon the barracks for some time without inflicting any casualties on the RIC garrison and then withdrew unimpeded.[65]

Undoubtedly the most controversial of the 'eleventh hour' IRA operations against the British forces which occurred in Kerry on the eve of the Truce was the Castleisland ambush. This operation resulted in the deaths of four British soldiers and three IRA volunteers.[66] Several IRA veterans later questioned Murphy's judgement for carrying out the attack in the knowledge that a Truce was imminent. Tom McEllistrim remembered: 'The Castleisland shooting caused a lot of trouble in the district for it was the last day of the Tan War.'[67] Seamus O'Connor stated: 'it might have been perhaps as well not to bother with it, seeing the Truce was on the following day.'[68] IRA veteran Dan Keating dismissed the operation as a catastrophe: 'It was a complete fiasco. Four [sic - three] great men killed.'[69] The British historiography has also placed particular emphasis upon the Castleisland ambush as an example of IRA guile. The history of the British Army's 6th Division in Ireland cited the Castleisland attack as proof that the IRA exploited the Truce as 'an opportunity for attacking and murdering people when vigilance would obviously be relaxed'.[70] General Macready also pointed to the Castleisland ambush as proof of the IRA's 'campaign of outrage and assassination until the clocks struck twelve on 11th July.'[71] Andy Cooney, the IRA officer from GHQ who had been sent to Kerry to organise the local IRA brigades, would later claim that the Castleisland ambush was organised by the local IRA volunteers as a knee jerk reaction to the announcement of the

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[64] Daniel Healy (NAI, BMH, WS 1067 pp 16 - 7).
[65] Jeremiah Kennedy (NAI, BMH, WS 1192), p. 18.
[66] These were Sergeant Davis, Private William Kelly, Private William Ross & Private George Rankin of the 2nd Battalion North Lancashire Regiment, British Army and IRA Volunteers John Flynn, Jack Prendiville & Richard Shanahan.
[67] Tom McEllistrim, (UCDA, EOMN, P17b / 102).
[68] Seamus O'Connor, *Tomorrow was another day: irreverant memories of an Irish rebel schoolmaster*, p. 55.
[69] Last Man Standing - An interview with Dan Keating' in *History Ireland* (May / June 2008).
[70] 'The Irish rebellion in the 6th Divisional area' in *The Irish Sword*, Spring 2010 Vol. XXVII No. 107 p. 130.
[71] Macready, *Annals*, pp 577 - 8.

Truce 'for fear they would not ever get another rap at the British'.[72] There is evidence that the attack had in fact been planned for some time and was not solely a last desperate chance to exact vengeance. Although the decision to proceed with the attack was reached at a Brigade Council meeting of Kerry No. 2 Brigade some time previously, it was ultimately carried out in the knowledge that a Truce was imminent. The British patrol's route varied little, generally they left their barracks at the western end of the town, marched up Main Street to the ruins of the Carnegie library, before returning by the same route. The local IRA had razed Castleisland library by fire the previous month to prevent it being commandeered by the British forces. The library had held a commanding view of Main Street and the republicans decided to use the ruined building as a vantage point from where they could ambush the curfew patrol.[73] Several failed attempts had been made previously to ambush the patrol in Castleisland, and it appears to have been largely coincidental that the night before the Truce was the only night when the British forces strayed into the trap which had been repeatedly set for them. According to Peter Browne, an IRA veteran who took part in the ambush, the operation had been planned for some time before the Truce was announced.

A foot patrol by members of North Lancashire Fusiliers left their barracks at 9:00pm each night and their commanding officer would fire a single shot in the air from his revolver:

> The Battallion had been very active … yet the Castleisland garrison were always able to elude the net. … The IRA had tried on a couple of occasions to ambush this patrol but it was a coincidence that the patrol remained indoors whenever the IRA were in the vicinity in strength. It would of course have been easy to have one or two of the IRA have a few shots at them on the nights they came out, but both the brigade and battalion were hoping to make a complete job of it if they could get into the town in strength on a night that the patrol came out. For some days prior to July 10th 1921 battalion intelligence indicated that they were coming out on certain occasions including the night of July 10th. Arrangements were therefore made by the brigade to attack the patrol on that night.[74]

The attack on the British military at Castleisland went ahead with disastrous consequences. The final decision to carry out the attack was made at 3:00pm on 10 July when the leadership of the Kerry No. 2 Brigade and the local IRA battalion officers

[72] Andy Cooney, (UCDA, EOMN, P17b / 107).
[73] Denis Prendiville, (NAI, BMH, WS 1106, p. 9).
[74] Peter Browne (NAI, BMH, WS 1110, pp 54 - 62).

received reliable and definite information that a British military curfew patrol would definitely leave the barracks that night. According to IRA veteran Peter Browne, this information came directly from an IRA mole inside Castleisland Barracks:

> The Brigade and Battalion staffs … were still in the vicinity of Scartaglin Village when at about 3pm another message came from Castleisland with word that the patrol was coming out for certain that night. The messenger was no less a person than the informant himself, who had sneaked out of the Barracks and taken the risk of being found out by cycling the five miles to Scartaglin with the information.[75]

That evening a group of thirty IRA volunteers under the command of Humphrey Murphy entered Castleisland. Approximately twenty-five the volunteers were armed with rifles, the remainder being armed with shotguns. If all went according to plan the British patrol would be trapped by heavy gunfire in the middle of the street with no cover and would be killed, or forced to surrender, within a matter of minutes. The IRA had been delayed whilst entering the town and as a result some of their men were not in allocated positions when the British patrol reached the ambush position. One of the IRA sections opened fire prematurely before the British troops entered the ambush position; the British soldiers were able to seek cover and engage their attackers.[76] British reinforcements were quick to reach the scene of the ambush and after an intense and chaotic battle lasting several minutes the IRA began its withdrawl. One group of IRA volunteers attempting to retreat came under sustained rifle and machinegun fire from the advancing British soldiers and were forced to seek cover in an old quarry. Some of these managed to escape under fire but the remaining three John Flynn, Richard Shanahan and Jack Prendiville were trapped and killed by the British forces.[77] Four members of the British forces, Sergeant John Laution Davies, Private George Rankin, Private William Ross and Private William Kelly were killed in the attack.[78]

[75] Browne (NAI, BMH, WS, 1110, pp 54 - 62).
[76] O'Connor, (NAI, BMH, WS 1181, pp 25 - 7).
[77] Denis Prendiville, (NAI, BMH WS 1106, p. 10); Peter Browne (NAI, BMH, WS, 1110, pp 54 - 62).
[78] War Office Papers (NAUK, WO 141 / 54).

(II) *Analysis of the IRA's military campaign nationally between 8 - 11 July 1921*

The final hours of the conflict in the operational areas of the IRA's 1st Eastern Division, Tipperary No. 3 Brigade and Kerry Brigades were marked by an upsurge in republican attacks on members of the British forces and their barracks. The majority of these attacks had little or no prospect of achieving a tangible military goal. It is tempting to view these actions as desperate acts hastily arranged by the IRA rank and file in response to the orders for 'last minute' attacks issued by brigade and divisional IRA officers. However, numerous attacks on the British forces were made throughout Ireland in the same period, in areas where the local IRA did not receive orders to take last minute action. This raises important questions about the nature of the War of Independence by July 1921. Was there anything unusual about the frequency and nature of the attacks that occurred throughout Ireland immediately prior to the Truce? Were these attacks simply the standard operations of the IRA's military campaign which had been ongoing for months previously or were they a futile and vengeful last ditch effort to settle old scores sparked by the news that the conflict was coming to an end?

Pre-Truce military activity in the IRA's 1st Western Division, (Clare and Galway)

There were three armed clashes between the IRA and the RIC in Clare in the period from 8 - 11 July. In the same time period a British soldier was killed at Bunratty in the south east of the county and an ambush led by IRA volunteers from Clare occurred at Kilchreest in Galway. The first of these attacks happened in Ennis at 4:30pm on 8 July when Constable Alfred Needham was shot and fatally wounded.[79] At 7:00pm that same night an RIC foot patrol opened fire on a group of IRA volunteers it had discovered near the town of Sixmilebridge. The republicans had been felling trees as part of a road blocking operation and quickly retreated, having been taken by surprise. When the RIC patrol were returning to their barracks following this encounter it came under fire from a second IRA party. After a brief firefight, the RIC patrol managed to reach its barracks

[79] See Chapter Four.

safely.[80] The final IRA attack on the British forces in Clare occurred at 10:15pm on 9 July, when a group of IRA volunteers led by Sean McNamara carried out a sniping attack on Ballyvaughan Coastguard Station.[81] A number of the Royal Marines garrisoned there were outside the building when the attack began. One of them, Marine W. A. Mungham, suffered a gunshot to his right thigh. The Royal Marines immediately opened up on their attackers with machinegun fire, and the IRA eventually withdrew after RIC reinforcements arrived from Galway.[82] A British soldier, Private R. W. Williams of the 2nd Battalion Royal Welch Fusiliers, was killed as the result of an IRA road blocking operation. At 2:00pm on 10 July Williams and another British Army motorcycle despatch rider were travelling from Limerick towards Ennis when they plunged from a bridge spanning the Owengarry River at Bunratty which the IRA had attempted to destroy using explosives two months earlier. As the two British motorcyclists approached Bunratty, local people attempted to warn them of the damage to the bridge caused by the IRA. The soldiers ignored their warnings and both men plunged into the river below. Private Williams split his head open on the masonry as he fell and lost consciousness. The second soldier managed to swim to safety but Williams was killed.[83]

The RIC county inspector for Clare claimed that these attacks were the result of a deliberate attempt by the IRA to kill as many of its opponents as possible before the Truce came into effect: 'Since the Truce this County has been in a comparatively quiet condition. Previous to that date there was evidently an intention to murder as many police and other Crown Forces as possible before the Truce came on.'[84] The RIC county inspector cited IRA attacks on the British forces on the 4, 7 and 8 July as further proof that the IRA had planned its attacks in the knowledge that a ceasefire was imminent. However there is no evidence to support this claim. As discussed in Chapter Two Michael Brennan, the leader of the IRA's 1st Western Division only learned that a Truce had been agreed when he received the despatch from IRA GHQ some time on the 9 or 10 July.[85] Although Brennan immediately sent copies of the Truce order received to all the

[80] *Irish Times*, 12 July 1921.
[81] Summary of outrages reported by the Police, July 1921. (NAUK, CO 904 / 146).
[82] *Irish Times*, 12 July 1921.
[83] Claremorris Command to GHQ Dubblin (IMA, A/07304).
[84] RIC County Inspector's Report Clare, July 1921 (NAUK, CO 904 / 116).
[85] Brennan, *The war in Clare*, p. 104.

units under his control, this meant that IRA units in Clare had less than forty-eight or twenty-four hours notice of the Truce - therefore the above attacks were led by IRA officers who had no knowledge that a truce was imminent and, despite the claims in the RIC report, were not motivated by 'an intention to murder as many police and other Crown Forces as possible before the Truce came on.'[86]

The RIC county inspector for Galway East Riding, like his counterpart in Clare, also believed that the IRA had engaged in deliberate 'eleventh hour' attacks in an effort to kill members of the RIC before the Truce came into effect. He cited the IRA attack on an RIC patrol at Roxborough near Kilchreest on the morning of 11 July as evidence of this:

> Up to the time of the "Truce" this Riding was in a disturbed state owing to the activities of the IRA and Sinn Féin. … On the morning of the 11th at Roxborough [Kilchreest] a patrol was ambushed . This was a particularly disgraceful affair, for the truce had been announced in all chapels in the locality on the day before, and it was thought by the police that on the Monday Morning nothing would be done …Very considerable activity was shown by the Sinn Féin and IRA organisations up to the morning of the Truce.[87]

In spite of the RIC county inspector's report that the ceasefire had been announced in all the churches of East Galway on Sunday 10 July, many IRA volunteers in the county were still apparently unaware that a Truce had been agreed. The Roxborough Ambush was carried out by members of the Galway IRA with assistance from members of the East Clare Brigade's Flying Column who had crossed the county border to assist local IRA units. The members of the East Clare Brigade IRA who were active in Galway had not all received news that a ceasefire had been agreed when the Truce came into effect. This casts significant doubt on the RIC county inspector's claim that the IRA had planned the Roxborough Ambush in the knowledge that the ceasefire was just hours away. Furthermore, the IRA had planned other attacks in south-east Galway for the same area which were never carried out. At least one of these ambushes had been planned several weeks in advance and was purely coincidental to the announcement of the Truce. The aborted ambush of an RIC patrol, which had been scheduled for 10 July, had been planned several weeks in advance and members of the IRA unit involved had made

[86] RIC County Inspector's Report Clare, July 1921 (NAUK, CO 904 / 116).
[87] RIC Co. Inspectors report Galway ER, July 1921, (NAUK, CO 904 / 116).

contact with a neighbouring IRA unit as early as June 1921 in order to borrow rifles for the attack. Therefore it appears that the final IRA attacks that occurred in counties Clare and Galway during the War of Independence were nothing to do with, and had not been motivated by, the announcement of the Truce. [88]

Pre-Truce military activity by the IRA's Cork Brigades

The three IRA brigades in county Cork had waged very strong and sustained military campaigns during the War of Independence with the two of the largest and most effective IRA ambushes (Kilmichael and Crossbarry) having occurred in the county. Cork also had the highest number of fatalities of any Irish county during the conflict.[89] However, in contrast to the neighbouring counties of Kerry, Limerick and Tipperary, there was just one military clash between the IRA and the British forces in Cork in the final days of the conflict, and this was carried out by an IRA unit from Limerick operating in the county.[90] The IRA's three Cork Brigades prepared six ambushes for the British forces (five in Cork and one in Limerick) but all of these were abandoned after the British forces failed to pass through the prepared ambush positions.[91] By contrast with their comrades in Limerick who carried out three successful ambushes on British troops in the final days of the war, none of the large-scale military operations planned by the Cork IRA for the weekend of 8 - 11 July came to fruition. The IRA's Cork No. 3 Brigade laid three ambushes for the British forces between 8 July and the Truce, and the Cork No. 1 and No. 4 Brigades also prepared ambushes but all failed to engage the British forces in battle. In the same time period there was only one recorded attack on a barracks in the county.

On 8 July a party of ten IRA volunteers from the Dunmanway Battalion, Cork No. 3 Brigade, under the command of Sean Murphy prepared an ambush for the British forces

[88] Patrick Connachton (NAI, BMH, WS 1137, pp 14 - 6).
[89] O'Halpin, 'Counting terror', p. 152.
[90] This was an attack by the IRA's East Limerick Brigade on the British forces in Michelstown, Cork on 10 July.
[91] The IRA's Cork No. 3 Brigade prepared ambushes for the British forces at Ardcahan near Dunmanway on 8 July, at Clonakilty Junction on 9 July and at Kealkil on 10 July. The Cork No. 1 Brigade planned an ambush at Staple's Cross, Castlelyons on 11 July. The Cork No. 4 Brigade and Limerick No. 3 Brigade Flying columns prepared an ambush at Barnagh near Newcastle West, Limerick.

at Ardcahan on the Dunmanway to Macroom road. After waiting in vain all day for a British patrol, the republicans withdrew that evening. Since the leadership of the IRA's Cork No. 3 Brigade did not discover that the Truce had been agreed until they read of it in press reports the following day, Murphy and his comrades probably mounted this ambush in complete ignorance that a ceasefire had been agreed in Dublin earlier that day.[92] The following day, four armed members of the IRA's Macroom Company spent over two hours in waiting to attack a British patrol which broke from its normal routine, failing to leave its barracks.[93] On the night of 10 July, the Caheragh Company of the IRA's Cork No. 3 Brigade made another unsuccessful attempt to ambush the British forces at Kealkil. The previous day, two local IRA officers had encountered a British Army cycle patrol of ten soldiers dressed in civilian clothing at a local pub. After making their escape, the two IRA officers immediately set about organising the manpower and weaponry to attack the patrol. Despite making a search that evening they failed to locate the patrol, and the following night they mounted an ambush in the hope that the British Army was still active in the area and might enter their ambush position. The IRA lay in ambush at Kealkil from 9:00pm on 10 July until 9:00am the following morning but the ambush was called off as the British patrol had not made reappearance by that time. In this case it is important to note that a chance encounter and the discovery of a suitable target which the local IRA unit was capable of attacking, rather than political and military developments in Dublin in relation to the ceasefire, appear to have been the primary motivating factors in planning the attack.[94] The IRA in Cork made further attempts to ambush the British forces at Clonakilty Junction train station and Staples Cross Castlelyons. In both these cases, the IRA remained in ambush positions until the morning of 11 July but both ambushes were abandoned hours before the Truce was due to begin. The proposed ambushes at Clonakilty Junction and Staples Cross had been organised in response to intelligence information gathered locally over several weeks and there is nothing to suggest that they were spur of the moment attacks planned in the wake of the Truce being announced.[95]

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[92] Sean Murphy, (NAI, BMH, WS 1445, pp 16 - 7).
[93] Dan Corkery, (NAI, BMH, WS 1719, p. 27).
[94] William Norris (NAI, BMH, WS 595, p. 14).
[95] Daniel Canty (NAI, BMH, WS 1619, p. 35); James Brennock (NAI, BMH, WS 1113, p. 20).

The largest and by far the most ambitious IRA operation planned for the weekend of the Truce was to be an ambush on a convoy of British military at Barnagh, County Limerick which was mounted on Friday 8 July, and was abandoned at noon on 11 July. Given the exact correlation between the dates the IRA laid this ambush and the announcement and implementation of the Truce, it is tempting to see the operation as an attempt by the IRA to inflict serious casualties upon their opponents in the final days hours of the conflict in the full knowledge that a ceasefire was imminent. However, the operation had been planned for weeks in advance and the IRA personnel who laid the ambush had no knowledge of the political developments in Dublin which led to the Truce.[96] In total approximately 140 members of the IRA were mobilised at Barnagh, making the proposed ambush the largest IRA operation of the war.[97] Prior to this, the largest mobilisation of IRA volunteers was for the 'Battle of Crossbarry'. The ambush laid at Barnagh had the potential to eclipse Crossbarry in terms of scale and fatalities.[98]

Despite the unprecedented mobilisation of IRA manpower, weaponry and equipment, not a single shot was to be fired in anger at Barnagh. At 7:00am on 8 July the IRA engineers had just finished placing the land mines and the riflemen were moving in to occupy their ambush positions when, according to Mossie Hartnett, they were taken unawares by the approach of a British convoy from Newcastle West:

> By morning around 7 am the greater number of our troops were just settling down in their positions and others were

[96] In June 1921 Patrick O'Brien Commandant of the Cork No. 4 Brigade IRA, decided to act upon an invitation he received from the leadership of the West Limerick Brigade to mount a joint attack on the British military garrison at Newcastle West, Limerick. The proposal was that both IRA units would combine their strength to ambush a convoy of British soldiers which travelled regularly between Newcastle West and Abbeyfeale. This convoy consisted of up to eight British lorries, usually accompanied by an armored car. Preparations for the ambush began several weeks before the Truce. They eventually selected an ambush position between Dore's Cross and Barnagh Bridge. Engineers from the Cork No. 4 Brigade spent a fortnight in Ballydesmond, Cork preparing land mines for the attack. The operation was scheduled for as early as 1 July, but was postponed because preparations were not completed by that time, because it took about two weeks to accumulate the required amount of potassium chlorate to make the explosive for the required mines. Eventually on 7 July 1921 the North Cork Brigade and West Limerick Brigade flying columns assembled at Barnagh for the planned ambush. Sean Moylan later stated that: 'Every gun, every ounce of explosive and every fighting man in North Cork and West Limerick were mobilised'. Sean Moylan, (NAI, BMH, WS 838, p. 269).

[97] O'Brien (NAI, BMH, WS 764, pp 57 - 8).

[98] The Barnagh ambush would have involved a greater number of IRA Volunteers and far fewer British troops. The republicans lying in ambush at Barnagh had the advantage of being equipped with a Hotchkiss machine gun whereas their predecessors at Crossbarry fought with rifles, shotguns and side arms only. The most important factor in the ambush laid at Barnagh on 8 July was the number of land mines available to the IRA. At least eight landmines, each containing approximately 14lbs of explosive, which could be detonated by electronic charge. By contrast, the IRA at Crossbarry had only employed two mines and therefore the potential for much higher British casualties at Barnagh was significant. Historian, Dr. William H. Kautt, Associate Professor of Military History at the US Army Command and General Staff College has drawn attention to the rapid development of the expertise of the IRA's 4th (North) Cork Brigade in employing landmines in ambushes: 'That the rebels had sufficient forethought to place the mines in a sequential manner so that they could detonate them individually at will, thus halting and attacking the convoy at certain locations and trapping the other vehicles, demonstrates a sophistication with IRA ambush operations, and especially IED employment. This placement, with appropriately sized bombs, could have destroyed the entire convoy without firing their small arms at all.' William H. Kautt, *Ambushes and armour: the Irish rebellion 1919 - 1921* (Dublin, 2010), p. 178.

> approaching from the Newcastle West direction. Before we realised what was happening, on they came with a private car in front followed by four transport Crossleys filled with troops and they drove quickly over our mined road and disappeared in the direction of Abbeyfeale.[99]

According Patrick O'Brien, who was in overall charge of the operation, a spur of the moment decision was taken by the IRA to allow the convoy pass unchallenged and attack it if it returned by the same route: 'They had never left at that hour before; it was usually about 3:00pm before they left for Listowel. We hurriedly decided to let them pass and attack as they were returning.'[100] However the convoy did not return by the same route; no other British forces passed through the ambush position that day and the republicans withdrew from their ambush positions but remained in the vicinity ready to take action if a suitable target presented itself.[101]

The following night, O'Brien was summoned to a meeting by Ernie O'Malley the leader of the IRA's 1st Southern Division:

> Late on Saturday evening, July 9th, a despatch arrived from Divisional Headquarters summoning myself and the Battalion O.C., who were with the Column, to a meeting at Dromahane on Sunday, July 10th. We started immediately and got as far as Freemount that night, where we heard the first rumours of a Truce. On the following day, Sunday, we got to Dromhane and arrived at the venue of the meeting. The Divisional O.C. was present and also the Brigade O.C. (George Power) …It was then we were definitely informed that there was to be a Truce the following day at noon. … I then asked if it would be permissible for the Column to carry out an attack on the following morning, and was informed by the Divisional O.C. that we could please ourselves but that the Truce should be strictly observed at 12 Noon on Monday. We returned to Tournafulla that night and held a Conference with the section leaders of North Cork and the officers of the West Limerick Column. I explained to them about the Truce and asked for their opinions as to the advisability of seeking an engagement the following morning. It was unanimously decided that we would go back into the positions evacuated on Friday and remain there until 12 noon.[102]

O'Brien's account makes it clear that prior to the night of Saturday 9 July, the IRA officers who organised the ambush at Barnagh had received no information that a ceasefire was imminent. Consequently, the IRA rank and file at Barnagh would not have received definite news of the Truce until O'Brien's return the following day, Sunday 10 July. O'Brien and his men had been given a free hand on the issue of whether or not to press ahead with their planned operation with the only caveat being that they obeyed the

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[99] Harnett, Mossie, *Victory and woe: the West Limerick Brigade in the War of Independence* (Dublin, 2002), pp 109 - 17.
[100] Collins (NAI, BMH, WS 1272, pp 39 - 40).
[101] O'Brien (NAI, BMH, WS 764, pp 57 - 8), Con Meany (NAI, BMH, WS 787, p. 26); J Cashman (NAI, BMH, WS 1270, pp 17 - 8).
[102] O'Brien (NAI, BMH, WS 764, pp 57 - 58).

Truce once it came into effect.

The members of the Cork No. 4 Brigade and West Limerick Flying Column returned to their allotted ambush positions at Barnagh late on the night of 10 July and remained there awaiting their quarry until the Truce came into effect.[103] A quarter of an hour before the Truce was due to start, Patrick O'Brien cancelled the operation and called upon the IRA volunteers present to form ranks on the roadway. After calling them to attention, O'Brien then addressed the men, spelling out the terms of the Truce which was about to take effect. O'Brien dismissed the assembled ranks of the IRA at 12 noon sharp - the exact time the ceasefire began.[104] At that moment, a Royal Air Force aeroplane flew above the ambush position and the North Cork IRA volunteers loosed off a burst of machinegun fire to signal the start of the Truce.[105] The IRA engineers immediately began removing the eight landmines that had been placed along the length of the ambush position. At 12:15pm, whilst the task of removing the mines was still underway, a motorised convoy of British military approached from Newcastle West en route to Abbeyfeale, drove into the ambush position at Barnagh and debussed from their vehicles. Upon seeing first-hand the IRA preparations for the ambush the British troops initially adopted a hostile attitude before boarding their vehicles and continuing on their journey.[106] According to some accounts the British military were aware of the IRA ambush; Major Foster, who was in charge of the patrol, allegedly confronted the IRA men he met coming out of ambush declaring: 'Ye are waiting here for the past week to ambush us'.[107]

Significantly, with the exception of the Mitchelstown operation where British outposts were sniped as a covering action for an ambush, there were only two other attacks on British barracks in Cork following the announcement of the Truce. *The Irish Times* reported that at 10:45pm on 9 July the RIC barracks at Drimoleague was attacked by a large number of men using bombs and rifle fire. The attack was reported to have lasted for twenty minutes but did not result in any RIC casualties.[108] Another IRA attack

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[103] Cashman (NAI, BMH, WS 1270, pp 17 - 8).
[104] O'Brien (NAI, BMH, WS 764, p. 60).
[105] Collins (NAI, BMH, WS 1272, p. 40): Patrick Mulcahy, (NAI, BMH, WS 815, p. 11).
[106] O'Brien (NAI, BMH, WS 764, p. 60); Daniel Browne, (NAI, BMH, WS 785, pp 11 - 2); Harnett, *Victory and woe*, pp 109 - 17.
[107] John J. O'Riordan, *Kiskeam versus the Empire* (Cork, 2010), p.121.
[108] *Irish Times*, 10 July 1921; Summary of outrages reported by the police July 1921 (NAUK, CO 904 / 146).

was carried out on Innishannon RIC barracks the following night.[109] The majority of IRA attacks in Limerick and Cork which were planned or carried out following the announcement of the Truce on 8 July were large scale ambushes of the British forces. The majority of these ambushes had been planned in advance of the announcement of the Truce and the remainder was a spontaneous reaction to the unexpected appearance of British troops in the immediate area rather than a reaction to the announcement of the ceasefire.

Pre-Truce military activity by the IRA's Limerick Brigades

Whilst the IRA's Limerick Brigades were far more active that their counterparts in Cork following the announcement of the Truce, there were just three armed clashes between the IRA and the British forces in Limerick between 8 and 11 July.[110] The IRA's Limerick Brigades did not make any attacks on British barracks during the same time period.

There were two IRA attacks on the British forces in Limerick on the 8 July. The first was carried out by the IRA's Mid Limerick Brigade at Cantor's Bridge near Killonan. There, the IRA were acting on reliable intelligence information received the previous month that the full strength of G Company of the Auxiliaries stationed at Killaloe (approx 150 men) was being transferred by rail to another posting.[111] The Mid Limerick Brigade mined the Birdhill to Limerick railway line at Cantor's Bridge. The Auxiliaries were due to cross the bridge at 8:00am that morning; however shortly before their arrival, the route was searched by the British military. When the British soldiers discovered that the railway was mined and took cover, the IRA volunteers lying in ambush immediately opened fire. After a very brief engagement, the IRA retreated as the sound of gunfire was attracting British reinforcements. One British soldier was wounded in the attack.

The Cantor's Bridge ambush was one of the largest and most ambitious operations mounted by the IRA's Mid Limerick Brigade. However, its timing the same

[109] Frank Neville, (NAI, BMH, WS 443, p. 16).

[110] These were the Canter's Bridge ambush near Limerick City and a grenade attack on an RIC lorry at Dromkeen, Limerick , both occurred 8 July; and an attack on the British forces in Mitchelstown, Cork on 10 July.

[111] Liam Forde (NAI, BMH, WS 1710, p.25); McCall, *Tudor's toughs*, pp 210 - 3.

day that the Truce was announced was entirely coincidental. The operation had been planned for over a month and Michael Hayes, who took part in the attack, stated that he and his comrades were completely unaware of the political machinations in Dublin which would lead to the announcement of a Truce later that day.[112] The timing of this operation was dictated entirely by British troop movements and the ambush took place several hours before the Truce was agreed or announced.[113] The second IRA attack in Limerick that day occurred at Dromkeen where members of the East Limerick Brigade made a grenade attack on an RIC lorry. One RIC constable was wounded in the attack, the remaining members of the patrol escaping unscathed. This attack was carried out at a time when IRA personnel in Limerick were still unaware that a ceasefire had been announced and the timing of the attack so close to the Truce appears to have been entirely coincidental.[114]

On the morning of 10 July, the East Limerick Brigade ambushed a ten-strong patrol of British soldiers from the King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry in Mitchelstown, County Cork.[115] The IRA had been planning an attack on the British garrison there for some time, and had occupied ambush positions outside the town for over a fortnight but no suitable target had presented itself.[116] The most promising target which the IRA could identify was a ten-strong British Army patrol that regularly left Mitchelstown military barracks escorting a water wagon to the fountain at the opposite end of town. On the morning of Sunday 10 July, a force of ten IRA volunteers armed with rifles and shotguns, supported by a reserve force of another five IRA volunteers armed with small calibre revolvers, emerged from the town's creamery, surprising the British soldiers, and calling upon them to surrender. When challenged, the British troops reached for their rifles instead of surrendering and the IRA opened fire. Three civilians, two British soldiers and two IRA volunteers were wounded in the ensuing gunfight, and the IRA captured two rifles from the British military. Two separate IRA covering parties, each consisting of three riflemen, had been placed near the town's British military and RIC barracks. When

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[112] Michael Hayes [Michael Ó hAodha (ed.)], *The Irish republican struggle in Limerick: diary of a 16 year old volunteer* (Dublin, 2013), p. 62.
[113] Thomas Moynihan (BMH, WS, 1452, p. 9); Various, *Limerick's fighting story*, p. 352; Toomey, *War of Independence in Limerick*, pp 630 - 2.
[114] *Irish Times*, 11 July 1921.
[115] Leo Skinner (NAI, BMH, WS 940, pp 5 - 7).
[116] Various, *Rebel Cork's fighting story*, pp 270 - 1.

the ambush began, these covering parties sniped these outposts to prevent British reinforcements advancing toward the scene of the ambush. The British forces responded from their barracks with machinegun and rifle fire and the IRA withdrew from the town after the approach of the nearby British Army reinforcements from Kilworth camp.[117] Significantly, with the exception of the Mitchelstown operation where British outposts were sniped as a covering action for an ambush, the Limerick IRA did not react to the announcement of the Truce by planning new ambushes. Two of the three attacks on the British forces made by Limerick republicans between 8 - 11 July were carried out prior to the announcement of the Truce. There is no evidence implying that these operations were planned by republicans as part of a vengeful reaction to the advent of the ceasefire.

Pre-Truce military activity by the IRA in Waterford

The RIC county inspector's July 1921 report for Waterford makes a definite claim that the IRA in the county reacted to the announcement of the Truce by launching an 'eleventh hour outburst': 'Sinn Fein [sic] appears to have made a special effort in crime from the first of the month up to the very hour of the commencement of the Truce. In fact the two days preliminary notice seems to have spurred the local patriots to redouble there [sic] exertions, doubtless to let the world see what dashing fellows they are.' However this claim is not supported by evidence from other sources. The Waterford No. 2 Brigade's report for the same month records only two attacks on the British forces after the Truce was agreed. On two successive nights, 8 and 9 July, the 3rd Battalion Waterford No 2 Brigade sniped the coast guardstation at Ardmore, which housed a garrison from the Royal Marine Light infantry. The garrison returned the republican's fire on both occasions but neither side sustained any casualties.[118] The only other republican attack recorded in the same period occurred on the night of 9 July when a grenade was thrown at Dungarvan Castle RIC barracks. However the bomb fell short of the castle wall and exploded harmlessly.[119] Despite his claim that the 'two days preliminary notice' of the

[117] RIC County Inspector's Report Cork ER, July 1921 (NAUK, CO 904 / 116); Various. *Rebel Cork's fighting story*, pp 270 - 2.
[118] 3rd Battalion Waterford No 2. Brigade report to GHQ, July 1921 (UCDA, RMP, P7/A/23).
[119] RIC County Inspector's Report for Waterford July 1921, (NAUK, CO 904 / 116); *Irish Times*, 10 July 1921.

Truce spurred the IRA in Waterford to redouble their efforts, the RIC county inspector's report records one IRA attack, the shooting of an off-duty RIC constable, during the last two days of the conflict.[120]

According to the Waterford No. 2 Brigade's report for July, an ambush of British forces was prepared at Dungarvan, and two sniping operations were also planned by members of the Brigades 4th Battalion but none of these plans bore fruit. The IRA in West Waterford appear to have spent the final days of the conflict engrossed in road blocking operations with the 1st Battalion being 'confined more or less to early trenching or blocking of roads.'[121] The West Waterford Flying Column had discovered on 10 July that a column of British soldiers had billeted near Millstreet, and were due to travel to Clonmel the following morning. According to James Prendergast, Vice O/C of the flying column, the republicans had an opportunity to attack the British forces but decided against doing so: 'because of the Truce, which was to take effect at 12 o' clock (midday) the following day'.[122] Given the lack of aggressive IRA activity reported in Waterford on 10 and 11 July onwards, it would be wrong to conclude that the IRA in the county reacted to news of the truce with an 'eleventh hour outburst'.[123]

Pre-Truce military activity by the IRA in Connacht

In contrast with the south there was very little IRA activity in the west of Ireland between 8 - 11 July. Excluding Galway (examined above), there were just four attacks on the British forces in the province of Connacht. The RIC, rather than the British military, was the targets of all four attacks. At 9:30pm on 9 July the North Longford Flying column ambushed an RIC cycle patrol near Streete in Westmeath. One member of the RIC was wounded in the ambush which had been planned with the intention of luring a larger British force into the area for a second attack. However, the second ambush never occurred and the North Longford Flying Column was not involved in any other actions

[120] Attack on Constable Massey near Cappoquinn on 10 July. See Chapter Four & RIC County Inspector's Report for Waterford, July 1921, (NAUK, CO 904 / 116).
[121] 1st Battalion Waterford No 2. Brigade report to GHQ, July 1921 (UCDA, RMP, P7/A/23).
[122] James Prendergast (NAI, BMH, WS 1655, pp 14 - 5).
[123] RIC County Inspector's Report for Waterford, July 1921, (NAUK, CO 904 / 116).

prior to the Truce.[124] The same day, the 1st Battalion of the IRA's Roscommon Brigade ambushed an RIC cycle patrol at South Park near Castlerea. A short time previously the IRA had burned the house of a loyalist at Tarmon and the republicans anticipated that the RIC would congregate in the area to carry out reprisals and consequently they decided to mount an ambush at South Park. However the local IRA unit was ill-equipped to carry out a successful ambush, with a number of the IRA volunteers mobilised for the attack only having two rounds each for their shotguns. The IRA opened fire on the advance party of an RIC cycle patrol that entered the ambush position but withdrew following a brief engagement when the main body of approximately fifty RIC arrived, outnumbering them. The RIC suffered no casualties in the engagement and captured two IRA volunteers in the immediate aftermath of the ambush.[125]

The final three IRA attacks in the west were far less formidable affairs. Ten rifle shots were fired at the RIC Barracks in Swinford, Mayo on the night of 9 July.[126] Members of the East Mayo Brigade opened fire on a group of Black and Tans at the sports field in Ballaghadreen on 10 July.[127] That night, thirty IRA volunteers made a sniping attack on the RIC barracks at Ballinalee, Longford. The attack lasted for approximately thirty minutes but did not result in any RIC casualties.[128] IRA Veteran Bryan Doherty, a member of the 1st Battalion Longford Brigade which carried out the operation, dismissed the attack on the barracks as a political gesture rather than a serious military operation: 'The unit did carry out a sort of attack on the stronghold at Ballinalee on the eve of the Truce which I thought was more of a defiant action than a serious attempt to take the fortress.'[129] In contrast with IRA units in other areas where the announcement of the Truce led some IRA units to organise last minute attacks, news of the ceasefire led to a number of IRA officers in the west to cancel attacks on the British forces. The IRA's North Mayo Brigade discovered an RIC convoy stopped at Enniscrone on the night of 10 July. They had debussed from their vehicles, leaving just one sentry keeping guard. Some members of the Brigade suggested attacking the convoy whilst they

[124] *Irish Times*, 13 July 1921; Seamus Conway (NAI, BMH, WS 440, p. 30).
[125] Heagerty Thorne, *They put the flag a flyin*, pp 110 - 2.
[126] Summary of outrages reported by the police, July 1921 (NAUK, CO 904 / 146).
[127] Patrick Cassidy, (NAI, BMH, WS 1017, p. 15).
[128] Michael Francis Reynolds (NAI, BMH, WS 438, pp 19 - 20).
[129] Bryan Doherty (NAI, BMH, WS 1292, p. 14).

could be caught off-guard but they were soon informed 'that the Truce was almost on and [decided] … that it would be next to dishonourable to attempt it, and in consequence the attack was called off.[130] Similarly, an IRA attack on the RIC garrison at Cliffoney due to take place the weekend of the Truce was cancelled by the commandant of the IRA's Sligo Brigade who gave the local IRA unit 'instructions to withdraw our men and not engage in any further activities pending definite orders from him.'[131]

Pre-Truce military activity by the IRA in Dublin and the south-east

The IRA's Dublin Brigade had planned a number of large-scale military operations for Friday 8 July, the date that the Truce was agreed in the city and publicly announced. At 1:00pm that morning members of the Dublin Brigade's ASU under the command of Pádraig O'Connor attacked a train as it passed Ballyfermot railway bridge. The train was transporting a company of British soldiers from the Gordon Highlanders Regiment who were en route to Tipperary. The IRA poured several gallons of petrol onto the roof of the passing train in an attempt to set it alight before attacking the carriages with grenades, revolver and machinegun fire. The British troops on board the train returned fire but did not inflict any casualties on their attackers. One civilian on board the train was mortally wounded by the explosion of a grenade thrown by the IRA ambushers and died later that day. Although the attack occurred at the precise time that the negotiations to secure a truce were being finalized, there is no suggestion in the testimony of the IRA participants that the timing was anything other than coincidental. Pádraig O'Connor, who was in charge of the attack, stated that it had been organised in response to definite intelligence information that a British troop transport would be taking that route at that precise time and date. As such, the timing of the attack was dictated by British troop movements and the availability of a target for the IRA.[132] It would appear that most, if not all, of the IRA volunteers taking part in the ambush had no prior knowledge or foresight that a ceasefire

[130] William J. O'Hara, (NAI, BMH, WS 1554, p. 21).
[131] Martin Bernard McGowan, (NAI, BMH, WS 1545, p. 13).
[132] Pádraig O'Connor (NAI, BMH, WS 813, p. 44).

was imminent.[133] This is confirmed by Patrick McCrae, who only learned that the Truce had been agreed after the operation, when they went to 'dump' the weaponry they had used in the earlier attack.[134]

Once the Truce had been formally agreed and announced, the IRA's Dublin Brigade, acting on de Valera's orders, immediately cancelled all of the other offensive military operations in the capital. These included a 'shoot up' of all members of the British forces visible in the city centre that evening, regardless of whether they were on active duty or not, and a large-scale ambush of British forces at Crumlin Cross involving two mines and three machineguns.[135] De Valera had issued the order cancelling these, and presumably all further operations in Dublin 'on account of the close proximity of the Truce.'[136] Following de Valera's order, there were no other IRA attacks on British troops in the capital with the exception of a single incident at Dalkey at 8:15pm on 9 July where a British soldier, Private J. W. Martin of the Royal Army Service Corps, was wounded by gunfire during an attempt to hijack and destroy a British military vehicle parked near the tramway terminus.[137] The final IRA operation in Dublin was a raid on the Inchicore Railway Works which had been ordered by Sean Russell, the IRA's Director of Munitions, to secure chemicals used in the manufacture of explosives.[138] The raid was carried out at 6:40am on the morning of 11 July but did not involve contact with the British forces.[139]

Outside of Dublin and the IRA's 1st Eastern Divisional area (examined above) there was relatively little military activity in terms of ambushes and barracks attacks by republicans in the remainder of Leinster following the announcement of the Truce. The 7th Battalion of the IRA's Kilkenny Brigade made two attacks on the British forces. The first of these was a sniping attack on a joint British military / RIC patrol at Clashacrow near Callan, Kilkenny on 9 July.[140] Two lorries containing British forces had been lured to the area to investigate an IRA raid on a mail car that had taken place earlier that day.

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[133] See Chapter One.
[134] Patrick McCrae (NAI, BMH, WS 413, p. 45).
[135] Pádraig O'Connor (NAI, BMH, WS 813, p. 44).
[136] O'Connor (NAI, BMH, WS 813, p. 44).
[137] *The Irish Times*, 12 July 1921.
[138] O'Connor (NAI, BMH, WS 813, p. 44).
[139] Summaries of DMP reports, Oscar Traynor Papers (IMA, BMH, CD 120/4).
[140] RIC Co. Inspectors report Kilkenny July 1921 (NAUK, CO 904 / 115)

Approximately a dozen members of the IRA fired on the British lorries from the top of a quarry before withdrawing. The affair was over within a few minutes and neither side suffered any casualties. The IRA had laid several ambushes on the roads outside Callan in late June and early July in the hope of surprising a British patrol - consequently the nature and location of the attack suggests that it was a standard republican operation of the War of Independence.[141] There is no indication that it was specifically planned and carried out as a response to the announcement of the armistice.[142]

The following night, the 7th Battalion, Kilkenny Brigade attacked a British curfew patrol in Mullinahone, Co. Tipperary. The Brigade had been monitoring the routine of the mixed RIC and British Army curfew patrol for some time. The six-strong patrol departed the village's RIC barracks each night without varying its routine. The operation was planned before the agreement of the Truce; when the local IRA learned of this development they decided to carry out the attack because they did not consider the ceasefire would be anything other than a temporary measure. The members of the patrol were attacked with a grenade and revolver fire immediately after they departed the RIC barracks on the 10 July. Sergeant John William Reynolds, 1st Battalion Lincolnshire Regiment, was killed in the attack. Lieutenant Rowles was badly wounded, but escaped without being pursued by his attackers. The IRA withdrew from the village under fire from the British military, after retrieving Sergeant Reynold's revolver.[143] None of the other Battalions which formed the IRA's Kilkenny Brigade carried out attacks on the British forces following the announcement of the Truce. Nor were there any barrack attacks reported in the county.

Wicklow was the only county in the southeast where there were recorded IRA attacks on the British forces immediately before the ceasefire.[144] In addition to the shooting of Constable Cormer at Rathdrum, the British military outpost at Bray came under attack from the IRA.[145] The barracks suffered three separate sniping attacks after the announcement of the Truce, at 3:15am on 10 July and again 2:30am and 4:00am the

[141] Thomas Meagher, (NAI, BMH, WS 1672, p. 8).
[142] Edward Halley (NAI, BMH, WS 1642, pp 20 - 1).
[143] Jim Maher, *The flying column: West Kilkenny 1916 - 21*, (Kilkenny, 1988) pp 151 - 3.
[144] RIC Co. Inspectors report Wicklow July 1921 (NAUK, CO 904 / 115); Summary of outrages reported by the police July 1921 (NAUK CO 904 / 146).
[145] Summary of outrages reported by the police, July 1921 (NAUK, CO 904 / 146).

following morning. During some of these attacks, the barracks were fired upon from two separate locations. These attacks caused some damage to the exterior of the building but did not result in any British casualties.[146] Counties Carlow and Wexford were completely devoid of IRA ambushes, barracks attacks or other aggressive military activity against the British forces during the same period.[147] Consequently, the southeast of Ireland saw practically no aggressive IRA military activity or attacks on the British forces following the announcement of the Truce, and the empirical data available for this area does not support claims that the announcement of the Truce led to widespread bloodletting by the IRA.

Pre-Truce military activity by the IRA in Ulster

There was little reaction from the IRA's Northern Brigades to the announcement of the Truce in terms of attacks on the British forces, their patrols and barracks. Only two IRA ambushes of the British forces occurred in the province occurred following the announcement of the Truce. The first was an attempted IRA ambush of a USC patrol in Tyrone. At 11:15pm, a group of B Specials on curfew patrol discovered an IRA unit preparing an ambush at Dunteague near Omagh. The B Specials opened fire on the republicans killing IRA Volunteer James McSorely, a twenty-six year old ex-soldier.[148] The second ambush occurred in Belfast later the same night. A patrol of RIC and USC, travelling in a Crossley Tender lorry, left the Springfield Road RIC barracks to enforce the curfew on the Falls Road. At 11:30pm the IRA attacked the vehicle with revolver fire as it reached the Ross Street / Raglan Street area. One member of the patrol, Constable Thomas Conlon, was killed in the ensuing fire fight. Two other members of the patrol,

[146] Summary of outrages reported by the police July 1921 (NAUK CO 904 / 146).

[147] RIC County Inspectors reports for Carlow and Wexford July 1921 (NAUK, CO 904 / 115); Summary of outrages reported by the police July 1921 (NAUK CO 904/146). The only reference to an attack in Wexford following the Truce's announcement comes from Patrick Carton, an IRA veteran who claimed that he single-handedly attacked a six strong RIC Cycle patrol with grenade and revolver fire. Carton's claims are so fantastic as to be scarcely credible. Given the lack of corroborating evidence in the press or RIC reports it is likely that the incident was either extremely exaggerated or completely invented. Patrick Carton (NAI, BMH, WS 1160, p. 9)

[148] *Irish Times*, 11 July 1921; *Irish News*, 15 July 1921; *Ulster Herald*, 16 July 1921; PMCILCI on James McSorley (NAUK, WO 35 / 154). McSorely's death is incorrectly listed as: 'McNally, James. Co. Tyrone. Shot by police in Sperrin Mountains. 6/7/21. Buried Cranagh, Co. Tyrone.' *The last post: The details and stories of republican dead 1913 / 1975* (Dublin, 1976), p. 90

Constable Edward J. Horgan and Special Constable Dunne, were seriously wounded.[149] Aside from these two ambushes, the only other offensive action taken by the IRA's Northern Brigades following the advent of the Truce were two attacks on British garrisons. At 10:30pm on 10 July, Falcarragh RIC barracks was attacked with rifle fire. The RIC garrison reported that thirty men were involved in the attack and that they were pursued afterwards but affected an escape. The RIC suffered no casualties in the attack and the barrack building was unscathed except for a few broken windows.[150] On the morning of 11 July, the IRA attempted to burn the coastguard station at Greencastle, Co. Down. It is unclear if the station was occupied at the time. Regardless, the attempt was a complete failure and did not result in any material damage to the building.[151] Apart from these attacks on the British forces, the IRA's Northern Divisions seem to have been primarily concerned with enforcing the 'Belfast Boycott' of loyalist-owned businesses. The night train from Belfast to Derry was held up by members of the Carrickmore and Pomeroy IRA Companies at Carrickmore, Co. Tyrone on 10 July. The IRA seized a number of bicycles, a large quantity of tobacco and several mail bags before burning several railway carriages containing merchandise from Belfast.[152]

Table 6: Comparison of IRA military operations in June 1921 and between 8 to 11 1921 [153]

Number of IRA operations against the British forces in month of June 1921.			Nature of IRA operations against the British forces 8 - 11 July 1921.		
TYPE	**NUMBER**	**PERCENTAGE**	**TYPE**	**NUMBER**	**PERCENTAGE**
'Soft Targets'	45	25.7 %	'Soft Targets'	16	25.0 %
Barracks	49	28.0 %	Barracks	27	42.2 %
Ambushes	81	46.3 %	Ambushes	21	32.8 %
Total = 175 attacks		**Fatalities**: 58	**Total =** 64 attacks		**Fatalities**: 23

[149] RIC Inspectors report for the City of Belfast, July 1921 (NAUK, CO 904 /115); Abbott, *Police casualties*, p. 265.
[150] Summary of outrages reported by the police, July 1921 (NAUK CO 904 / 146).
[151] Summary of outrages reported by the police, July 1921 (NAUK, CO 904 / 146).
[152] *Irish Times*, 12 July 1921; William J. Kelly (NAI, BMH, WS 893), p. 25.
[153] Summary of outrages reported by the police, June - July 1921 (NAUK, CO 904 / 146); Abbott, *Police casualties*, pp 216 - 7; Trotter, *Constabulary heroes*, pp 23 -28; www.cairogang.com (accessed 17 August 2014).

Assessment

A comparison of the IRA's military campaign in the final days of the conflict with the whole of the previous month, does indicate an increase in the frequency of IRA attacks following the announcement of the Truce. This may have been coincidental to a degree as the IRA's military campaign and the number of attacks it made on the British forces had been steadily increasing for some time. However, the data shows that the IRA's campaign against the British forces immediately prior to the ceasefire did not involve a switch in IRA tactics in favour of attacks on 'soft targets' as previously claimed. Instead the evidence indicates that vast majority of republican military attacks continued to be directed against 'hard targets'. The most significant change in the nature of the IRA's campaign was a shift from away from ambushes, in favour of attacks on RIC barracks and British military outposts. This was probably due, in part, to the number of ambushes cancelled by local IRA leaders after the ceasefire was announced, and the directives issued by some IRA units calling for last minute actions against the British forces which primarily resulted in an upsurge in barrack attacks.

It is significant that, despite the previous emphasis on 'soft targets' in the historiography of the period, such attacks were the least common type of offensive military action employed by the IRA against the British forces in the weeks prior to the Truce. The statistical data indicates that in the period prior to the Truce of July 1921, IRA attacks on 'hard targets' were almost three times more common than attacks on unarmed off-duty British personnel.[154] This calls into question Hart's assertion that the Irish War of Independence was a 'dirty war' in which 'murder was more common than battle'.[155] Only 20% of the ambushes and 10% of barracks attacks carried out by the IRA in June 1921 resulted in British fatalities compared with 51% of the IRA attacks on soft targets the same month. However, the IRA campaign proceeded as normal with a continued focus on barracks, armed patrols and other 'hard targets'. This was despite the fact that these operations required far greater effort on the part of the IRA in terms of personnel, ammunition and explosives. They also entailed a far greater risk to the republican

[154] 'Hard targets': ie. armed and active members of the British forces guarding barracks or on patrol.
[155] Hart, *IRA & its enemies*, p. 18.

guerrilla's involved. Even if the above figures were adjusted, to include the six IRA attacks upon civilians suspected of spying along with attacks on off-duty British troops, attacks on 'soft targets' would still account for just 33.3% of IRA attacks in the period between the announcement of the ceasefire and its implementation.

Furthermore, if Hart's assertion that many IRA units attempted to kill as many people as possible before the Truce began was correct, the units concerned would be expected to have halted barracks attacks in the final days and hours of the conflict to concentrate on ambushes and attacks on soft targets which were far more likely to result in enemy fatalities. Yet the empirical data shows that the opposite occurred. There was a significant surge in barracks attacks which were far less likely to inflict fatalities on the British forces. Of the IRA ambushes that did take place following the announcement of the Truce a significant number, including the Castleisland Ambush in Kerry and the Cantor's Bridge Ambush in Limerick were based upon local intelligence and had been planned several weeks in advance. Of the planned ambushes that failed to materialise, a number were cancelled because local IRA leaders felt that offensive action was not justified given that an armistice had been announced. The biggest factor which affected the IRA's attempts to mount successful ambushes following the announcement of the Truce was the movement of British forces. In many cases, the British patrols that local IRA units hoped to ambush simply failed to travel through the IRA's selected ambush positions, having either abandoned their planned patrols or opting to travel by another route. In other cases, a decision on the part of the British forces to confine themselves to barracks as far as possible meant that the IRA was denied a target to attack.

The most significant change in the nature of the IRA's military campaign following the announcement of the Truce was the shift in favour of barracks attacks over other types of operations. The majority of IRA attacks following the ceasefire agreement were attacks upon British barracks and outposts. A seemingly unique aspect of the IRA activity in the final days of the conflict was the practice of launching numerous attacks on a single garrison in one night. Both Annacarty RIC barracks and the British Army outpost at Bray were each attacked twice in the final hours of the conflict. This phenomenon did not occur anywhere in Ireland the previous month, indeed IRA sniping attacks on British barracks occurring on consecutive nights were a rarity. However, we should not

automatically assume that these attacks were carried out by IRA volunteers who intended, or believed it possible, to capture and destroy these garrisons thereby achieving a definite military objective. During the initial stages of the war the IRA had enjoyed a great deal of success through the use of force and subterfuge in capturing and destroying RIC barracks. As the number of IRA attacks on British barracks increased, so to did the security measures employed by the British forces. Consequently, by the summer of 1921, it had become practically impossible for IRA units to penetrate the barracks defences employed by the British forces except through the deployment of powerful explosive mines. Tom Barry, the leader of the Cork No. 3 Brigade's Flying Column, stated that it was practically impossible for the IRA to capture a British held barracks without employing explosives:

> The mine was the only weapon the IRA had in its armoury to breach a barrack door or wall. Rifle and revolver bullets were about as useful as snowballs against these strong enemy posts. All the garrison had to do was to man the loopholed walls and windows in complete safety and shoot down any attackers who approached.[156]

The last successful IRA barrack attack of the war was carried out months before the Truce in March 1921 when the Cork No. 3 Brigade Flying Column captured Roscarberry RIC barracks. This building was captured only after its walls were breached using an improvised mine. Even after the barracks walls had been breached the RIC garrison fought on for several hours until their situation became completely hopeless.[157] Following this operation, the Cork No. 3 Brigade Flying Column abandoned similar attacks because of a lack of effective mines and the chronic shortage of the explosives necessary to develop them. Yet, the IRA in West Cork continued to throw 'snowballs'. The IRA's Cork No. 3 Brigade launched regular attacks on RIC barracks which continued right up until the Truce in spite of a critical shortage of ammunition. According to Barry, (who complained of the lack of ammunition in his memoir): 'Every enemy post was sniped several times, including Innishannon which had five sniping attacks.'[158] The fifth and final attack upon Innishannon barracks happened the night before the Truce.[159]

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[156] Barry, *Guerrilla days*, pp 75 - 6.
[157] Abbott, *Police casualties*, pp 216 - 7.
[158] Tom Barry, *The reality of the Anglo-Irish War 1920 - 21 in West Cork: refutations, corrections and comments on Liam Deasy's Towards Ireland free* (Tralee, 1974), p. 49).
[159] Frank Neville, (NAI, BMH, WS 443, pp 15 - 6).

Local IRA leaders like Barry knew by the summer of 1921 that these attacks would not force the barracks garrisons to surrender, or result in the capture and destruction of the outpost, then why did their units continue to carry out these sniping operations? The answer is that these attacks were an effective means of maintaining IRA morale, were an inconvenience to the British forces and had a significant propaganda benefit.

By the summer of 1921, sniping attacks on British barracks had become an intrinsic part of the IRA's military campaign throughout Ireland. The RIC recorded forty-nine sniping attacks on British barracks in June of 1921. By that time republican sniping operations on British outposts were so commonplace that some IRA units in Cork sniped RIC barracks in their area at least twice weekly. [160] Members of the Tipperary No. 1 Brigade of the IRA sniped Portroe RIC barracks so often by night and day that they lost count of the number of times it was attacked.[161] Often British barracks, and in particular RIC barracks, were attacked because they were recognised as an important local symbol of the British Crown's authority. The *Morning Post* stated 'these little barrack forts … are the block houses of Imperial rule in Ireland.'[162] On a more pragmatic level, in many cases the IRA carried out sniping operations in response to developments in British tactics and improvements in British security measures which left them no other option. In particular, the abandonment of smaller rural barracks and the strengthening of British convoys, by tripling or even quadrupling the numbers of troops and vehicles involved, had made IRA ambushes of British convoys and curfew patrols impossible.

In Tipperary the IRA sniped British barracks because no other feasible targets were available. Jim Leahy of the Tipperary No. 2 Brigade complained that by 1921: 'There were no big engagements in Mid Tipp, but we were always hammering at their posts … The last couple of months only convoys moved through our area, and as they were strong we weren't in a position to attack them.'[163] Ned Jordan, another IRA volunteer in the county, recalled that a state of military stalemate was beginning to set in to south Tipperary by the summer of 1921, that the British forces were reluctant to move outside of urban centres and risk being in harms way and frustrated by this state of

[160] Michael O'Donnell, (NAI, BMH, WS 1145, p. 9).
[161] Martin Grace, (NAI, BMH, WS 1463, p. 6).
[162] Townshend, *The republic*, p. 8.
[163] Jim Leahy, (EOMN, UCDA, P17b / 100).

affairs, his comrades in the IRA were drawn to the only available targets, RIC barracks and British military outposts.

> In the 8th Battalion the enemy were so quiet that it was hard to keep our men from going down to Carrick beg … The military and the RIC didn't want to fight. If they could hold their posts that was all they wanted to do. Shots (sniping) from Carrick beg [were fired from] time to time, but we never could learn what was the result.[164]

These attacks rarely resulted in British casualties and the IRA volunteers taking part were aware of this but the sniping operations continued for other reasons.

One rationale behind sniping attacks was the harassment of the British forces and the belief that this would have a detrimental effect on enemy morale. IRA Veteran James Keating from Tipperary stated that his unit organised sniping attacks 'to worry the enemy forces in the area.'[165] Likewise, Edward Horgan, an IRA veteran from Cork, stated that the purpose of these attacks was to 'obstruct and confuse' the British forces.[166] Another IRA veteran recalled that the effect of the constant sniping was to keep 'the enemy in a constant state of nerves' and that 'the garrisons in these posts were prepared to open fire on hearing the least sound.'[167] These attacks on British barracks were usually met with an immediate response from the besieged garrison which returned its attackers' fire and which immediately sent for reinforcements often by firing signal flares. Consequently, sniping operations were employed by the IRA as a ploy to lure British troops into ambushes, or as a feint to draw British forces away from the scene of a larger and more sustained operation. Sniping attacks required few personnel, and little effort, on the part of IRA units and became so commonplace that they lost the air of menace and danger associated with a military attack to the extent that they became on occasion farcical and frivolous in nature. On one such occasion the RIC garrison at Ballinalee barracks in Longford responded to an IRA attack by playing a piano and singing 'God Save the King'.[168] On another occasion, Ned Jordan and his IRA comrades attacked Glenbower RIC barracks due to boredom as they were eager: 'more to see the Verey Lights [flares] they [the RIC] put up than for anything else'; the local IRA volunteers had attacked the

[164] Ned Jordan, (UCDA, EOMN, P17b / 103).
[165] James Keating (NAI, BMH, WS 1528, p. 9).
[166] Edward Horgan, (NAI, BMH, WS 1644, p. 14).
[167] Michael O'Donnell, (NAI, BMH, WS 1145, p. 9).
[168] Abbott, *Police casualties*, p. 164.

barracks in the hope of triggering an impromptu fireworks display, for their own entertainment.[169]

Given the frequent nature of IRA sniping attacks on British barracks, it is not surprising that a large number of them occurred the weekend before the Truce. Only two of the planned IRA attacks on British barracks following the announcement of the Truce differed significantly from the hundreds of other IRA sniping attacks occurring at that stage of the conflict. The IRA attack on Kenmare RIC barracks planned for the night of 10 July, and which was due to employ a powerful improvised explosive mine and involve an attempt to storm the barracks could potentially have resulted in the capture of the barracks and its destruction. The attack was cancelled at the last moment. It is worth noting that this raid on the barracks had been planned prior to the public announcement of the Truce and not as a consequence of it.[170] The sniping attack on Listowel barracks also differs because the local IRA appear to have used the operation as a ruse to attempt to draw out the RIC garrison and cause it to trigger a 'booby trap' mine affixed to the barracks gate.[171] A feint attack on Rathmore barracks was also carried out with the intention of drawing British forces away from the site of a genuine IRA attack in Killorglin. Both operations had been planned in advance of the Truce.[172] Whilst it is likely that a number of the twenty-eight IRA attacks on RIC barracks had been planned as routine operations prior to the announcement of the Truce, it is also clear from the testimony of IRA veterans that many of the barracks attacks launched after the Truce were intended as 'parting shots', carried out more with the aim sending a final defiant message to the British forces in advance of the Truce rather than an attempt to achieve a military objective.

IRA veteran Bryan Doherty, commenting on the attack on an RIC barracks in Ballinalee Co. Longford the night before the Truce opined: 'I thought [the barracks attack] was more of a defiant action than a serious attempt to take the fortress.'[173] Likewise, Andrew Kennedy stated that on the morning the Truce took effect: 'a lot of shooting at enemy posts took place, it was not a serious affair, as a lot of the shooting was

[169] Ned Jordan, (UCDA, EOMN, P17b / 103).
[170] McEllistrim (NAI, BMH, WS 882, p. 33); O'Connor, (UCDA, EOMN, P17b / 132).
[171] Summary of outrages reported by the police, July 1921 (NAUK, CO 904 / 146); Gaughan, *Listowel and its vicinity*, p. 394.
[172] Mc Ellistrim (NAI, BMH, WS 882, p. 33); O'Connor, (UCDA, EOMN, P17b / 132).
[173] Bryan Doherty (NAI, BMH, WS 1292, p. 14).

done at long range and the enemy remained strictly indoors.'[174] According to Kennedy, the Tipperary No. 3 Brigade had been ordered to carry out these attacks, not as part of a concerted military effort to capture a series of barracks, but to 'indicate the presence of the IRA up to 12 noon … when the Truce would come into operation.'[175] Perhaps the most unusual aspect of the IRA barracks attacks to occur following the announcement of the Truce, and the strongest indication that they were not carried out in pursuit of a military goal, were the multiple IRA attacks upon a barracks in a single night. Whilst it was not unusual for IRA units to snipe British barracks on two or three occasions in one week, more frequent attacks can only be described as excessive. Ardmore coastguard station was attacked on two consecutive nights by the IRA and the British Army outpost at Bray was sniped three times over two consecutive nights. Annacarty RIC barracks in Tipperary was fired upon twice the night before the Truce.

These actions were designed to effect an impression upon the Irish public consciousness and the British forces the sense that the IRA had not suffered a military defeat and was still militarily active and capable of taking offensive action. The order issued by the 1st Eastern Division, which called for attacks on the British forces and in particular attacks upon the RIC specifically, stated that these attacks mere motivated by the belief that a show of IRA military force would bolster Irish Republican negotiators in any political talks that might follow the impending truce. From the IRA's perspective, the policy of pursuing attacks on armed, active members of the British forces was far more costly than the practice of targeting so-called 'soft targets', ie off-duty members of the British forces and civilians suspected of spying for the British forces. The IRA attacks upon off-duty members of the British forces following the announcement of the Truce did not result in the death or capture of any IRA volunteers. Likewise, the IRA actions against civilians suspected of spying by the IRA. These operations against 'soft targets' involved a very low risk for the IRA volunteers involved. By contrast, the IRA attacks on the British forces carried out in the same period resulted in the deaths of three IRA volunteers, with a number of others being wounded and captured by the British forces. It is significant that, given the risk factors involved, the majority of IRA operations

[174] Kennedy (NAI, BMH, WS 963, p. 30).
[175] Kennedy (NAI, BMH, WS 963, p. 30).

nationally in the wake of the announcement of the Truce continued to be against 'hard targets'.

The rush by combatants to take part in last minute attacks following the announcement of a ceasefire was not restricted to the Irish War of Independence. The announcement of the Armistice which ended the First World War resulted in similar actions by combatants who were eager to continue fighting until the moment the ceasefire took effect. The US Army's 79th Division was due to make an offensive attack on the German positions that morning; the announcement of the ceasefire made these plans redundant. Despite this, the division's commanding officer, Major General Joseph E. Kuhun, ordered: 'Hostilities will cease … at 11 hours today … Until that hour, the operations previously ordered will be pressed with vigour.' Likewise, his subordinate Brigadier General William Nicholson informed his troops that 'These orders will be strictly complied with, and there will be absolutely no let up in the carrying out of the original plans until 11 o'clock.' It appears that the rank and file of the US Army followed these instructions to the letter. Although they knew of the 11:00am ceasefire, US troops in the 79th Division continued to advance on their enemy's positions, as late as 10:59am whilst their German counterparts were making frantic efforts to signal to them that the war was about to end.[176]

So many members of the US Army's field artillery were intent on fighting in the dying seconds of the war that dozens of ropes were tied to the lanyards of field guns to enable numerous veterans to boast that they had fired the 'final' shot of the war. Many of these soldiers gleefully posed for photographers whilst firing their field guns. Of course these soldiers would never knew what casualties, if any, their 'parting shots' had inflicted but those under fire did. Anton Lang, a German soldier with the 2nd Bavarian Artillery Regiment, saw four of his comrades killed by an artillery shell fired by allied troops at the exact moment the Armistice came into effect:

> The battle raged until exactly 11 am and all of a sudden a "big freeze" set in. … The sudden stillness was interrupted by a single heavy shell which exploded … among a platoon of infantry and killed four and wounded about a dozen. … this made us sad and mad. Some joker on the other side probably wanted to fire the "last" shot. [177]

[176] Persico, *11th hour*, pp 133 - 6.
[177] Max Arthur, *The road home: the aftermath of the Great War told by the men and women who survived it* (London, 2010), p. 5.

The collection of the Imperial War Museum in London includes a 'sound trace' recorded by a British artillery unit's sound ranging equipment on 11 November 1918 which shows that artillery units on the Western Front kept firing at their enemy until the very last second before the armistice began.[178] The legacy of such 'eleventh hour' fighting zeal was that 10,944 casualties were recorded on the Western Front alone on 11 November 1918.[179] This included 2,738 fatalities, a figure far in excess of the average daily fatality rate of 2,088 troops killed.[180]

Béaslaí dismissed the attacks on British troops which took place following the announcement of the Truce as 'belated exhibitions of prowess, with no military objective'. Béaslaí's criticisim of the IRA's military campaign seems justified in this instance as the majority of IRA attacks in the final days of the conflict appear to have been launched with little chance of achieving a military objective, or affecting the wider military situation, and took place in the knowledge that a Truce would shortly come in to effect. However Hart's claim that the IRA's military campaign during the conflict primarily consisted of attacks upon 'soft targets' and that 'Murder was more common than battle' is not justified.[181] The available evidence suggests that, in the final weeks of the war, the IRA's military campaign was primarily directed against armed and active members of the British forces, their patrols, convoys and barracks rather than 'soft targets'. Nor is there evidence to support the claim that there was an effort by several IRA units to deliberately inflict a large number of fatalities before the armistice took effect.[182] To date the historiography of the conflict has centred exclusively upon criticism of the IRA's military campaign and the fatalities it inflicted following the announcement of the Truce. By comparison the actions of the British forces in the same period, which resulted in a significant number of IRA and civilians fatalities, has been ignored. In an effort to redress this imbalance these fatalities will be examined in detail in the next chapter.

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[178] Imperial War Museum, Photographic Archive, (Q 47886).
[179] Persico, *11th hour*, p. 378.
[180] Persico, *11th hour*, p. 308.
[181] Hart, *The IRA & its enemies*, p. 18.
[182] Hart, *Mick*, p. 277.

Chapter Six

Fatalities inflicted by the British forces following the announcement of the Truce

(I) Introduction

As outlined in Chapter One, the established historical narrative of the Truce is that the IRA exploited the announcement of the ceasefire as an opportunity to launch a number of reckless and vindictive last minute attacks which resulted in the deaths of loyalist civilians, off-duty members of the British forces and other 'soft targets'. Historical accounts written in this vein only mention British forces personnel as victims of unjustifiable and irrational IRA violence.[1] The offensive actions of the British forces, including irrational or vengeful last minute attacks and the resulting fatalities, are conspicuously absent from this narrative. This historiography is strikingly similar to the early accounts of the conflict written by senior British military officers in the 1920s. The official history of the British Army's 6th Division, written in 1922, juxtaposed the IRA's allegedly 'murderous mentality' with the British military's supposed chivalry and forbearance: 'All pending operations [by British forces] were cancelled immediately, and a state of passive defence was ordered until the actual hour at which the Truce commenced.'[2] The author of the British 5th Division's history described the final days of the conflict in near identical terms: 'All military and police activities in the form of drives, raids, and searches were to cease as soon as orders to this effect could be received by the troops, ***without waiting for the official hour on 11 July*** … but attacks by the IRA on the Crown forces and others took place right to the hour of the "suspension of activities".' [3] In his memoirs Macready reinforced the idea that the British forces immediately halted offensive operations and adopting 'a state of passive defence', and

[1] For an extreme example of this see Stanley, *I met Murder on the way*. Stanley states that the Irish War of Independence was a 'Police War' in which the British military 'provided security only' and never took offensive action against the IRA. Ibid, p. 34. Even some historians with a republican bias have been quick, perhaps rashly so, to absolve the British Army of the worst excesses of the conflict: 'Generally the army did not get involved in day to day policing and they usually refrained from reprisals and killing in revenge for IRA attacks.' Michael McNamara, *Unveiling of a memorial to commemorate the Glenwood Ambush of 20 January 1921: Commemorative Booklet* (Sixmilebridge, 2011), p. 14.

[2] 'The Irish Rebellion in the 6th Divisional area' in The Irish Sword Spring 2010 Vol. XXVII No. 107 p. 130

[3] Sheehan, *Hearts & mines*, p. 103. (Emphasis in the original.)

abstained as far as possible from taking offensive action against the IRA. Macready lamented that this British gesture of goodwill was abused by the IRA who 'continued their campaign of outrage and assassination'.[4] These accounts of the War of Independence were written specifically for a British audience and were largely hagiographical in their treatment of the British forces and heavily influenced by the anti-republican propaganda employed during the conflict.

Most of the recent histories which have examined the final actions of the conflict have replicated the pattern, set by the earlier British accounts and Beaslaí's commentary. These histories criticise IRA actions which occurred after the announcement of the Truce whilst omitting any references to the activities of the British forces. A large number of historians including Phillips, Townshend, Curran, Coogan, Twohig, Hart, O'Sullivan, Murphy, McKenna, Dorney and Sheehan have analysed in detail the IRA killings which occurred after the announcement of the Truce, but all failed to mention the numerous British killings which occurred at the same time.[5] Likewise, Myers, Harris and other commentators repeated the same omission in their work.[6] Valiulis's biography of Richard Mulcahy is unusual in that it is one of the only histories to acknowledge that the British forces attempted to assassinate IRA volunteers after the ceasefire was announced. However Valiulis failed to explore any of the specific cases where the British forces were responsible for the reprisal killings of civilians and IRA volunteers immediately prior to the Truce. Instead, her work, like that of the majority of her peers, concentrated on the final IRA actions of the war.

Not a single person killed by the British forces after the Truce was announced is mentioned in any of the above works which examined the conflict's final fatalities.[7] This

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[4] Macready, *Annals*, pp 577 - 8.

[5] The Irish rebellion in the 6th divisional area', p.130; Sheehan, *Hearts & mines*, pp 104 -105.; Phillips, *Revolution in Ireland*, p. 216. Macready, *Annals*, pp 577 - 8; Beaslai, *Collins and the making of a new Ireland*, p. 248; Townshend, *The British campaign*, p. 198; Curran, *Birth of the Irish Free State*, p. 61; Coogan, *Michael Collins*, pp 216 - 7.; Twohig, *Green tears for Hecuba*, pp 335 - 6.; Hart, *IRA at war*, pp 71 -2, 75; Hart, *Mick*, p. 277.; O'Sullivan, Donal J., *The Irish Constabularies 1822 - 1922: a century of policing in Ireland* (Kerry, 1999), p. 361; Murphy, *Year of disappearances*, pp 16, 300 - 6.; McKenna, *Guerrilla warfare*, pp 218, 236, John Dorney, '11 July 11 1921: The Truce' on www.theirishstory.com/2011/07/11/today-in-irish-history (accessed 17 August 2014); Sheehan, *Hard local war*, p. 160.

[6] *Irish Independent*, 22 June 2011; *Sunday Independent*, 31 March 2013.

[7] Only one killing attributed to the British forces has been afforded specific mention in histories of the period which discuss the immediate pre-truce fatalities. Robert Kee attributed the killing of a prominent public figure in Cork the night before the Truce to the British forces: 'The last Black and Tan murder seems to have been that of a Cork JP, a supporter of Plunket's Dominion Home Rule, who had made an affidavit on behalf of IRA prisoners in Cork Goal. He was taken from his house and shot dead 'by armed men' on the night of 10 July.' Likewise, Russell Rees also mentions 'a prominent local figure in Cork' supposedly killed by the Black and Tans on the eve of the Truce. There can be little doubt that both of these references relate to the killing of Major G. B. O'Conor. However, it is beyond doubt that O'Conor was killed by the IRA. The origin of the erroneous claim that O'Conor was killed by the British forces

gross imbalance in the historical record has been influential in creating a biased historical narrative, which is highly critical of republicanism and gives the impression that, in the final days of the conflict, the IRA engaged in reckless actions that resulted in multiple fatalities, whilst their British counterparts abstained from violence, adopting a completely passive stance awaiting the beginning of the ceasefire. Following the announcement of the Truce, the IRA was responsible for the deaths of at least twenty-five people. In the same period the British forces were responsible for at least nineteen fatalities: Four IRA volunteers were killed in combat with the British forces. Another ten people (7 civilians, 2 IRA volunteers and 1 member of Cumann na mBan) were assassinated, executed or accidentally killed by the British forces in the south of Ireland. This chapter will examine the circumstances of, and possible motivations for, these killings. (A further five civilians were shot dead by members of the British forces during disturbances in Belfast. These deaths will be dealt with separately in Chapter Seven.)

(II) The reaction of rank and file British troops towards the Truce

An order giving British Army units formal notice of the Truce arrangements was issued by the British military's GHQ (Ireland) a few hours after the ceasefire was announced on the evening of 8 July. This order informed British troops that, as a result of ongoing negotiations between the British Government and the leadership of Sinn Féin; 'an agreement had been made to suspend activities at 12 noon on Monday, 11 July'. The historian of the British Army's 5th Division wrote that this order instructed each British Army unit, upon receipt, to immediately cease all offensive military activities:

> All military and police activities in the form of drives, raids, and searches were to cease as soon as orders to that effect could be received by the troops, without waiting for the official hour on 11 July; military action was to be restricted to giving assistance to the police in aid to the Civil Power; all pre-arranged moves of units and detachments in Ireland were to

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apparently comes from a newspaper report which appeared in the *Irish News* a few days after the Truce. One of that newpaper's correspondents, who wrote under the pen-name 'Belfast Commercial', implicated the British forces in the killing. The author was an unidentified Belfast businessman who had spent several years in Cork and consequently claimed to be au fait with O'Conor's politics, and his standing with Cork's militant republicans. 'Belfast Commercial' speculated that O'Conor was killed because: 'He was outspoken, perhaps too outspoken, in his condemnation of the [British] Government's methods, and was continually railing against Reprisals.' Robert Kee, *The green flag Volume III: ourselves alone* (London, 1972), p. 143; Russell Rees, *Ireland 1905 - 1925: Volume I - text & historiography* (Newtownards, 1998), p.270; *Irish News*, 13 July 1921. (Emphasis in the original).

be carried out.[8]

As outlined in Chapter Two, there was a delay in some British units receiving the order but all sections of the British military in Ireland appear to have received this order by the evening of 9 July, twenty-four hours after it was first issued. On the same date, proclamations suspending curfew impositions were issued by Colonel Campbell, Commander of the 15th Infantry Brigade.[9] As outlined below, several sections of the British forces did not immediately suspend offensive actions against the IRA upon being informed of the impending Truce. This may be due in part to hostility from some members of the British forces towards the agreement. It is clear from veteran testimony quoted in Chapter Three that combatants on both sides reacted to the announcement of the Truce with a mixture of shock and surprise. A number of republicans regarded the ceasefire as a positive development which they interpreted as a victory for the republican military campaign. Tom Maguire, an IRA leader from Mayo, stated that although the announcement of the Truce caught him completely by surprise, he felt it signalled a republican victory; 'the English are after this, so we must have won'.[10] Maguire was not alone in reaching this conclusion. Many republicans felt that the agreement of a formal truce acknowledged the IRA's status as a legitimate army by opponents who had previously dismissed them as a 'murder gang'. If republicans felt that they had gained status from the Truce, many members of the British forces equally felt they had lost something in return. Undoubtedly many British military officers were enraged at seeing the Truce referred to in their own intelligence sheet, the *Weekly Summary,* as an agreement between the 'British Army' and the 'Irish Army'.[11]

The official history of the British Army's 5th Division stated that British Army officers felt humiliated and disappointed 'at the necessity for treating on equal terms with those whom they regarded as callous and treacherous murderers, among whose victims were reckoned many of their friends.'[12] Frederick Clarke who served as a Lieutenant with the Essex Regiment in Cork felt 'angry' and 'ashamed' at the conclusion of the conflict,

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[8] Sheehan, *Hearts & mines*, pp 104 - 5.
[9] *Irish News*, 13 July 1921.
[10] Ruairí Ó Brádaigh, *Dílseacht: The story of Comdt. General Tom Maguire and the Second Dáil* (Dublin, 1997), p. 10.
[11] *Weekly Summary*, 11 July 1921.
[12] Sheehan, *Hearts & mines*, pp 104 - 5.

because he felt that: 'The British politicians had arranged an armistice just when we could have quelled the rebellion.'[13] Captain R. D. Jeune dismissed the Truce as Lloyd George 'yielding to threats from the IRA' at the very moment when a British victory was assured.[14] The sense that the British Government betrayed their troops in Ireland by agreeing to a ceasefire also prevailed amongst the Black and Tans stationed in Galway. One of whom later wrote:

> We could not believe it, we knew only two well that the "Shinner" resistance was almost finished, we had broken the back of armed rebellion, … Of course we argued this talk of truce is all moonshine, not even Lloyd George would be fool enough to stop when victory is within his grasp.[15]

The general dissatisfaction amongst the RIC was also mentioned by the history of the British Army's 5th Division: 'Amongst the RIC there was much uncertainty as to their future and much suspicion that somehow or other they would be 'let down'. [16] Eugene Bratton encountered similar dismay amongst his fellow RIC officers: 'When the Truce came, the officers of the RIC were almost crying. They realised that their good days were over, and they had had good days before the troubles began. They were kings in their own areas.'[17] Contemporary reports by senior RIC officers also indicate that the men under their command were upset by the Truce. The RIC county inspector for the Galway West Riding stated that the men under his command 'have considerable apprehensions lest they be let down in the negotiations for a settlement.'[18] His counterpart in Westmeath reported: 'The manner in which it came was also trying on them [RIC Constables]'.[19] The RIC inspector in charge of Tipperary North claimed that the sudden announcement of the Truce put a serious strain on RIC discipline:

> The Force of this Riding did not receive the truce announcement and its terms with acclamation. It was only natural that those who had suffered so much during the past twelve months at the hands of the rebels, many of whom were well known murderers, but could not be brought to justice for lack of evidence, felt it difficult to restrain themselves when orders to

[13] Sheehan, *Hearts & mines*, p. 39, 42.
[14] Sheehan, *Hearts & mines*, pp 90 - 1.
[15] Duff, *Sword for hire*, p. 84.
[16] Sheehan, *Hearts & mines*, p. 104.
[17] Eugene Bratton, (NAI, BMH, WS 467, p. 11).
[18] RIC County Inspector's Report for Galway WR, July 1921, (NAUK, CO 904 / 116).
[19] RIC County Inspector's Report for Westmeath, July 1921, (NAUK, CO 904 / 116).

carry out the "truce" were received.[20]

Whilst the RIC in Tipperary North managed to restrain themselves, members of the British forces in other districts showed considerably less restraint.

Offensive British military activities which occurred after the announcement of the Truce

The British authorities apparently responded to the announcement of the Truce by reprieving a number of republican prisoners who had been sentenced to death and were due be executed on the morning of Saturday 9 July. John Lehihan, an IRA volunteer from Listowel, Kerry had been court-martialed under Regulation 67 of the Restoration of Order in Ireland Act for the killing of RIC District Inspector Sullivan. Subsequently, Lenihan and his co-accused, Edward Carmody, Thomas Deveraux and Daniel O'Carroll were all sentenced to death for the offence. All four were due to be executed at 8:00am on the morning of 9 July alongside four other republican prisoners. According to Lenihan the final arrangements for the executions were so far advanced at the time the Truce was agreed, that the graves of the condemned men had been dug. The executions were cancelled following the announcement of the Truce.[21]

In contrast to the senior British military officers who cancelled the Cork executions, some rank and file members of the British forces in Ireland adopted a less conciliatory attitude and responded to the announcement of the Truce by engaging in reprisals. On the night of 9 July a group of British soldiers was responsible for an outburst of violence in Cork city: 'There was a considerable amount of firing in different parts of the city during curfew hours on Saturday night particularly between ten and eleven o clock. Shots were fired in Blackpool about 10:15pm it is stated, at a pressman who failed to halt and was subsequently arrested. Military pickets were in the area at the time.'[22] The shop fronts of Grace's grocery store and the post office on Thomas Davis Street were damaged by gunfire. Augustine Harty, a fourteen year old boy, was shot in the face near his home in Grattan Street by British soldiers. He was rushed to the nearby

[20] RIC County Inspector's Report for Tipperary, July 1921, (NAUK, CO 904 / 116).
[21] John Lenihan (NAI, BMH, WS 968, p. 5).
[22] *Cork Examiner*, 11 July 1921.

Mercy Hospital in a critical condition, but survived. Shooting was also reported on the northern side of the city, and in the western suburbs.[23] The same night, soldiers from the Devonshire Regiment brawled with local ex-servicemen on Michael Street, Waterford and a British military patrol in full battle kit arrived to clear the thoroughfare.[24]

Although the British Army's order to immediately halt all offensive activities appears to have resulted in a significant fall off in their activities, it did not result in a complete cessation of activity by the British forces prior to the Truce. Large-scale 'round-ups' and searches for IRA personnel, arms dumps and safe houses, involving hundreds of British soldiers, cavalry units and Royal Navy vessels continued apace in Mayo and Waterford in the final days and hours of the conflict.[25] At Durless near Ballygawley, Tyrone the homes of two local republicans, Patrick McVicker and Francis Donnelly, were destroyed by fire; apparently this act was carried out in reprisal for previous attacks on loyalist properties in the area.[26] In Kildare, the British forces raided the home of Mr Stephen Barry Roche at Monasterevan arresting his two sons, who were both ex-servicemen. Apparently the raid was launched on the pretext that the Roche brothers were suspected of involvement in IRA activities. Roche was so incensed by this action that he immediately proffered his resignation as a British excise officer.[27] At Ballon, Kilkenny British soldiers raided a property belonging to the Nolans, a prominent republican family. Nothing of military significance was found in the search, but members of the Nolan family later accused the British military of having stolen a sum of money from the house.[28] The activities of the British forces in the wake of the announcement of the Truce were not solely limited to raids and searches, a number of republicans and civilians were killed by the British forces in the final days and hours of the conflict.

[23] *Cork Examiner*, 11 July 1921; *Kerry People*, July 16 1921.
[24] Michael Ryan, (NAI, BMH, WS 1709, p. 30).
[25] Martin Conneely (NAI, BMH, WS 1611, pp 22 - 5); Tom Kelleher (NAI, BMH, WS 758, p. 18).
[26] RIC County Inspector's Report, Tyrone July 1921 (NAUK, CO 904 / 115).
[27] *Cork Examiner*, 11 July 1921.
[28] Nan Nolan, (NAI, BMH, WS 1441, p. 11).

'The Kilgobnet Mine Disaster'

Probably the most significant action by the British forces to occur following the announcement of the Truce was the detonation on 9 July of a booby trap mine set by the British military at Kilgobnet, near Dungarvan, Waterford. This incident, known locally as the 'Kilgobnet Mine Disaster', resulted in six fatalities. The majority of those killed appear to have been civilians.[29] The incident occurred whilst the IRA's West Waterford Brigade was preparing to ambush a unit from the Royal East Kent Regiment which was expected to travel through the Cappagh district by bicycle. As part of the preparations for this ambush, the commander of the local IRA flying column, George Lennon, sought to have all the roads in the area 'trenched' to make them impassable to the British force's motor vehicles. One trench, dug across the Chapel Road in Kilgobnet, had recently been partially re-filled to allow a funeral cortege to pass. When Lennon was informed of this, he ordered members of the local IRA unit to re-open the trench.[30] Some time during the night of 8 July, or the morning of 9 July, a handful of local IRA volunteers from H Company 1st Battalion of the IRA's Waterford No. 2 Brigade began work to re-open the trench.[31] The IRA were assisted in this task by a large group of local civilians.[32] (It is unclear whether these civiluians were republican sympathizers who willingly assisted the IRA or were unwilling participants who had been forced to cooperate.) The attempt to reopen the trench set off a booby trap which had been set by members of the Royal East Kent Regiment. A landmine planted in the trench by the British soldiers exploded instantly killing two members of the work party. A further twelve men were seriously wounded by the blast, four of whom subsequently died.[33] Those killed were Thomas Burke of Inchidrisla, Thomas Cahill of Knockanee, brothers James Dunford and William Dunford of Knockanee, Richard Lynch of Kilgobnet and Sean Quinn from Ballymacmague.[34]

The RIC county inspector's report states that those killed were all 'rebels' and

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[29] Mooney, *Cry of the curlew*, p 313.
[30] Sean and Síle Murphy, *The Comeraghs: gunfire and Civil War. The story of the Deise Brigade IRA 1914 - 1924* (Waterford, 2003), pp 109 - 10.
[31] IRA Report to GHQ Waterford No. 2 Brigade July 1921, Richard Mulcahy Papers (UCDA, P7/A/23).
[32] Mooney, *Cry of the curlew*, p 313.
[33] PMCILCI on Quin, Burke, Lynch (NAUK, WO 35 / 158); *Irish Times*,11 July 1921; Murphy, *Gunfire and Civil War*, pp 109 - 10.
[34] Murphy, *Gunfire and Civil War*, pp 109 - 10.

claimed that they 'were engaged in laying a land-mine' when the explosion occurred.' His report concluded; 'It is doubted if the survivors concur in this.'[35] Accounts of the incident written by British military historians have taken a different approach by admitting that the British military were responsible for the blast, but claiming that all those killed were members of the IRA, thus portraying the event as a successful military operation. The official history of the 6th Division of the British Army recorded the incident as follows: '8th [July 1921] Dungarvan. Rebels re-taking road trench blown up; 8 killed, 12 wounded.'[36] The history of the Royal East Kent Regiment, which planted the mine, also states that those killed were members of the IRA: 'In and around Dungarvan the Buffs had several brushes with the rebels and, in the course of a series of patrols, effected a number of important arrests, whilst one road block was converted into a booby trap, causing many Sinn Fein casualties.'[37] However, contrary to the British claims, it appears that almost all of the men killed in this incident were civilians. Of the six fatalities named on the monument erected at the site of the explosion, only one, Seán Quinn, is recorded as 'A.P.É.' the abbreviation of Arm Phoblachtach na h-Éireann - the Irish language translation of the title 'Irish Republican Army'. The inscription reveals that Quinn was the only IRA volunteer killed in the incident. Mooney's work on the conflict in Waterford also identifies Quinn as the only republican volunteer amongst the fatalities.[38] The British accounts of this incident reflect a trend in British military historiography which sought to minimise the 'collateral damage' caused by their operations by reclassifying the resulting civilian fatalities as IRA volunteers.[39]

In the final months of the conflict, the use of trap-mines became increasingly commonplace. According to Hart, the tactic was developed in a haphazard fashion following experimentation by enterprising British military officers attached to a number of different regiments.[40] The use of this tactic by the British forces resulted in the deaths

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[35] RIC County Inspector's Report for Waterford, July 1921, (NAUK, CO 904 / 116).

[36] 'The Irish rebellion in the 6th divisional area', p. 151.

[37] Colonel C. R. B. Knight O.B.E., *Historical record of the Buffs 1919 - 1948* (London, 1951), p. 3.

[38] Mooney, *Cry of the curlew*, p 313.

[39] For example, Cecil and Aidan O'Donovan, two unarmed teenage brothers were shot dead by British forces at Parteen, County Clare in February 1921. The British officers who conducted the military inquiry into their deaths accepted the brothers were innocent civilians. Nonetheless the RIC report on their killing states that they had been armed with a grenade and two revolvers. The inquest into their deaths made no mention of any such weaponry. Furthermore, the official British Army history compiled a short time later describes the O'Donovan brothers as active IRA volunteers. 'The Irish rebellion in the 6th divisional area', p. 143; Toomey, *The Blackwater tragedy 20th February 1921: Commemorative booklet* (Meelick, 2013).

[40] Hart, *IRA at war*, p. 94.

of five civilians and one IRA volunteer in the 'Kilgobnet Mine Disaster'. By the summer of 1921, republican attempts to disrupt British transport and communications led to a campaign of sabotage of roads and bridges by the IRA. The British forces initially responded to this campaign by forcing civilians to repair the damage done to these routes. Later they reacted to these measures by deploying explosive booby-traps in trenches dug by the IRA which were then wholly, or partially, refilled, a tactic which often had fatal, or near-fatal results. On 21 May 1921, IRA Volunteer Patrick O'Brien from Coolacappagh, Limerick was killed whilst working to re-open a trench which had been back-filled and boobytrapped by the British forces.[41] In another incident similar to the 'Kilgobnet Mine Disaster', four IRA volunteers were wounded whilst re-opening a trench on the road from Roscommon to Lanesboro. The trench had been re-filled by members of the British forces who concealed a booby-trap device utilising a hand grenade, amidst the earth and rubble they had used to refill the trench. On that occasion, the British mine did not cause any fatalities.[42]

By 1921 this tactic was so commonly employed by the British forces that the IRA became highly suspicious of any of their trenches which had been interfered with in any way. In the IRA's Mid Clare Brigade area, the local populace were so suspicious about a wheelbarrow abandoned by the British forces at the scene of a partially re-filled trench, that it was left untouched for over a week. The wheelbarrow was eventually removed by some locals who were so fearful it might be a booby-trap that they used several lengths of rope tied together to drag it from the trench.[43] In Cork the British tactic of booby-trapping republican trenches was so readily employed that the local IRA volunteers, like Edward O'Sullivan, became expert at dismantling the devices, retrieving the explosives and reutilising them against the British forces.

> The danger of the trap mine was first noticed … by the officers of the Skehanore Company … On one occasion the bridge was filled in by enemy forces who buried a trap mine made from two Mills bombs [hand grenades] in a small timber box. … The removal of the stone flag from the cover of the box would allow … the bombs to explode. When the men … arrived … to … demolish the bridge, one of them noticed the flag laid on top of the box and immediately became suspicious … Two nails were inserted through the holes in the side of the box to replace the pins which had been withdrawn from the bombs by the enemy forces. The bombs were now removed from the box, which was sent by post to Major Percival … A

[41] Toomey, *War of Independence in Limerick*, p. 607 - 8.
[42] Hegarty Thorne, *They put the flag a-flyin'*, p. 418.
[43] Liam Haugh, (NAI, BMH WS 474, p. 30); David S. Daniel, *The Royal Hampshire Regiment 1918 - 1954* (Hampshire, 1955), p. 7.

note thanking him for the two Mills bombs was enclosed.[44]

British sources and historiographies denounced the use of trap mines by the IRA as a 'dastardly' and 'shameful' tactic used to 'murder' British soldiers.[45] However it is clear beyond any doubt that the British forces employed exactly the same tactic in their effort to defeat the IRA. British records commonly boasted of their troops' ingenuity in developing and adapting this tactic. The intelligence officer attached to H Company of the RIC's Auxiliary division boasted in a report to RIC headquarters of how his comrades had rigged the IRA's obstacles they encountered with mines and other explosive devices : 'April 5th. D. I. Durlacher and party patrolled roads to SPA and FENIT. Amongst other obstacles encountered were 8 stone walls about 10 yards apart. These were removed. A booby trap was set by us in a suitable trench and it is to be hoped that the enemy will reopen this particular one. Nil desperandum!'[46] The use of mines by the British forces was an indiscriminate act which endangered, and claimed, the lives of several civilians.[47] Neither this tactic by the British forces, nor the IRA's practice of assassinating off-duty members of the British forces were particularly chivalrous; yet both were legitimate (if deeply unwholesome) methods that were not in violation of the rules of warfare as they were understood at the time.

Attempted assassinations of republicans prior to the Truce

Coinciding with the announcement of the Truce, the British Government refuted the suggestion by the *Freeman's Journal* that the British authorities had placed a bounty on the head of Michael Collins who was then MP for South Cork. The day before the Truce, Michael Collins pasted a copy of the article onto a piece of paper and wrote beneath it: 'Tudor offered £4,000 to any of his men who'd bring me in dead. Even up to 12.30

[44] Edward O'Sullivan (NAI, BMH, WS 1501, pp 3 - 5).
[45] Summary of outrages reported by police, June 1921 (NAUK, CO 904 /146); 'The Irish rebellion in the 6th divisional area', p. 113.
[46] O'Donoghue Papers, 'Intelligence Summary, H Company Auxiliaries, (NLI, MS 31, 225).
[47] In the later stages of the conflict the IRA developed the tactic of using hidden landmines during attacks on British patrols however these were deliberately detonated by command wire / electrical current during attacks. Republicans seldom used 'booby trap' devices which were abandoned and could easily be triggered accidentally by civilians.

tomorrow I'm sure the offer will be honoured.'[48] Given Collins' stature, and his importance to the Truce negotiations from late 1920 onwards, the idea that the British forces would have had him assassinated in the final hours of the conflict was extremely fanciful. However some British troops, like a number of their IRA counterparts, sought a final opportunity to attack their opponents, as a reprisal for earlier incidents. There were a number of failed attempts by members of the British forces to capture and kill IRA volunteers following the announcement of the Truce. One such attempt occurred at Lisdoonvarna, County Clare on 9 July. Members of the IRA's Mid Clare Brigade Flying Column had been waiting in ambush for an RIC patrol at Doon near Lisdoonvarna, when the operation was cancelled by their commanding officer Commandant Peader O'Loughlin who ordered them to cease all offensive actions against the British forces from midnight that night. Several members of the Flying Column went to Kilfenora to celebrate this development with a few drinks. IRA Volunteer Pádraig Ó Fathaigh and his comrade, Arty Hayden, were socialising in O'Brien's public house in Kilfenora when they received word that a group of Black and Tans were approaching. According to Ó Fathaigh:

> the Black and Tans did arrive, and in savage mood. They entered Mc Cormack's shop looking for Sinn Feiners and forced some men they met to tear down Sinn Fein notices. They said they got no order re truce and were in Galway since the previous day. They went there with two of their comrades who were shot down near Doolin.

After searching the area and forcing the local populace to tear down republican proclamations, the British forces departed. Ó Fathaigh and his IRA comrades came out of hiding a short time later. Almost immediately, the IRA volunteers received word that the Black and Tans were returning, and they promptly made good their escape. Ó Fathaigh interpreted the return of the Black and Tans as a typical ruse used by the British forces to entrap the IRA: 'Scarcely had we settled down when the warning came that the Tans were coming back ... It was a favourite trick of the Tans to double back on the expectation that the IRA would become careless.'[49] On this occasion the Black and Tans appear to have been enraged by the shooting of two of their comrades near Doolin on 7 July. One of these Constable James Hewitt, a twenty year-old Black and Tan from

[48] Margaret Forester, *Michael Collins: the lost leader* (London, 1972), p. 201.
[49] MacMahon (ed.) *Ó Fathaigh's war*, pp 79 - 80.

Dublin, was killed in the attack. The other, Constable Massey, survived seriously wounded.[50] It is likely that the Black and Tans rage at this attack would have been compounded by the announcement shortly afterwards of the Truce. Given the circumstances, the reported humour of the Black and Tans, and their denial that they had been notified of the imminent ceasefire, it seems unlikely that any suspected republicans captured in the raid would have been treated chivalrously.[51]

Members of the RIC made at least two separate attempts to kill IRA officers on 11 July, both occurring after the Truce had come into effect. Péig Malone, wife of Tomás Malone, the adjutant of the East Limerick Brigade IRA's Flying Column, worked as a teacher at Boher National School in Tipperary. On the morning of 11 July, a party of Black and Tans stationed at Killaloe took up positions surrounding the school in the hope that Malone would avail of the beginning of the ceasefire as an opportunity to visit his wife at her place of work. They remained in ambush positions following the beginning of the Truce at noon and remained there in the forlorn hope that Malone would appear at 3:30pm when his wife finished work.[52] That night, a group of Black and Tans breached the Truce by raiding the home of Patrick O'Reilly, an IRA officer who lived at Moynalty, Co. Meath. All of the raiding party carried revolvers and they were assisted by a local loyalist who wore a mask to conceal his identity. This raid may have been launched in retaliation for O'Reilly's role in leading the ambush of British soldiers which occurred in that district a few hours before the ceasefire began.[53]

The death of Denis Spriggs, and the phenomenon of prisoners 'shot trying to escape'

In Cork city the IRA received word that some members of the British forces were planning a series of reprisals in reaction to the announcement of the Truce. Consequently, IRA volunteers in the city were warned not to sleep in their own homes.[54] A few hours after the Truce was announced, the British military abducted and killed an IRA volunteer

[50] Abbott, *Police casualties*, p. 264.
[51] MacMahon (ed.) *Ó Fathaigh's war*, pp 79 - 80.
[52] Tom Malone Jr., *Alias Seán Forde: the story of commandant Tomás Malone, Vice O.C. East Limerick Flying Column, Irish Republican Army* (Dublin, 2000), p. 88.
[53] Michael Govern, (NAI, BMH, WS 1625, pp 7 - 8).
[54] Valiulis, *Portrait of a revolutionary*, p. 78.

named Denis Spriggs. Spriggs, a plasterer and slater by trade, was a member of C Company, 1st Battalion of the IRA's Cork No.1 Brigade. He was twenty years-old at the time of his death. Spriggs' family home in Strawberry Hill, on the northern side of Cork city, was raided by the 2nd Battalion, South Staffordshire Regiment about midnight on 8 July. According to the British military inquest into the killing, the British Army had planned the raid after receiving specific intelligence information, and had launched the operation specifically to capture Spriggs. Spriggs was asleep in his bed when the raid began. He was unarmed and upon being confronted immediately surrendered to the raiders without offering any resistance. The British officer who led the raiding party, 2nd Lieutenant A. d'Ydewalle, told the military inquest that Spriggs had been shot dead whilst attempting to escape:

> On the night of the 8th inst, at about midnight, acting on information, I proceeded to the house of Denis Spriggs at Strawberry Hill and arrested him on suspicion. He was placed in a Crossley Tender under an escort. When the Crossley had proceeded about 200 yards down Blarney Street, the tail board either fell down or was released by Denis Spriggs. Spriggs then leaped out of the Crossley and started to run up Blarney Street. The escort on the Crossley opened fire & he fell. He was apparently dead when picked up. Before putting Denis Spriggs in the Crossley, I personally warned him that he would be shot if he attempted to escape.

The inquest ruled that Spriggs was killed whilst trying to escape 'and that the deceased was to blame, in as much as he attempted to escape from Military Custody, after having been warned of the consequences.'[55]

Leeson noted that the cases of captured IRA volunteers and civilian prisoners being killed by the British forces whilst allegedly trying to escape were so numerous that the phrase 'shot while trying to escape' became a euphemism for 'executed'.[56] Leeson concluded that many prisoners were killed by the British forces simply because they were republicans, or connected to republican families.[57] The practice of British forces summarily executing captured enemy combatants during the Irish War of Independence appears to have its origins in the First World War. Robert Graves, who had been an officer in the Royal Welch Fusiliers, recalled that during that conflict German soldiers

[55] PMCILCI on Denis Spriggs (NAUK, WO 35 / 159A).

[56] Leeson, *Black & Tans*, p. 182; The exact same phrase was used by the German forces in their attempts to conceal the execution of fifty captured allied airmen in March - April 1944. Twenty German officers involved in these killings were tried by the British for war crimes. Fourteen of whom were executed for the murder of prisoners who were allegedly 'shot while trying to escape'. Simon Read, *Human Game: The true story of the great escape murders and the hunt for the Gestapo gunmen* (New York, 2013), pp 16, 31, 231.

[57] Leeson, *The Black & Tans*, p. 189.

taken captive by British troops were frequently executed and their deaths were attributed to enemy shellfire:

> nearly every instructor in the mess could quote specific instances of prisoners having been murdered on the way back … In many of these cases the conductors would report on arrival at headquarters that a German shell had killed the prisoners and no questions would be asked.[58]

The primary motivation for these 'battlefield executions' in both of these conflicts appears to have been the desire to avenge the death of a fallen comrade or comrades. For example, the assassination of Head Constable Peter Burke in Balbriggan, Dublin on 20 September 1920 sparked widespread reprisals by his comrades that resulted in two killings and the destruction of twenty five houses. Two days later the deaths of six members of an RIC patrol in the Rineen Ambush were avenged by British forces who killed six local people and attacked over seventy properties. A similar cause and effect is evident in British Army reprisals during the First World War. At Bellewaarde near Ypres, in June 1915, the Royal Scots killed 300 German soldiers they had taken prisoner after their officers encouraged them to do so to avenge their fallen comrades. According to Private Charles Tames who witnessed the massacre, 'the Scots immediately shot the whole lot, and shouted "Death and Hell to every one of ye shits" and in five minutes the ground was ankle deep in German blood.'[59] In June 1916 members of the Leinster Regiment killed six German prisoners at Vermelles after discovering the body of one of their own officers who had been killed in battle.[60]

The British military practice of summarily executing enemy combatants and blaming their deaths on the conditions of war appears to have continued unabated into the War of Independence. The main difference was that the explanation 'Killed by enemy shellfire' used in Flanders in 1918 was replaced in Ireland with 'Shot whilst attempting to escape'. An examination of the available British military inquest reports reveals that at least 42 unarmed prisoners were killed in the custody of the British forces whilst allegedly attempting to escape.[61] The true number of prisoners shot by the British forces

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[58] Robert Graves, *Goodbye to all that* (London, 1960), p. 153.
[59] Malcom Brown, *The Imperial War Museum book of the Western Front* (London, 1993), p. 176.
[60] Brown, *Book of the Western Front*, p. 178.
[61] Provisional Military Inquest reports (NAUK, WO 35 / 147A - 159B), and RIC County Inspector's Reports (CO 904 / 145 -146).

whilst supposedly trying to escape is likely to be far higher because inquest reports for a number of other unarmed prisoners known to have been killed in the same circumstances are not available.[62] The vast majority of the prisoners killed in alleged escape attempts were IRA volunteers shot dead within hours of their capture. There is compelling evidence to suggest that these prisoners were victims of a culture of reprisal killings which existed in several British military and RIC units.

Escape attempts were a convenient method of explaining the suspicious circumstances surrounding the deaths of multiple republican prisoners who met violent deaths in British custody. In November 1920 three IRA Volunteers, Michael Mc Mahon, Alfred Rogers and Martin Kildea, and a civilian named John Egan, were arrested by RIC Auxiliaries at Whitegate in Clare. Their captors were aware that McMahon, Rogers and Kildea had been involved in a number of attacks on the RIC in the preceding weeks, some of which had caused RIC fatalities. That night all four prisoners were taken from their holding cells and shot dead on a bridge spanning the river Shannon. The British military inquest into the killings recorded that three of the four had suffered a single gunshot wound to the head and that the fourth suffered a fatal shot to the abdomen.[63] Pat O'Donnell, an IRA volunteer who assisted with the funeral arrangements for the four, recalled that the men who had suffered a fatal gunshot wound to the head had singed hair near the wounds. This indicates that these men had been shot at point blank range, most likely by a revolver placed almost directly against their heads, in the manner of an execution.[64] The official British inquest into their deaths reported that the four, despite being known IRA members responsible for a number of RIC fatalities, had not been handcuffed, and had been shot after they made a concerted attempt to escape.[65] This explanation is highly unlikely given that all four men were unarmed prisoners in the custody of a large and very heavily armed guard crossing a bridge which had a permanently manned British military checkpoint at each end. An escape attempt in these circumstances would have been completely illogical and totally futile. Prior to the

[62] The total figure of those killed by the British forces in contested circumstances whilst allegedly trying to escape is likely to be far in excess of 50. The above does not include more than two hundred civilians who were killed by the British forces for allegedly 'refusing to halt' or IRA members who had not been taken prisoner and were shot dead whilst attempting to evade arrest.
[63] PMCILCI on Martin Kildea, Alfred Rogers, Michael McMahon and John Egan (NAUK, WO 35 / 153 A).
[64] Henry O'Mara, (NAI, BMH, WS 1653, p. 18).
[65] PMCILCI on Martin Kildea, Alfred Rogers, Michael McMahon and John Egan (NAUK, WO 35 / 153 A).

shooting, local people heard the four prisoners pleading to be allowed to see a priest. This action is more indicative of condemned men awaiting execution than prisoners plotting an escape attempt.[66] The most obvious explanation is that all four prisoners were killed by their captors as a reprisal killing to avenge the deaths of their fallen RIC comrades, and the story that the four were killed in a failed escape attempt was concocted later to justify these killings.

There were a number of other instances in which the British forces claimed responsibility for the multiple deaths of civilians and unarmed IRA prisoners in British custody that were also recorded as escape attempts. These included prisoners Dick McKee, Peader Clancy and Conor Clune who were killed whilst allegedly attempting to escape from Dublin Castle on 21 November 1921.[67] Also, the deaths of brothers Stephen and Owen Magill, who were killed at Newry on 13 June 1921.[68] In counties Limerick and Clare, a combined total of ten unarmed IRA prisoners were shot dead in British custody during alleged escape attempts.[69] Of these ten, only two, Henry Clancy and Richard Leonard, appear to have been killed during genuine escape attempts.[70] The remaining eight were almost certainly executed in reprisal killings - some of them having been severely ill-treated beforehand. The largest and most significant multiple killing by members of the British forces to have been officially explained by an alleged escape attempt occurred at Kerry Pike, Cork on 23 March 1921. On that occasion six IRA volunteers were captured during an RIC raid on an IRA safehouse and were killed shortly afterwards in suspicious circumstances. According to the official British military inquest, all six republicans were captured whilst sleeping and surrendered to their captors without offering any resistance. Following this peaceable surrender, the prisoners were alleged by their captors to have launched a simultaneous bid for freedom during which all six were shot down. There were no survivors. None of the prisoners were wounded or recaptured

[66] O'Mara, (NAI, BMH, WS 1653, p. 14).
[67] Hopkinson, *Irish War of Independence*, p. 91.
[68] PMCILCI on Owen and Stephen Magill (NAUK, WO 35 / 155 A).
[69] Michael McMahon, Alfred Rogers and Martin Gildea 16/11/1920, Michael Mc Namara and William Shanahan 22/12/1920, Martin Conway 27/12/1920, William Slattery 30/12/1920, Richard Leonard 31/12/1921, Henry Clancy 1/5/1921, Sean Wall 6/5/1921.
[70] Accounts of Henry Clancy's killing written by IRA veterans concur with the British claim that he was shot dead whilst making an ill-fated bid for freedom. Clancy's shooting was witnessed by another IRA volunteer who was being held prisoner on the same vehicle. Richard Leonard's body was examined by Dr. Corby independently of the official British Military Court of Inquiry. Dr. Corby's account of Leonard's wounds is consistent with those of a person shot from behind whilst running. In the other eight cases there is no independent evidence cooberating evidence presented at the British Military Courts of Inquiry which is not consistent with those killed having been involved in genuine escape attempts.

unharmed 'whilst trying to escape'.

The British military inquiry into the incident failed to give any details of the nature of the gunshot wounds or other injuries suffered by the six deceased.[71] The inquiry into the deaths of these six unarmed prisoners initially recorded that they were 'killed by forces of the Crown in the course of their duty'. However this finding was subsequently struck out and replaced with a new verdict which completely exonerated the RIC men involved and instead apportioned blame onto the deceased IRA volunteers:

> all the deceased, whilst in the custody of the RIC, attempted to escape. The Constabulary in the course of their duty, fired on them, whereby they suffered various gunshot wounds. The deceased were all killed instantly at the above hour. That no blame attaches itself to the RIC or any member thereof.[72]

If, as seems likely, the six prisoners killed in this instance were executed rather than killed during an escape attempt, the alteration of the British military inquest's verdict into the case is a strong indication that some senior British military officers were fully aware of the circumstances of the case, and were fully willing to 'turn a blind eye' to the excesses, indiscipline, acts of violence and reprisal killings carried out by their subordinates.

The killing of republican prisoners who allegedly tried to escape became so common that the phenomenon began to weigh on the minds of those in command of the British forces. One British officer who served in Cork during the period, Major General Douglas Wimberley, acknowledged in his memoirs that the summary execution of unarmed prisoners troubled him, and he claimed to have used his influence to thwart such killings:

> my first action was always to detail two or three of my Jocks [Scottish soldiers] … and see that they [the Black and Tans and RIC Auxiliaries] did not commit any atrocities such as unlawfully looting or burning houses, when they were acting under my command, or even shooting prisoners, on the grounds that they were attempting to escape.[73]

General Macready, the commander of the British forces in Ireland, became so worried by the number of men being killed in these circumstances that he issued orders that all

[71] PMCILCI on W. Deasy, D. Murphy, J. Mullane, M. Sullivan, T. Dennehy, and D. Crowley (NAUK, WO 35 / 149 A).
[72] PMCILCI on W. Deasy, D. Murphy, J. Mullane, M. Sullivan, T. Dennehy, and D. Crowley (NAUK, WO 35 / 149 A).
[73] Sheehan, *British voices*, p. 188.

prisoners must be handcuffed, and that if any prisoners who were not handcuffed were killed whilst allegedly attempting to escape the senior officer responsible would be held to account.[74] However, senior British officers ignored Macready's decree. In March 1921, an IRA volunteer named William McCarthy was taken from a police cell and shot dead by his captors. The British military inquest into his death recorded that McCarthy 'Attempted to escape from custody [of the] RIC (Not handcuffed).' Despite Macready's order regarding the shooting of unrestrained prisoners, no punitive action was taken against McCarthy's killers.[75] The following month the RIC in Tipperary shot dead Thomas Walsh during an alleged escape attempt. The military inquest into Walsh's killing casually recorded it as: 'Another case of handcuffs.'[76]

A unique aspect of the War of Independence in Cork is that not a single member of the IRA in Cork City was killed in action fighting against the British forces. In fact, all of the twenty-one IRA members killed by the British forces in Cork were unarmed at the time of their deaths and were either killed in their homes by masked assassins, shot dead on the city streets by British patrols, or killed whilst in British custody.[77] Ten of these fatalities were assassinations carried out by disguised members of the British forces.[78] Denis Spriggs was the ninth unarmed IRA prisoner killed by the British forces in Cork city whilst allegedly trying to escape. Of the other eight IRA volunteers killed, only one, Tadhg O'Sullivan, had been killed during a genuine escape attempt. Six of the remainder had been killed after surrendering at Kerry Pike, and another, Charlie Daly, was arrested and beaten to death by British soldiers at Victoria Barracks just twelve days before Spriggs' death.[79] The same night that Daly was beaten to death at Victoria Barracks, British soldiers also killed an unarmed civilian named William Horgan. Horgan, a twenty year-old fireman on the Great Southern & Western Railway, was arrested at 2:00am in his parent's home at Dillon's Cross, and was shot dead a short time later. The British military inquest into Horgan's death ruled that Horgan had assaulted a British officer who was searching him, and was killed whilst attempting to disarm this officer in an effort to

[74] Handcuffs for Prisoners: RIC Circular C.562/1291, 30 March 1920 (NAUK, HO 184 / 125, f. 235.)
[75] PMCILCI on William McCarthy (NAUK, WO 35 / 153 B). (Emphasis in the original).
[76] PMCILCI on Thomas Walsh (NAUK, WO 35 / 160).
[77] Borgonovo, *Anti-Sinn Féin Society*, pp 112 - 3.
[78] Borgonovo, *Anti-Sinn Féin Society*, p. 113.
[79] Borgonovo, *Anti-Sinn Féin Society*, p. 115.

escape.

Apart from the explanation that both men were shot 'whilst trying to escape', there is another connection between the killing of Horgan in late June and Spriggs on the night the Truce was announced - both were taken prisoner by British soldiers from the 2nd Battalion, South Staffordshire Regiment who were acting under the direct command of Lieutenant A. d'Ydewalle.[80] Given the circumstances of Denis Spriggs' arrest, the track-record of the British officer involved, and the explanation proffered for the killing, the probability is that Spriggs was summarily executed by the British military because of his republican activities and not because of any resistance, or attempt to escape on his part. It is impossible to establish without further information, to what extent, if any, the announcement of the Truce was a factor in his killing.

The death of Margaret Keogh: alleged assassinations and the British 'Murder Gang'.

In addition to Spriggs, a second republican was killed by British forcesduring a raid on their home on the same date. Margaret Keogh was shot and mortally wounded by unidentified assassins at her home at 20 Stella Gardens, Irishtown in Dublin at approximately 11:15pm on the night of 9 July. Despite receiving immediate first aid, and a transfer to Sir Patrick Dun's Hospital, she died of her wound at 4:00am the following morning.[81] Keogh was a nineteen year-old printing assistant employed by Messers Healy & Co. of Dame Street, Dublin. She was very active in Irish language, Gaelic revival, trade union, suffragist and republican circles in the capital. According to a press report in the *Irish News*, Miss Keogh was 'an ardent Irish Irelander', 'a fluent Irish speaker … [and] a strong supporter of the Irish revival movement'. Keogh was captain of the Croke Ladies Hurling Club, a member of the Irish Clerical Workers Union and was 'prominently associated with Cumann na mBan'.[82] A year prior to her death, Keogh had been arrested by the British forces for refusing to give her name in English when questioned, and for fundraising for the Gaelic League which was then a proscribed

[80] PMCILCI on William Horgan (NAUK, WO 35 / 152).
[81] *Cork Examiner*, 13 July 1921; Irish Military Archives (C.D. 120/3 - C.D. 120/4).
[82] *Irish News*, 13, 14 July 1921.

organisation.[83]

Keogh was shot after she left her bed to answer a knock at the door of her home at 11:15pm.[84] She was fatally wounded and died a short time later. Before her death she told police that: 'she answered the door in response to a knock about 11:15pm When she opened it there was no person outside it or about, and as she was in the act of closing the door she heard a single shot and felt a sting in the side and fell back in the hall. She had no idea as to who fired the shot.'[85] Despite making this statement, Margaret Keogh was unable to identify her killers before she expired. Keogh's membership of various nationalist and republican bodies including Cuman na mBan, and her previous confrontation with the British forces, would have made her a target for British reprisals. Furthermore, it appears that the British forces were conducting raids on republican homes in the immediate area at the time Margaret Keogh was shot. According to the *Irish News*' report: 'A short time previous to the shooting of Miss Keogh some persons knocked at the adjoining residence of a man "on the run", but the occupant, an old woman, informed the raiders [that] she would not open the door, and if they wanted admission they should force it.' [86] The press was refused admission to the British military inquest into Margret Keogh's killing, which was held in private.[87] (The findings of this court of inquiry have not been published and it appears that this file is one of the records in the War Office papers which is still under 100 year closure.) Keogh's funeral took place at Glasnevin Cemetery, Dublin on 14 July.[88] She was buried with military honours in a plot bought by her family. The funeral cortege was reported as being 'of large dimensions … inmmediatedly after the hearse marched a large number of young lady friends of the deceased associated with Cumann na mBan, members of the camogie clubs and fellow workers. The coffin was covered with the tricolour.' The following week, the Executive of Cumann na mBan organised a commemorative mass for her at the Star of the Sea church in Sandymount.[89] The inscription on her tombstone indicates that her family blamed the British forces for her death. Her epitaph reads: 'MARGRET KEOGH - DIED

[83] *Irish News*, 14 July 1921.
[84] *Cork Examiner*, 13 July 1921.
[85] *Irish News*, 13 July 1921.
[86] *Irish News*, 13 July 1921.
[87] *Irish News*, 14 July 1921.
[88] *Irish News*, 14 July 1921.
[89] *Irish Independent*, 15 July 1921.

FOR IRELAND'.[90]

The act of killing unarmed republican prisoners who had been taken into British custody burdened the killers with having to invent a credible explanation that vindicated their actions or at least concocting a story which was plausible enough to satisfy a British military court of inquiry. RIC and British military units in some areas developed a different modus operandi and adopted disguises to assassinate known and suspected republicans in their own homes and places of work. These killers never identified themselves as members of the British forces, and consequently never had the burden of claiming responsibility for their victims' deaths, or explaining their actions to their superior officers and military courts of inquiry. Major General Douglas Wimberley was forthright in admitting that some of his comrades adopted these methods in order to commit reprisal killings: 'They [the Black and Tans and RIC Auxiliaries] seemed to make a habit of breaking out of their barracks at night, illicitly, and killing men they thought were suspect rebels, and in this way the habit spread surreptitiously even to a few Army officers and men' [91]

During the conflict republicans alleged that a British 'Murder Gang', comprised of vengeful RIC and British military personnel, operated throughout Ireland. In some areas the alleged activities of the 'Murder Gang' overlapped with those of the 'Anti-Sinn Féin Society'. It is generally accepted that the 'Anti-Sinn Fein Society' was a cover name used as a flag of convenience by British forces' personnel to distance themselves from their more unsavoury activities. There is also the possibility that in some areas with a significant loyalist population the 'Anti-Sinn Féin Society' recruited active loyalists to gather intelligence information, act as 'identifiers' for raiding parties, or assist the British forces in conducting anti-republican reprisals. There is a record of suspicious behaviour by British raiding parties in the area where Margaret Keogh was killed matching the activity of the 'Murder Gang' and the 'Anti-Sinn Féin Society'. Members of the IRA's Dublin Brigade alleged that British military officers in civilian attire were responsible for shooting a number of IRA volunteers during nocturnal raids on their homes.[92] Joseph Curran, a Sinn Féin councilor residing just a few doors away from Margaret Keogh in

[90] Grave MI 276, Saint Bridget's, Glasnevin Cemetary, Dublin.
[91] Sheehan, *British voices*, p. 188.
[92] Charles Dalton, *With the Dublin Brigade*, (2nd ed., Cork, 2014), pp 90 - 1.

Stella Gardens, complained of suspicious and aggressive behaviour during British military raids. Curran's home at 36 Stella Gardens was raided by members of the Worchester Regiment a few months before Margaret Keogh was killed. He stated that one of the leaders of the search party 'had two revolvers and a cap pulled down over his eyes [as a disguise] … and went about like a desperado … he was a bit of the Dick Turpin terrorizing women and children.' During his courtmartial for possession of ammunition allegedly found during the raid, Curran raised questions about the identity of this individual. The Worchester Regiment denied that this man was a British soldier and insisted their troops had been led by 'a [civilian] guide … dressed as a captain'.[93]

The 'RIC Murder Gang' and 'Anti-Sinn Féin Society' killings began in the spring of 1920, shortly after the IRA killed RIC Constable Luke Finegan. On 20 January 1920 Constable Finegan was shot dead in Thurles, Tipperary as he was returning home from a night patrol. When the local RIC garrison learned of their comrade's death they ran amok, firing their guns into the homes of local republicans and attacking republican-owned business premises with hand grenades.[94] The 'Sack of Thurles', as the incident became known, was the first occasion that the RIC had reacted to the death of a comrade by going on a rampage. In response to this unprecedented event, Lloyd George wrote to the *Daily Chronicle*:

> Nobody can fail to deplore such occurrences but equally nobody can wonder at them. Indeed it is obvious that if these murderous clubs pursue their course much longer, we may see counter clubs springing up and the lives of prominent Sinn Feiners becoming as unsafe as prominent officials.[95]

The timing and nature of Lloyd George's letter strongly suggests that senior figures in the British government were aware of the assassination campaign being waged by some members of the British forces. Comments in Sir Henry Wilson's diary explicitly reinforce the suggestion that members of the British cabinet, senior RIC officers and others knew of the activities of the 'Anti-Sinn Féin Gang' and the identities of those involved:

> Tudor made it very clear that the police and the Black and Tans and the 100 Intelligence officers are all carrying out reprisal murders. At Balbriggan, Thurles and Galway yesterday the local police marked down certain Sinn Feiners as … murderers or instigators and then cooly went out and shot them without question or trial. Winston [Churchill] saw very

[93] *Irish Independent*, 11 September 1920.
[94] Hogan, *Black and Tans*, pp 156 - 61.
[95] Abbott, *Police casualties*, p. 51.

little harm in this but it horrifies me.'[96]

In short the British authorities at best gave their tacit approval to the combined RIC-British Army campaign of reprisal killings, and at worst were actively encouraging and protecting the assassins.

In March 1920, just two month's after Lloyd George's unprecedented comments predicting the emergence of 'counter murder clubs' targeting prominent republicans - the Mayor of Cork, Tomás MacCurtain, was assassinated by masked gunmen in his home at Blackpool. McCurtain was a member of Sinn Féin and commandant of the IRA's Cork No. 1 Brigade. Although British sources initially tried to suggest that MacCurtain was killed by the IRA in an internecine feud, it is generally accepted that a group of Irish loyalists within the RIC was responsible. The inquest into MacCurtain's death ruled that Lloyd George, the British authorities in Ireland, and unknown members of the RIC under the command of RIC District Inspector Swanzy were responsible for the killing.[97] The assassination of active republicans in Cork became increasingly frequent after the recruitment into the RIC of significant numbers of new personnel, mostly British ex-servicemen via the Black and Tans and the RIC Auxiliary Division. On 17 November 1920, IRA Volunteer Eugene O'Connell, James Coleman a member of Sinn Féin, and Patrick Hanley a seventeen year-old member of Na Fianna Éireann, the Irish Republican Boy Scouts, were all shot dead in their homes by unidentified men wearing RIC uniforms. A number of failed assassinations also occurred in the city on the same night.[98] The following week, Patrick O'Donoghue, an IRA volunteer, and two civilian friends of his were killed by an RIC constable who threw a hand grenade at them whilst they were walking home from work.[99] In December 1920 two brothers, Con and Jeremiah Delaney, both IRA volunteers, were shot dead in their beds by men in civilian clothing who all spoke with strong English accents.[100] The following February, Charlie J. Daly, an IRA officer, was abducted from his workplace by unidentified men who shot him dead in a

[96] Hogan, *Black and Tans in north Tipperary*, p. 465.
[97] Hopkinson, *War of Independence*, p. 109.
[98] Borgonovo, *Anti-Sinn Féin Society*, p. 107.
[99] Borgonovo, *Anti-Sinn Féin Society*, p. 107.
[100] Borgonovo, *Anti-Sinn Féin Society*, pp 107 - 8.

nearby railway tunnel.[101] Another IRA volunteer, Stephen Dorman, was killed in an almost identical grenade attack to that which had killed O'Donoghue and his workmates.[102]

A similar spate of reprisal killings attributed to the 'Murder Gang' occurred in Limerick city at the same time. The first of these occurred on 20 November 1920 when James O'Neill and Michael Blake were shot dead after being held up by armed men whilst travelling to their homes by car. O'Neill and Blake's brother, Patrick, were returning to the city with their supporters after having been acquitted by a British military court martial of the murder of a Black and Tan named Walter Oakley. Before their court-martial the local RIC county inspector denounced the accused as 'murderers' and 'paid assassins'. Given the circumstances of their deaths and the fact that their killers spoke with a mixture of English and Irish accents, there can be little doubt that O'Neill was deliberately killed by members of the RIC who were dissatisfied with the result of the court-martial. Michael Blake was apparently killed for the same reason in a case of mistaken identity by someone who mistook him for his brother Patrick. Neither of the dead men had any role in Oakley's killing or any connections to the IRA.[103] In February 1921 an IRA volunteer named Thomas Blake was shot dead in Limerick city by unidentified assassins. Blake's home had been raided by the British forces on a number of occasions and local tradition holds that District Inspector George Montagu Nathan of the RIC Auxiliary Division was involved in Blake's assassination.[104] The following month three members of the IRA, George Clancy, the mayor of Limerick, his predecessor in the office, ex-mayor Michael O'Callaghan and Joseph O'Donoghue, the manager of a local meat company, were all shot dead at their homes by disguised assassins. O'Callaghan's widow later identified District Inspector Nathan as one of her husband's killers.[105] Nathan apparently confessed his role in the Limerick killings over a decade later, during the Spanish Civil War, when he was confronted by a group of Irish Republicans who had identified him.[106] Given that all three victims were members of the

[101] Borgonovo, *Anti-Sinn Féin Society*, p. 110.
[102] Borgonovo, *Anti-Sinn Féin Society*, p. 111
[103] Toomey, *War of Independence in Limerick*, pp 458 - 65.
[104] Toomey, *War of Independence in Limerick*, pp 508 - 9.
[105] Toomey, *War of Independence in Limerick*, pp 537 - 53.
[106] Maurice Levine, *From Cheetham to Cordoba*: a *Manchester man of the thirties* (Manchester, 1984), p. 39.

IRA whose homes had previously been raided by the British forces, and were killed by men wearing British military-style clothing, there can be little doubt that British forces' personnel, most likely members of an RIC 'Murder Gang' led by Nathan, were responsible.[107]

Reprisal killings by the British forces were also common in Dublin. Following the killing of RIC Head Constable Bourke at Balbriggan in September 1920, members of the British forces abducted republicans John Gibbons and James Lawless. The following morning, their bodies were found on Quay Street a few yards from the local RIC Barracks.[108] The following month Peter O'Carroll, a fifty-six year-old house-bound invalid, was taken from his home in Manor Street and shot dead by a group of men who had forced their way in and questioned him about his two sons who were both members of the IRA. O'Carroll's widow refused to give evidence to the British military inquest into his death but instead made a public statement that her husband had been 'murdered by members of the Army of Occupation'.[109] Then, on 27 October 1920, IRA Volunteer John Sherlock was taken from his home in Skerries and shot dead by unidentified men.[110] Another IRA volunteer, Thomas Hand, was dragged from his bed at 2 am on 5 December 1920 and shot dead by unidentified men dressed in British uniform.[111] Two other republicans, Patrick Kennedy and James Murphy, were killed in Dublin on 9 February 1921. Both men had been arrested by the RIC Auxiliaries and taken to Dublin Castle for interrogation. That night a DMP patrol discovered Kennedy's lifeless body in Clonturk Park, Drumcondra. Murphy lay beside him, conscious but mortally wounded. Murphy lived long enough to dictate a detailed statement identifying his killers. On the basis of Murphy's statement, three members of the RIC Auxiliary division were court-martialed on a murder charge; however all three were acquitted after claiming that both of the victims had been released unharmed after questioning and that neither they, nor the British forces, were involved in their deaths.[112] On 30 May 1921 Thomas Murphy, a porter for the Dublin South and East Railway, was shot dead in his bed by unidentified

[107] Toomey, *War of Independence in Limerick*, pp 537 - 53.
[108] Ross O'Mahony, 'The Sack of Balbriggan' in David Fitzpatrick (ed.) *Terror in Ireland 1916 - 1923* (Dublin, 2012), p. 64.
[109] Yeates, *A city in turmoil*, p. 185.
[110] Yeates, *A cityiIn turmoil*, p. 172.
[111] Yeates, *A city in turmoil*, p. 172.
[112] *Freeman's Journal*, 15 April 1921; *Irish Independent*, 16 April 1921.

assailants. Two days earlier a Black and Tan named Albert Skeats succumbed to his wounds inflicted in an IRA attack and Murphy was apparently killed by Skeat's comrades in reprisal.[113]

The activities of the 'Anti- Sinn Féin Gang' were not confined to Cork, Dublin, Limerick and other large cities. Another group of assassins dubbed the 'Anti-Murder Gang' was responsible for at least seven deaths in North Tipperary. On 28 March 1920, Lieutennant Thomas Dwyer and IRA Volunteer James McCarthy were both shot dead in their homes. The Coroner's inquests into their deaths left no doubt as to who the perpetrators were. The jury at the inquest into McCarthy's death ruled that he 'was shot by some person or persons unknown, wearing long black coats and caps similar to those worn by the police.' At Dwyer's inquest the jury went a step further and returned the verdict 'Thomas Dwyer was wilfully murdered by unknown members of the Royal Irish Constabulary.'[114] Following an IRA attack upon the RIC at Shevry, the 'Anti-Murder Gang' struck again in July 1920, shooting Richard Larkin, whose brother was an active member of the IRA. Larkin survived the attack.[115] On 1 October 1920, IRA signals officer Michael Cleary was taken from his home and shot a number of times by a group of unidentified gunmen. Despite being left for dead, Cleary survived the attack RIC Sergeant Eugene Igoe was later identified as having led the men who abducted and shot Cleary.[116] Later that month a group of assassins disguised with blackened faces killed another IRA officer, Michael Ryan, by shooting him dead as he lay in bed.[117] In November 1920, Denis Carey, a member of Sinn Féin, was taken from his workplace by masked raiders. He was interrogated about attacks on the RIC before being shot and mortally wounded. However, Carey lived long enough to describe his ordeal and identify his attackers as members of the RIC.[118] Five days after Carey's shooting armed men, raided a house in Thurles where a cardgame was in progress and shot dead Thomas O'Loughlin. He was a member of the IRA, and his killers were believed to have been

[113] Séamus MacCiarnáin (ed.) *The last post* (Dublin, 1976), p. 88.
[114] Hogan, *Black and Tans in north Tipperary*, pp 176 - 83.
[115] Hogan, *Black and Tans in north Tipperary*, p. 463.
[116] Hogan, *Black and Tan in north Tipperary s*, p. 263.
[117] Hogan, *Black and Tans in north Tipperary*, p. 264.
[118] Hogan, *Black and Tans in north Tipperary*, pp 282 - 3, 464 - 5.

members of the British forces.[119] The 'Anti-Murder Gang' killings in North Tipperary reached a bloody pinnacle on the night of 10 March 1921 when two members of Sinn Féin, Laurence Hickey and William Loughnane, were shot dead in their homes.[120]

Whilst reprisal killings of suspected republicans and attacks on their family homes were commonplace, Leeson's recent study of the Black and Tans concluded that republican women were not targeted: 'it seems that not a single woman was ever murdered in reprisal [by the British forces]. In the few documented cases where police and soldiers murdered Irish women, their motives were unrelated to the national struggle.'[121] Leeson has stated that the majority killings of women committed by British forces during the conflict, were not politically motivated. Leeson's finding has been reinforced by Townshend who has suggested that women were 'in no real danger of execution if arrested.'[122] Many of the women killed by the British forces shot unintentionally, innocent bystanders and 'collateral damage'. A minority were the victims of 'crimes of passion' and sexually-motivated murders committed by individual British troops.[123] However Leeson is probably wrong in stating that no woman was ever killed in a British reprisal killing.

The circumstances of Margaret Keogh's death indicate that she was killed by members of the British forces who selected her home, and her neighbour's house, as locations where they were likely to find suitable targets for a reprisal attack. Given the available information, it is impossible to know whether Keogh was deliberately targeted for assassination or if another person who resided at the same address was the intended target. The sexism and chivalry of the day meant that the IRA rarely executed women they suspected of spying, and the British forces were not in the habit of targeting republican women. The likelihood therefore is that Keogh was fatally wounded, by accident or in a case of mistaken identity by members of the British forces. Given the timing and location of the incident, Keogh's killers would have been aware that a

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[119] Hogan, *Black and Tans in north Tipperary*, pp 464.
[120] Hogan, *Black and Tans in north Tipperary*, pp 331 - 4.
[121] Leeson, *Black & Tans in north Tipperary*, p. 178.
[122] Townshend, *The republic*, p. 251.
[123] For crimes of passion see see the case of Kathleen Kelleher. Kelleher was shot dead by her boyfriend, RIC Constable John McCansh. McCansh claimed that his pistol had accidentally discharged whilst they were alone together. He was acquitted of her murder by a British military court of inquiry. For sexually motivated murders see the case of Kate Maher. Maher was found unconscious; bleeding to death from serious internal wounds to her vagina, found next to her was a heavily intoxicated British soldier, Private Thomas Bennett of the Lincolnshire Regiment. Bennett was later acquitted of her murder by a British military court of inquiry. PMCILCI on Kathleen Kelleher (NAUK, WO 35 / 160); PMCILCI on Kate Maher (NAUK, WO 35 / 155 B).

ceasefire was imminent. Whether the announcement of the Truce was a partial factor, or even the sole motivation, in the decision to launch the fatal attack on the Keogh family home is impossible to establish at this remove.

John Foley and Hannah Carey: civilians shot dead by British patrols

On the eve of the Truce the British military shot and killed a thirty-eight year-old civilian named John Foley, near his home at Leemount, Coachford, Cork. A patrol from the West Yorkshire Regiment was passing through the area at approximately 6:00pm on 10 July when Foley was killed. The British military inquest into his death was told by the officer in charge of the patrol, Corporal F. J. Smith, that the patrol had been conducting searches of houses in the district, and had received orders to arrest any male civilians found in the locality aged between fifteen and forty-five years. According to Corporal Smith, he and Lance Corporal W. Pearson called to search Foley's house, but were refused entry. Smith claimed that he had forced his way in, whereupon the occupants of the house (Foley, another man and a woman) barricaded themselves into a bedroom. When he entered the bedroom alone, Smith stated that he was trapped inside by the woman and attacked by Foley and his male accomplice who attempted to disarm him. Pearson was alleged to have then entered the room and, without firing a shot, saved Smith from his attackers. According to Smith the two British officers were retreating when Foley again attempted to attack him and he fired, fatally wounding Foley. Smith testified that: 'He [Foley] staggered past me, left the house and fell into a ditch on the roadside and died.' Lance Corporal Pearson also gave evidence to the inquest, in support of Smith's account; however, there are significant inconsistencies between the two accounts.[124]

Given that no other witnesses were heard at the inquest, it is unsurprising that the Court of Inquiry ruled that Foley was killed by the British military in the execution of their duty and that: 'John Foley was himself to blame for having attacked Cpl. Smith with a knife.'[125] However Charlie Browne a local IRA volunteer, claimed that Foley was an innocent civilian who was killed by the British military without any provocation: 'Enemy

[124] For example Pearson says that Foley attacked Smith with a knife, a significant detail that Smith could reasonably be expected to report, but failed to mention in his account of the incident. PMCILCI on John Foley (NAUK, WO 35 / 150).
[125] PMCILCI on John Foley (NAUK, WO 35 / 150).

raids continued up to the Sunday night 10 July. It was on that date that a large party of military from Ballincollig came into Coachford district and shot dead an innocent young boy on the roadside beside his home. In fact, this party opened fire on several houses as they sped along the highway.'[126] The failure of those responsible to give a credible account of Foley's death, and the existence of a conflicting local account, suggests that he was killed by British soldiers who were in the habit of firing on the local populace whilst on patrol.

The very last fatality of the War of Independence was Hannah Carey a forty-eight year-old civilian, shot in Killarney, Kerry shortly after 11:50am on the morning of 11 July - just moments before the ceasefire was due to begin. The official Dublin Castle report of the incident attributed Miss Carey's death to the IRA. It stated that she had been killed during the attack on Sergeants Mears and Clarke which occurred on High Street a short time earlier. This version of events was repeated in the national and local press. The *Kerry People* reported:

> Killarney Tragedy - 3 Deaths … Dublin Castle reports. At 11.45 am yesterday, sergeants Mayer and Clarke of the 1st Battalion of the Royal Fusileers, Killarney, were fired at and wounded by a number of armed men … Hannah Carey, domestic servant employed at the imperial hotel Killarney, has died as a consequence of a wound sustained by a stray bullet during the attack on the two sergeants.[127]

The local RIC county inspector also attributed Hannah Carey's death to the actions of the IRA. His official report stated that Carey was killed when the IRA launched a second attack upon an RIC patrol which was rushing to the scene of the earlier ambush:

> At 11:45am on 11:7:21, Sgt Mear and Sgt F.J.Clarke of 1st Royal Fusiliers, both unarmed, were fired at and badly wounded in High Street, Killarney, by a party of rebels. Military and police visited the scene and were also fired on by the rebels … Hanna Carey, domestic servant who was shot in the neck at the same time, died in a short time.[128]

However Hannah Carey had not been shot during the IRA attack on the British forces as indicated in British reports. In fact, Miss Carey was shot and fatally wounded by a patrol of RIC / Black and Tans on College Street, Killarney in a separate incident a short time

[126] Charlie Browne, *The story of the 7th*: a concise history of the 7th Battalion, Cork No. 1 Brigade IRA from 1915 - 1921 (Cork, 2007), p. 87.
[127] *Kerry People*, 16 July 1921.
[128] RIC County Inspector's Report for Kerry, July 1921 (NAUK, CO 904 / 115).

after the IRA attack on Sergeants Mears and Clarke.[129] The RIC constable who fired the fatal shot told the British military inquest into Carey's death that he had shot her by accident as he drove an RIC lorry past her workplace:

> I was holding a revolver in my right hand, and both hands [were] on the steering wheel at the same time, when turning at the end of College Street I mechanically gripped the wheel tighter, making the turn, and it was then my revolver went off. I suppose I must have pulled the trigger whilst doing so. It was quite unintentional. We were all rather excited at the time, it was just after two military Sergeants had been shot in the street, and we thought it might have been a ruse to get the police out, and we half expected an attack or an ambush. I had no idea anyone had been hit at the time.[130]

The military inquest into Miss Carey's killing concluded that she was 'Shot by the accidental discharge of a revolver by [a] member of [the] RIC.' None of the members of the British forces who gave evidence at this inquest claimed to have been under attack at the time.[131]

Hannah Carey was an employee at the Imperial Hotel in Killarney, according to the official Dublin Castle report reproduced in the local press; she was a domestic servant and had been outside the hotel beating carpets when she was shot a few minutes before noon on 11 July.[132] However this seems unlikely since her employer stated that she was employed as a waitress at the hotel. The British military inquest into her death was told that a patrol of RIC and Black and Tans left the RIC barracks in Killarney at approximately 11:50am after learning of the IRA attack on Sergeants Mears and Clarke, five minutes earlier. The members of this patrol were travelling through College Street in two RIC Crossley Tender lorries when a number of shots were fired by the occupants of the first lorry. One member of the RIC patrol testified that two rifle shots had been fired into the air to clear the street of a group of people who had congregated near the Imperial Hotel when Hannah Carey was shot. This evidence was contradicted by the hotel's chef who was at the front door of the business a few moments before the RIC patrol began firing. The chef testified that whilst he was standing inside the doorway looking out, and before the RIC patrol arrived and began shooting, College Street had already been emptied of people. Furthermore, he testified that a British military armoured car had

[129] PMCILCI on Hannah Carey (NAUK, WO 35 / 147 A).
[130] PMCILCI on Hannah Carey (NAUK, WO 35 / 147 A).
[131] PMCILCI on Hannah Carey (NAUK, WO 35/147 A).
[132] *Kerry People*, 16 July 1921.

already passed en-route to the scene of the IRA attack in High Street, and that its occupants did not fire any shots. Hannah Carey was struck by one shot fired by the RIC patrol travelling in the motor lorry. The bullet entered her body just above her right collar bone, passed through her neck and exited over her left shoulder blade. After being shot Miss Carey staggered into the hotel and collapsed in the arms of her employer saying 'I am done'. She died at the premises about 2:00pm that evening.[133]

Recent research by O'Halpin has revealed that the British forces were responsible for the largest number of civilian casualties during the War of Independence. The deaths of approximately 42% of civilians killed in the conflict were caused by the British forces. The IRA was responsible for at least 31% of those killed. Given their circumstances it is impossible to apportion blame for the remainder.[134] A majority, 249 of the 381 civilians killed by the British forces, were killed whilst allegedly resisting arrest, failing to halt when challenged, or for refusing to put their hands up when ordered to do so.[135] Many of these killings are relatively straightforward affairs in which those killed had not complied with warnings issued by British troops, often because they were under the influence of alcohol, suffered from mental impairments or deafness. However, it was also commonplace for members of the British forces to shoot at inoffensive members of the local populace without warning. British patrols were known to fire upon locals for sport, using them for live target practice - often with fatal results. On occasion members of the British forces even boasted of their marksmanship after firing upon, and killing, men in cold blood. During a search of Boyce's farm at Broadford, Limerick on 28 February 1921, Private Henry Hall of the Warwickshire Regiment shot and killed Richard Boyce, one of the family's sons. According to a witness, Private Hall balanced his rifle on a British Army vehicle and took aim at Boyce who was tending to his family's horses in a field some distance away. Private Hall whistled to attract Boyce's attention and when the young man turned to see where the noise had come from, he was killed by a single shot fired by Hall. Having killed Boyce, Hall walked over to the spot where Boyce's corpse lay, carefully pacing out the distance as he went. Private Hall returned to his comrades

[133] PMCILCI on Hannah Carey (NAUK, WO 35 / 147 A).
[134] O'Halpin, 'Counting Terror: Bloody Sunday and the dead of the Irish Revolution', p.154.
[135] O'Halpin, 'Problematic killing during the War of Independence and its aftermath: civilian spies and informers', p. 318.

boasting 'Clean through the forehead at 220 paces - not bad shooting.'[136] In a separate incident in Limerick city, an officer from the Oxford and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry shot dead an innocent civilian in reprisal for an IRA attack on an RIC patrol. The regiment's annual magazine wrongly implied that the deceased had been a member of the IRA. Consequently, it recounted the incident in a frivolous fashion and praised the marksmanship of the officer who had fired the fatal shot:

> One evening an RIC patrol was fired at when crossing Sarsfield Bridge at about 7:45pm. It is worthy of note that five minutes after this outrage the streets were flooded with troops … There were no casualties to the crown forces, but one civilian was killed and five wounded. … The dead civilian (one Dan McNamara of Park) was laid low, while running by a magnificent shot from a .32 automatic pistol at a range of 40 yards. He was an evil bird and quite easily spared.[137]

The circumstances of John Foley and Hannah Carey's deaths immediately before the Truce are similar, in that both appear to have been killed by RIC constables firing wildly from vehicles they were travelling in. The primary difference between these two cases is the explanation offered by the killers for each death. The British military claimed that Foley was killed deliberately because he had attempted to attack two British officers who had debussed from the vehicle to search his house. In this regard the explanation offered by his killers is not significantly different from that given to justify the death of IRA men taken prisoner and 'shot whilst trying to escape.' As stated earlier the alternative account of the killing offered by IRA veteran Charlie Brown that Foley was shot dead on the roadside without warning by passing members of a British patrol seems more plausible. In contrast to Foley's killing Carey's death was admitted as having been a tragic accident, but was alleged to have been the unfortunate result of necessary security procedures rather than indiscipline or horseplay. Another woman had been killed by the RIC in similar circumstances in Galway. Ellen Quinn a heavily pregnant woman was shot in the abdomen by a member of a passing RIC patrol as she sat on a wall outside her home cradling her nine month old baby. Quinn, and her unborn child, died a short time later.[138] Although there had been no IRA activity in the area at the time, the British military inquest into the killing returned a verdict of 'death by misadventure' finding that

[136] Toomey, *War of Independence in Limerick*, p. 529 ; Hartnett, *Victory and woe*, p. 166.
[137] 'Summary of 1st Battalion Diary' *in Regimental Chronicle 1921 (*Soldiers of Oxfordshire Trust Archives).
[138] William Henry, *Blood for blood: the Black and Tan War in Galway* (Cork, 2012), pp 126 - 8.

the shot which killed her had been fired as a precautionary measure by the RIC who feared that they might be ambushed.[139] When the Irish Parliamentary Party MP, Joseph Devlin, raised questions about Ellen Quinn's killing in the House of Commons, the British Chief Secretary, Sir Hamar Greenwood, stated that Mrs. Quinn was killed by members of the British forces who had a right to protect themselves from IRA ambushes.[140] A member of the RIC patrol which killed Hannah Carey offered a similar rationale for her accidental killing - claiming that his comrades had drawn their weapons and fired shots solely to warn people off the streets and thereby frustrate IRA attacks.[141]

Assessment

Analysis of the activities of the British forces in the final days of the conflict shows that, contrary to popular accounts, a number of British units did launch aggressive military actions targeting Irish republicans following the announcement, on 8 July 1921, of the Anglo-Irish Truce. The established narrative that the British forces withdrew to their barracks to adopt a policy of passive defence whilst awaiting the arrival of the ceasefire is true to the extent that the British military hierarchy in Ireland issued orders to refrain from offensive action, and cancelled the executions of a number of republican prisoners who were due to be put to death. However, there were numerous instances where rank and file members of the British Army and RIC did not comply with this order. Instead they continued their standard modus operandi, causing a significant number of civilian and republican fatalities in the process. The timing and nature of many of these offensive actions, including the 'Kilgobnet Mine disaster', indicates that they were regular operations planned in advance of the announcement of the Truce on 8 July. Their occurrence so close to the ceasefire was entirely coincidental, and any resulting fatalities from these incidences cannot be reasonably considered as evidence of pre-ceasefire 'blood lust' on the part of the British forces. In other cases, such as the fatal shootings of John Foley and Hannah Carey, it is impossible to say to what extent, if any, news of the

[139] *Galway Observer*, 6 November 1920.
[140] *Irish Independent*, 5 November 1920.
[141] PMCILCI on Hannah Carey (NAUK, WO 35 / 147A).

Truce motivated the British personnel responsible. The discipline of the British forces at the time was so poor that such killings were commonplace that it would be wrong to assume that Foley and Carey were killed in pre-mediated acts by British troops seeking vengeance in the final hours of the conflict. By contrast the killing of Denis Spriggs, the attack on the Keogh family home which killed Margaret Keogh, and the attempted assassinations of Tomás Malone and Patrick O'Reilly were apparently premeditated attempts at reprisal killings carried out by members of the British forces who were aware that the Truce was imminent. As illustrated above, the announcement of the Truce caused British forces personnel to react in a number of different ways. Some welcomed the forthcoming armistice, immediately withdrew from the battlefield and reprieved prisoners who they had been due to execute. Some of those angered by the announcement of the ceasefire sought opportunities for vengeance, or a final chance to confront the enemy in battle. Others still carried out their duties as normal up to the final hour but were careful not to breach the Truce once it began. An equally diverse range of actions and attitudes existed within the IRA at the time - yet the final acts of the republican military campaign have received infinitely more attention than those of their British counterparts.

The methods, and level of violence involved in both the final British and republican attacks were often comparable. The use of mines by the British forces, as at Kilgobnet, was a reckless and indiscriminate tactic that endangered, and claimed, the lives of a number of innocent civilians. However it was an effective, if not particularly gallant or chivalrous method of conducting anti-insurgent warfare. Many of the IRA's method's of warfare, such as their use of improvised mines, explosive booby traps and their attacks on 'soft targets' were equally unwholesome. Despite how loathsome these operations may appear, they were considered legitimate methods of warfare at the time. Both sides also frequently engaged in tactics that they knew to be illegal. Members of British forces regularly engaged in reprisal killings, summarily executing unarmed men they had taken prisoner or targeting the homes of republican families and killing unarmed suspects whom they had captured in their beds. The IRA was guilty of executing unarmed enemies they had taken prisoner who were not suspected of involvement in espionage and whose deaths appear to have been primarily motivated by vengeance.

Despite the equally questionable morality of actions undertaken by both sides, the

trend in Irish and British historiography has been to ignore the killings committed by British troops after the ceasefire was announced. For example, the reaction of rank and file British soldiers stationed in Cork to the announcement of the Truce resulted in at least two fatalities, the shooting of a child, damage to private property and other serious breaches of discipline. Yet a number of historians including Hart and Sheehan, whose work centers on Cork and explored in detail violence committed by the IRA, failed completely to mention these killings, their possible motives or to investigate whether or not they were related to the announcement of the Truce.

Simarily, Yeates' history of Dublin during the War of Independence focused so much on IRA violence at the time of the Truce that it completely ignored the deaths of those killed by the actions of the British forces in the same period:

> the IRA mounted a series of attacks around the country before the ceasefire deadline of noon on Monday 11 July. … The only fatality in Dublin was Andrew Knight, a tram inspector from Clarinda Park, Kingstown, whose body was discovered in Dalkey … By contrast eight soldiers, two RIC men, three Volunteers and two civilians were killed in the provinces in the last hours of the conflict including the fifteen year old daughter of a former RIC man, shot as she tried to protect her father from his attackers, who suspected him of being an informer.[142]

Yeates adopts the standard Truce narrative which excludes any reference to similar acts of violence perpetrated by the British forces. The three IRA volunteers killed in combat fighting against the British forces during the Castleisland Ambush are mentioned in passing by Yeates; however the deaths of two other IRA Volunteers, Denis Spriggs and Seán Quinn, who were killed by the British forces in non-combat situations, are not. Yeates' work focuses on Dublin city; yet it omitted any reference to the death of a young woman in Dublin city, who was apparently killed by the British forces, whilst describing in some detail the death of another young woman in rural Tipperary who was killed by the IRA.

Another example of this biased narrative cames from Donal J. O'Sullivan's *The Irish Constabularies 1822 - 1922: a century of policing in Ireland*. He gives the following account of the Truce:

> On 9 July, a Truce was agreed between Eamon de Valera and General Macready. Hostilities in Ireland were to officially

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[142] Yeates, *A city in turmoil*, p 285.

> cease at 12 noon on the 11th. Even though the Truce was signed on 9 July there was a last minute flurry of activity by the IRA. They shot dead the daughter of a retired RIC man whose house they raided in Tipperary on the 9th, and on the same day they fired at and wounded a soldier and an RIC man. Early on 11 July, they kidnapped five British soldiers in Cork city, shot four of them dead and wounded the other The IRA in Kerry killed three British soldiers on the day the Truce became effective. Serious rioting took place in Belfast during most of the month and several people were killed, including fourteen people on the 11th alone. Military and RIC reinforcements were dispatched by special trains from Dublin in an effort to get the Belfast Riots under control.[143]

O'Sullivan's account is entirely selective. In it, the IRA are portrayed as the sole agressors. No mention is made of the numerous instances of British aggression, outlined above, that occurred in the same period and caused a significant number of fatalities. No effort is made to explore the context of the shooting of Brigid Dillon or the four soldiers killed at Ellis Quarry. Instead it is automatically assumed that these were callous premeditated actions planned by the IRA in reaction to the announcement of the Truce, with no other motivation. The many cases where the IRA showed clemency to British soldiers and RIC constables they held prisoner at the time of the Truce are not recorded by O'Sullivan. The very last victim of the conflict, Hannah Carey, is also conspicuously absent from his account, most likely because O'Sullivan was more concerned with chronicling the deaths of RIC constables than those they killed. Finally, O'Sullivan suggests that the RIC were key to ending the rioting in Belfast, completely ignoring the key role that members of the RIC and Special Constabulary played in formenting the violence.[144]

This narrative and historiography is flawed, not only because of its inordinate focus on republican violence, but also because it promotes a hierarchy of victimhood. It names and identifies victims of IRA. The stories of their deaths were remembered and recorded in some detail in histories of the conflict. By contrast the stories of those killed by the British forces are forgotten. For example, Margaret Keogh's killing has been forgotten to the extent that is not recorded in any of the recently published histories of the conflict or of the Cumann na mBan organisation.[145] Alexander Clarke, the RIC constable assassinated by the IRA in Skibbereen, is regularly referred to in books, in newspaper articles, and on radio, as one of the last victims of IRA violence - 'the last of the "enemy"

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[143] O'Sullivan, Donal J., *The Irish Constabularies*, p. 361.
[144] For the role of the RIC and Special Constabulary in formenting the violence in Belfast see Chapter Seven.
[145] See, for example: Pádraig Yeates, *A city in turmoil*; Ann Matthews, *Renegades*.

to die at the hands of the IRA' or 'the last casualty of the War of Independence'.[146] In fact, Clarke was neither. The last member of the RIC killed during the War of Independence was Sergeant James King but he is frequently overlooked in favour of Clarke because Clarke, unlike King, was not the leader of an RIC 'Murder Gang'. In fact, the final fatility of the War of Independence was Hannah Carey an innocent civilian shot dead by the RIC whose death has never received the same level of public attention as Clarke's.

Negative reaction by members of the British forces to the announcement of the Truce appears to have been a key factor in the violence which convulsed Belfast between the 8 July and 11 July 1921. This violence and the role of the British forces in sparking it is analysed in detail in the next chapter.

[146] See, for example: Kee, *The green flag Volume III*, p. 143; *Irish Independent*, 22 June 2011.

Chapter Seven

The Raglan Street Ambush and sectarian violence during 'Belfast's Bloody Sunday'

Introduction

A total of sixty-one people died as a direct result of political violence in the interim period between the announcement of the Truce and its implementation. Twenty-two of these fatalities (approx 36% of total) occurred during 'Belfast's Bloody Sunday', an intense and extremely violent bout of sectarian rioting which began at midnight on Sunday 10 July and did not abate until the afternoon of Monday 11 July. This death toll gives 'Belfast's Bloody Sunday' the dubious honour of having been the bloodiest day in the city's very long and troubled history. Despite the extremely high number of fatalities, the widespread sectarian rioting and the large-scale destruction of property, the Bloody Sunday riots hardly register in public consciousness, and are usually reduced to a footnote in histories of the period.[1] Where the Bloody Sunday riots are mentioned, they are usually linked with the established narrative that the announcement of the Truce led directly to a series of reckless and foolhardy last minute IRA attacks. Some commentators have promoted the idea that the Bloody Sunday riots were solely the result of an unprovoked, cynical and exploitative IRA murder of an RIC constable. In the days following the attack, the *Belfast Telegraph* reported:

> The City of Belfast had an object lesson on Sinn Fein methods yesterday, when the customary quiet of the Sabbath was turned into bedlam by the gunmen … Sinn Fein is evidently taking full value of the few hours remaining before the Truce. There is not the slightest doubt that all the trouble yesterday was commenced and continued by Sinn Fein gunmen. The murder of Constable Conlon and the shooting of his comrades was the starting point of the turmoil, which would have been infinitely worse but for the admirable restraint of the loyalists. [2]

Phillips, who wrote one of the earliest histories of the period, also cited 'the murder of a

[1] Dorney has suggested that this is because the violence that occurred is an embarrassment to the historical and political image which all involved wish to project. John Dorney, 'Four Bloody Sundays' on www.theirishstory.com/2010/06/24/four-bloody-sundays (accessed 17 August 2014).
[2] *Belfast Telegraph*, 11 July 1921.

constable by Sinn Feiners' as the sole cause of the Belfast violence.[3] Hezlet's account of the incident, though somewhat more balanced, in acknowledging that Protestant-Loyalist attacks also occurred, emphasised that the IRA was to blame for sparking the outbreak and absolved the British forces of any involvement in or responsibility for any of the resultant deaths. He suggested that any attempts to link the Special Constabulary to sectarian attacks on Catholics were 'skilful propaganda'.[4] Others, including Abbott and Trotter, whilst acknowledging that there was widespread sectarian rioting across the city as the Truce drew near, have also pointed to IRA aggression as the root cause of the unrest and its ensuing fatalities.[5]

On several occasions, newspaper columnist Kevin Myers has also asserted that the IRA's actions provoked the violence:

> As the hours of the Truce neared, the tempo of the killings increased. Twenty four hours before the Truce started, the IRA attacked a police patrol on the Falls Road, shooting two Catholic policemen and a Protestant Special Constable. In the chaos and communal riots which followed, a total of 14 [sic] people were killed in west and north Belfast. [6]

On the 90th anniversary of the Truce, Myers again reiterated his belief that unprovoked IRA violence caused the riots of July 1921:

> the cycle of psychiatric futility that is Fenianism knows no end … I've said many, many times that the more we know of the past Troubles, the less likely we are to repeat them … didn't the nationalist people of West Belfast have all the knowledge that they could possibly have wanted about the futility of violence before they began their insane war in 1971? … Did they not have the ambush of Raglan Street of July just 90 years ago to tell them of the consequences of violence? This sordid little murder of a Catholic police officer led to an eruption of sectarian violence in which 14 [sic] people were killed, 100 injured, and scores of houses burnt out. Did the nationalist people thereby learn of the futility of violence? … The reverse: "The Raglan Street Ambush" is cherished in Falls Road folklore.[7]

Whilst Myers' analysis of the causes of violence in Belfast is deeply flawed, he is correct in stating that the Raglan Street ambush is an important event in the history and folklore of the Falls Road district which is still celebrated by the Catholic-Nationalist and republican community there.

Peter Carleton, who was a member of Na Fianna Éireann in Belfast, spoke of the

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[3] Phillips, *The revolution in Ireland 1906 - 1923*, p. 216.
[4] Hezlet, *The 'B' Specials*, pp 23, 46.
[5] Abbott, *Police casualties*, p.265; Trotter, *Constabulary heroes*, p. 28.
[6] *Irish Times*, 27 August 1994.
[7] *Irish Independent*, 22 June 1921.

incident as if it were a successful premeditated ambush - the high point of the IRA's military campaign in the city and a successful military operation that Belfast republicans were proud of:

> The only type of conventional warfare that took place in Belfast and that bore any resemblance to what was then taking place in the South, was the ambush at Raglan Street. Twelve men took part, yet nearly a hundred put in later for Free State pensions … It was directed against the RIC and B-Specials. There were not a lot of casualties, but they captured some arms and burned the Crossley Tenders. [8]

Another republican also recalled that the IRA had lured the British forces into a trap in Raglan Street and that so many members of the Belfast IRA later claimed to have been involved that if they 'had really been there, then they could have [e]ate[n] up the cage-car [Crossley Tender lorry], peelers [RIC constables] and all.'[9] IRA veteran, Roger McCorley, stated that the ambush was the most successful IRA operation against the British forces in Belfast. According to McCorley, the Belfast IRA seized this opportunity to impose a brutal and just retribution upon the British forces for the reprisal killings committed by the 'Murder Gang', thereby settling the score, and restoring the IRA's military reputation with a single deadly blow.

> I had issued a general order that where reprisal gangs were cornered; no prisoners were to be taken. The enemy, after a short time, offered to surrender but our men, in obedience to the order, refused to accept their surrender. The fight continued for about forty minutes and only finished when the last of the reprisal gang was wiped out.[10]

McCorley estimated that the IRA killed up to fifteen members of the British forces in this attack. If this estimate was accurate, it would mean that the Raglan Street ambush was one of the most successful IRA operations of the entire conflict, ranking alongside the IRA attacks at Kilmichael and Crossbarry. One of the participants in the operation, Sean Mac Iomaire, suggested that he and his comrades had killed at least eight RIC constables, and that the attack was 'a great victory' for the IRA.'[11]

Lore about the 'Raglan Street Ambush' was so widespread that some West Belfast bard penned 'The Ballad of the Raglan Street Ambush' as a celebration of the

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[8] MacEoin, *Survivors*, p. 305.
[9] Gerry Adams, *Falls memories: a Belfast life* (Colorado, 1994), pp 66 - 7.
[10] Roger McCorley, (NAI, BMH WS 389, pp 22 - 6).
[11] Sean MacIomaire, in Geraldine McAteer (ed.) *Down the Falls: book one the old Falls* (Belfast, 1983), p. 17.

event:

Well I'll tell you a tale of a row in the town,
When a lorry went up and it never came down,
It was the neatest oul sweetest row you'd ever meet,
When the boys caught the Specials down Raglan Street.

When Craigavon sent the Specials out to shoot the people down,
He thought the IRA were dead in dear old Belfast town,
But he got a rude awakening with rifle and grenade,
When he met the first Battalion of the Belfast Brigade.

They came cursing and swearing as always before,
And they swore they'd walk knee deep in Sinn Feiners' gore,
But ours was the bullets those bould boys did meet,
And they ran like Hell's blazes down Raglan Street.

Oh the bould Christy Clarke he was there on that night,
Shouting give me a Webbly - I'll put them to flight,
But a Martini bullet cut the bricks at his feet,
And he broke all the records out of Raglan Street.

And the bould Dinkey Campbell, the brother of a man,
With a 'Peter The Painter' clasped in his right hand,
He walked around the corner and a Peeler did meet,
And bang! went the Peeler up Raglan Street.

Well early next morning when dawn it had come,
There was nothing to hear but the sound of a drum,
It wasn't the Orangemen a-walkin the streets,
It was D Company marching up Raglan Street.[12]

Given the wide range of conflicting accounts and interpretations of the event, and the significance of the ensuing violence, it is worth examining the nature, causes and effects of the incident in detail.

[12] Lyrics recorded by Hugh McAteer and reproduced in *Down the Falls*. The additional verse is from local historian Jim McDermott. This song is a reworking of *'A row in the town'* written about the 1916 Rising. McAteer (ed.) *Down the Falls*, p. 17; McDermott, *Northern Divisions,pp 100 -1;* Frank Harte, *Dublin street songs* (Dublin, 2004).

The Raglan Street Ambush

Despite the many inconsistencies in the numerous and varied accounts, all are agreed that the 'Raglan Street Ambush' was at the beginning of the cycle of violence that claimed twenty-two lives in Belfast in just over twenty-four hours. Prior to the ambush, the RIC in Belfast reported that 'party feeling' (ie: political & sectarian tension) was running high in early July.[13] It is likely that the announcement of the Truce on 8 July further increased the existing tensions but both unionist and nationalist newspapers agree that the city was peaceable until the night of 9 July. The *Belfast Telegraph* reported that the 'customary quiet of the Sabbath' prevailed, whilst the *Irish News* stated that 'peace reigned everywhere' in the city up to that time.[14] All contemporary accounts also agree that a force of RIC and 'B Specials' departed Springfield Road barracks for the Catholic-Nationalist Falls Road district approximately one hour after the 10:30pm curfew. The official RIC account of the incident stated that this was a routine curfew patrol.[15] However some press reports suggest that the 'curfew patrol' was engaged in reprisals. The *Irish News* described the force as a raiding party which attacked Catholic-Nationalist homes on Raglan Street.[16] The *Ulster Herald* carried the following report of their behaviour: 'After midnight, a Crossley Tender with armed, uniformed, singing men began patrolling Raglan Street. The lorry stopped and 'when they got out of the car, they battered in a number of doors and called on B----Y Fenians to come out.'[17] IRA Volunteer Jimmy Burns, who was monitoring the patrol's activities, reported that they were drunk and had disguised themselves by painting their faces black. This led the IRA to suspect that the patrol was an RIC 'murder gang' intent on carrying out reprisal killings.[18] Local accounts of the incident also support Burns contention that the RIC constables and 'B Specials' were drunk and that the curfew patrol's activities were highly provocative and aggressive in nature.[19]

The IRA had expected British reprisals in the area that night, and in anticipation

[13] RIC County Inspector's Report for Belfast, July 1921 (NAUK, CO 904 / 115).
[14] *Belfast Telegraph*, 11 July 1921; *Irish News*, 11 July 1921.
[15] RIC County Inspector's Report for Belfast, July 1921 (NAUK, CO 904 / 115).
[16] *Irish News*, 11 July 1921.
[17] *Ulster Herald*, 16 July 1921.
[18] McAteer (ed.) *Down the Falls*, p. 16.
[19] McDermott, *Northern Divisions*, p. 99.

of this, a force of fourteen volunteers from D Company of the Belfast Battalion had assembled at their headquarters at No. 3 Raglan Street. Twelve members of this party were armed with rifles, the remaining two had side arms, and the group was under the command of Captain Thomas Flynn. At 11:20pm the residents of the Pound-Loney area near Barrack Street sounded an alarm by blowing whistles and beating bin lids to signal the approach of British forces. The IRA volunteers under Flynn's command took up positions around Albert Street in expectation of this threat but were stood down on the basis that there had been a false alarm. A short time later, the republicans returned to the eastern end of Raglan Street and received a signal flashed from a red lamp which indicated the approach of British forces. The IRA immediately took up defensive positions near the junction of Peel Street and Raglan Street. Within minutes an IRA scout arrived with confirmation that an RIC and Special Constabulary patrol was fast approaching.[20] At 11:50pm the RIC Crossley Tender reached the Raglan Street - Peel Street junction and came under attack from the IRA ambushers.[21] The IRA fired at least two coordinated volleys of rifle and small arms fire at the Crossley Tender from their ambush positions. The RIC and Special Constabulary quickly returned fire and a chaotic running battle between the opposing forces ensued that lasted for several minutes.[22] RIC Constable Edward Hogan and Special Constable Charles Dunn were wounded in the initial fire fight. Four IRA volunteers attempted to approach the rear of the Crossley Tender and were confronted by Thomas Conlon and two other constables. Constable Conlon challenged the republicans shouting 'Halt! Hands Up!'. IRA Volunteer Jack Donaghy immediately opened fire with an automatic pistol killing Conlon. The IRA broke off its attack shortly afterwards and retreated to a republican 'safe house' on Baker Street. [23] The attack had rendered the Crossley Tender immobile and a second RIC vehicle was summoned to take the wounded constables to the Royal Victoria Hospital.[24] Constable Conlon was a native of Roscommon, he was unmarried and was thirty-three years-old at the time of his death. He had thirteen years' service in the RIC, having been

[20] McAteer (ed.) *Down the Falls,* pp 15 - 6.
[21] *Belfast Telegraph,* 9 August 1921.
[22] RIC County Inspector's Report for Belfast, July 1921 (NAUK, CO 904 / 115); Sean Mac Iomaire in McAteer (ed.) *Down the Falls,* p. 16.
[23] McDermott, *Northern Divisions,* p. 103; Geraldine McAteer (ed.) *Down the Falls,* p. 16.
[24] Trotter, *Constabulary heroes,* p. 28.

a farmer before enlisting in the force.[25] Conlon was the only member of the British forces killed in the attack. Republican suggestions that the IRA had 'wiped out' the patrol, killing up to fifteen RIC & Special Constabulary are gross exaggerations.[26]

Following the attack, a large force of RIC and Special Constabulary was deployed in the area and cordoned off a section of the district bordered by the Fall's Road, Panton Street, Cypress Street, McDonnell Street and Albert Street.[27] The first action of the reinforcements was a raid on the Raglan Street GAA Club. According to the *Belfast Telegraph,* the police found empty rifle ammunition casings strewn outside the club. Inside they allegedly found over a thousand rounds of ammunition left in plain view on the floor and a German rifle concealed nearby. After making this discovery, the RIC and Special Constabulary repaired to a motor garage on the ground floor of the premises where, according to the *Belfast Telegraph* 'the police located an outbreak of fire'. Interestingly the *Belfast Telegraph*'s reporter failed to comment on the origins of the mysterious blaze.[28] The *Irish News* reported that the police reinforcements raided a number of Catholic-Nationalist homes within the cordoned area, physically assaulting their male occupants. A number of families in the area had their windows broken and gunshots were fired at their homes. Despite this outbreak of violence, none of the local inhabitants suffered death or serious injury that night.[29]

The probability is that the destruction of the GAA club and the disorder which followed were deliberate acts of reprisal carried out by members of the RIC and Special Constabulary to exact retribution on the local populace for the earlier attack on their comrades. Whilst it is conceivable that police reinforcements did discover a rifle and ammunition in the GAA club, though probably not in the quantities and haphazard manner reported in the unionist press, the suggestion that the RIC and Special Constabulary merely stumbled upon the fire which destroyed the same premises is unlikely, particularly given these forces' record of indiscipline and incendiarism. Tellingly, the RIC account of the disturbances mentions the alleged discovery of the munitions but omits any reference to the subsequent fire and destruction of the

[25] Abbott, *Police casualties,* p. 265.
[26] Roger McCorley, (UCDA, EOMN, P17b / 98).
[27] McDermott, *Northern Divisions,* p. 101.
[28] *Belfast Telegraph,* 11 July 1921.
[29] *Irish News,* 11 July 1921.

premises.[30] The Liberal newspaper the *Northern Whig*, later published a statement from the Raglan Street GAA Club stating that no arms or ammunition had been found on the premises. The *Northern Whig* also insisted that the destruction of the GAA club and police raids on homes in the district immediately afterwards amounted to state-sponsored attacks on the Catholic-Nationalist community. [31]

Belfast's Bloody Sunday

The police cordon imposed on part of the Falls Road district in response to the Raglan Street ambush was lifted between 9:00am and 10:00am the following morning, Sunday 10 July.[32] There had been sporadic outbreaks of shooting and sniping in Cupar Street, Carlisle Street, Lonedale Street and the Falls Road throughout the early morning but this appeared to ease after curfew ended at 5:00am.[33] At 8:00am a loyalist mob assembled in Cupar Street and set fire to five houses occupied by Catholic families. The fire brigade arrived a short time later and extinguished the flames. The firemen had scarcely left the street when they received word that another Catholic home was ablaze. The situation quickly spiralled out of control after the arsonists looted Finnegan's, a Catholic-owned pub at 93 Cupar Street, and then set the business ablaze. Twenty Catholic homes were destroyed in the wave of simultaneous arson attacks that followed.[34] At noon there was an outbreak of sniping from the loyalist enclaves of Ashmore Street, Conway Street and Townsend Street.[35] According to the *Irish News*: 'There was a regular ring of unionist snipers commanding the streets abutting on the Falls Road and no person could pass up or down that thoroughfare except at the gravest risk.'[36] By 1:00pm the violence had spread to adjoining streets and the situation had deteriorated so much that the tram service to the area was halted. At 2:30pm twelve year-old William Baxter, a Protestant schoolboy was shot in the chest as he walked to Sunday school in Ashmore Street.

[30] RIC County Inspector's Report, Belfast July 1921 (NAUK, CO 904 / 115).
[31] McDermott, *Northern Divisions*, p. 101.
[32] *Irish News*, 11 July 1921.
[33] *Belfast Telegraph*, 11 July 1921; *Irish News*, 11 July 1921.
[34] *Irish News*, 11 July 1921.
[35] RIC County Inspector's Report, Belfast July 1921 (NAUK, CO 904 / 115).
[36] *Irish News*, 11 July 1921.

Another Protestant youth, Ernest Park, was shot dead on the same thoroughfare as he was bringing a kitten to a friend's house. It would appear that both boys were killed by the same nationalist or republican sniper firing from the rear of Ashmore Street School and the Falls Road.[37]

The British forces, protected by armour plated vehicles, began patrolling sections of the Falls Road and the nationalist press subsequently complained that the British forces deployed a heavy police and military presence in Catholic-Nationalist areas, and that these troops raided houses and harassed the occupants whilst snipers and gunmen in loyalist districts went unmolested.[38] The RIC reported that they had come under sniper fire and that British military and Special Constabulary patrols in armoured vehicles had been deployed on the Falls Road to deal with this threat.[39] By three o'clock RIC and Special Constabulary patrols were reportedly running wild, racing through Catholic-nationalist streets in their armoured vehicles and firing indiscriminately at the residents. Large crowds of loyalist onlookers were alleged to have gathered in close proximity to bodies of police and cheered them as they fired each volley.[40] A Catholic ex-soldier named Henry Mulholland was killed at 3:30pm, when he was attacked without warning at Clonard Gardens by a gang of armed men who emerged from Cupar Street and shot him in the head. Mulholland lived at No. 5 Bombay Street, he was forty-nine years-old and had been employed at Combe's Foundry until the firm's Catholic-Nationalist employees had all been expelled by their Protestant-Loyalist co-workers.[41] Loyalist rioters on Cupar Street claimed a second victim shortly after Mulholland's killing when Alexander Hamilton, a twenty-one year old Catholic ex-soldier from Plevna Street, was shot dead.[42] Since early morning there had been attacks on Catholic homes and businesses in that neighbourhood, and before the day ended arsonists had destroyed the homes of at least twenty-six Catholic families and a Catholic-owned pub on Cupar Street.[43] The terror engendered by these attacks on Catholic homes is apparent in the death of Peter Mackey. Mackey was staying in a house on Mary Street at which a gang of unidentified men

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[37] Parkinson, *Unholy war*, p. 155.
[38] *Irish News*, 11 July 1921.
[39] RIC County Inspector's Report for Belfast, July 1921 (NAUK, CO 904 / 115).
[40] *Irish News*, 11 July 1921.
[41] *Irish News*, 11 July 1921.
[42] Parkinson, *Unholy war*, p. 154.
[43] *Irish News, 11 July 1921*.

appeared at night demanding entry. Believing, perhaps correctly, that the men were engaged in sectarian attacks on Catholics, Mackey fled the building and suffered a fatal fall in his panic stricken attempt to escape.[44]

Large crowds gathered near the city centre from 4:30pm onwards to watch members of the Orange Order return from a religious service at the Ulster Hall.[45] This Orange parade was attacked at several points by nationalist rioters firing revolvers, and the resulting panic led to a stampede by parade spectators near City Hall. A British soldier, Private C. Hughes, was attacked and wounded by gunmen in Upper Library Street, and a Protestant ex-soldier was wounded near the UVF Hospital.[46] A mixed force of RIC, Special Constabulary and British military supported by armoured vehicles, rushed to the scene. They responded to the nationalist attacks by pouring rifle and machine gunfire down the side streets into which they believed the attackers had fled. The *Irish News* gave the following account:

> The side streets were literally swept by rifle and machine-gun fire for over three hours, and during this time not a human being save the Crown forces was to be observed in any of these thoroughfares. Armed forces in motor wagons after a time patrolled the empty streets and there was machine-gun fire at intervals. There was scarcely a second's lull in this intense firing … The plight of the inhabitants was perilous in the extreme. Residents in the fire swept streets had to take refuge generally in the back rooms of their homes or lie prone on their faces on the floor.[47]

By late afternoon the violence had spread to Upper Library Street, Upper North Street, Millfield, Carrickhill, York Street, North Queen Street, Stanhope Street and the Old Lodge Road.[48] Although the violence had reached the city centre and was spreading rapidly it was still at its most intense between rival mobs and groups of gunmen along the Falls Road - Shankill Road interface. The RIC reported that Catholic-Nationalist areas were attacked by Protestant-Loyalist mobs which succeeded in setting fire to a number of houses.[49] The *Irish News* reported that, at one point, a loyalist mob, estimated to have been several thousand strong, attempted to invade the Falls Road and that many of them

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[44] *Irish News, 11 July 1921*.
[45] *Belfast Telegraph*, 11 July 1921.
[46] *Belfast Telegraph*, 11 July 1921.
[47] *Irish News*, 11 July 1921.
[48] Parkinson, *Unholy war*, p. 154.
[49] RIC County Inspector's Report for Belfast, July 1921 (NAUK, CO 904 / 115).

carried petrol, paraffin, rags and other incendiaries.[50]

Bernard Monaghan, a seventy year-old Catholic, was shot dead as he stood in the doorway of his house at 69 Abysinnia St.[51] James McGuiness, a thirty-five year-old Catholic left his home at 27 McMillan Place to fetch one of his children from Townshend Street. He was shot dead at the corner of McMillan's Place and Durham Street. Another Catholic ex-serviceman, twenty-two year-old Frederick Craig, was fatally wounded by a sniper as he was walked home along Clonard Street. He died shortly afterwards at the Mater Infirmorum Hospital. Dan Hughes, a twenty-eight year-old Catholic from McCleery Street, was shot dead by a sniper from Spamount Street, whilst attempting to reach his home. A loyalist mob attacked and killed Patrick Hickland in Boyd Street. Hickland was kicked and beaten by his attackers before being shot dead. Pat Devlin, a Catholic from Quadrant Street, was shot by gunmen on Albert Street. His gunshot wound eventually proved fatal and he died of his injures the following April.[52] James Lenaghan, a forty-eight year-old Catholic ex-soldier, who was shot dead on the corner of Derby St. and Falls Road.[53] Daniel Joseph Hughes, a 50 year old Catholic ex-soldier was shot dead whilst attempting to bring one of his five children home safely from a neighbours' house.[54] Another Catholic, fifty-six year-old laborer William Tierney, was shot dead in his home at 15 Osman Street.[55] Mary McGowan, a partially-sighted Catholic teenager, was crossing Derby Street with her mother when they were both shot without warning by members of the British forces travelling in an armoured vehicle. Mary received a fatal bullet wound to the leg and died the following day.[56] William Mullan, a fifty year-old Protestant tailor from James Street, was shot by a Catholic gunman and died of his wounds a short time later in the Victoria Hospital. David McMullan a nineteen year-old Protestant who worked as an apprentice engineer, was killed near his home on Lawnbrook Avenue.[57]

The level of the violence eased in the early hours of 11 July but intensified again

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[50] *Irish News*, 12 July 1921.
[51] Parkinson, *Unholy war*, p. 155; *Irish News*, 11 July 1921.
[52] Parkinson, *Unholy war*, p. 155; *Irish News*, 11 July 1921.
[53] McDermott, *Northern Divisions*, p. 102.
[54] Parkinson, *Belfast's Unholy war*, p. 154.
[55] *Belfast Telegraph*, 9 August 1921.
[56] *Belfast Telegraph*, 21 August 1921.
[57] McDermott, *Northern Divisions*, pp 101 - 2.

after daylight. William Brown, a forty-five year-old haulage contractor, was shot dead as he went to work in the nationalist David Street area. Brown died a short time later in Victoria Street Hospital. At 12:45pm, three quarters of an hour after the Truce had come into effect, a nineteen year-old Catholic, James Ledlie, was fatally wounded by a loyalist sniper.[58] Ledlie, a native of Plevna Street, was an IRA volunteer, a member of C Company 1st Battalion of the Belfast Brigade.[59] Accounts differ as to the circumstances of Ledlie's death. The official inquiry into Ledlie's death was told by a representative for the family that he had been killed whilst trying to remove furniture from the home of a Catholic friend who was at risk of sectarian attack. This was reported in the *Belfast Telegraph* and other contemporary newspaper accounts, and has since been taken at face value by some historians as proof that Ledlie was not on duty as an IRA volunteer at the time of his death.[60] However Ledlie's family was unlikely to tell an inquest organised by the British authorities the full facts of his death if he had died on active service with the IRA. It is more likely that the alternative narrative espoused by republicans that Ledlie was mobilised by the IRA for 'outpost duty' to prevent further sectarian attacks against Catholics in the Norfolk Street area at the time of his death is a more accurate version of events.[61] Regardless of the exact circumstances of Ledlie's death the nationalist press cited it as an example of loyalist callousness toward the negotiated ceasefire. The *Irish News* stated that Ledlie's shooting was 'a fitting commentary on the manner in which the Truce was kept by the Orange party in Belfast.'[62]

The RIC reported that the arrival of the Truce had a positive effect on the situation in Belfast. According to the local RIC district inspector: 'All over the city matters subsided about 12 o'clock noon on Monday, 11th ulto: as arranged by the Truce terms.'[63] The local IRA leader, Roger McCorley, recalled that 'fighting died down immediately' after the Angelus bells sounded at noon on 11 July. However the advent of the Truce only had a temporary effect on the violence in Belfast. Serious rioting erupted again on the 14 July with outbreaks of sniping, grenade attacks and exchanges of gunfire

[58] *Irish News*, 12 July 1921.
[59] McDermott, *Northern Divisions*, p. 103.
[60] *Belfast Telegraph*, 9 August 1921; Parkinson, *Unholy war*, p. 155.
[61] Belfast National Graves Association, *Antrim's patriot dead 1919 - 1993* (Belfast, ND); McDermott, *Northern Divisions*, p. 102.
[62] *Irish News*, 12 July 1921.
[63] RIC County Inspector's Report for Belfast, July 1921 (NAUK, CO 904 / 115).

between rival Catholic-Nationalist and Protestant-Loyalist mobs, which culminated in the shooting of a fourteen year-old Protestant girl and arson attacks on at least twenty houses.

Table 7:

Fatalities of 'Belfast's Bloody Sunday' 10 to 11 July 1921.

Thomas Conlon	RIC Constable	Killed in IRA attack.
William Baxter	Civilian (Protestant)	Killed by nationalist / republican sniper.
Ernest Park	Civilian (Protestant)	Killed by nationalist / republican sniper.
Henry Mulholland	Civilian (Catholic)	Killed by loyalist gunmen.
Alexander Hamilton	Civilian (Catholic)	Killed by loyalist gunmen.
Peter Mackey	Civilian (Catholic)	Suffered fatal fall fleeing raiders at his home.
Bernard Monaghan	Civilian (Catholic)	Killed by loyalist gunmen.
James McGuiness	Civilian (Catholic)	Killed by loyalist gunmen.
Frederick Craig	Civilian (Catholic)	Killed by loyalist sniper.
Dan Hughes	Civilian (Catholic)	Killed by loyalist sniper.
Patrick Hickland	Civilian (Catholic)	Killed by loyalist gunmen.
William Mullen	Civilian (Protestant)	Killed by nationalist / republican sniper.
David McMullen	Civilian (Protestant)	Killed by nationalist / republican sniper.
William Mullen	Civilian (Protestant)	Killed by nationalist / republican sniper.
Patrick Devlin	Civilian (Catholic)	Fatally wounded by loyalist gunmen.
James Lenaghan	Civilian (Catholic)	Killed by RIC / Special Constabulary.
Daniel Joseph Hughes	Civilian (Catholic)	Killed by RIC / Special Constabulary.
William Tierney	Civilian (Catholic)	Killed by RIC / Special Constabulary.
Francis Robinson	Civilian (Protestant)	Killed by RIC / Special Constabulary.
William Brown	Civilian (Protestant)	Killed by nationalist / republican sniper.
Mary McGowan	Civilian (Catholic)	Killed by RIC / Special Constabulary.
Seamus Ledlie	IRA Volunteer	Killed by a loyalist sniper.

Another outbreak of rioting and looting occurred on the night of 16 July but there were no reported fatalities.[64] The cycle of violent events in Belfast that began about midnight on Sunday 10 July and ended about midday on Monday 11 July resulted in at least 22 people being killed (1 RIC constable, 1 IRA volunteer, 7 Protestant civilians and 13

[64] RIC County Inspector's Report for Belfast, July 1921 (NAUK, CO 904 / 115).

Catholic civilians). A further 80 people suffered serious injuries.[65] Countless others were made homeless; with the highest estimate claiming that at least 160 Catholic homes were attacked, forcing a thousand homeless Catholics to seek shelter in schools, stores, halls and other makeshift accommodation.[66] Violence in Belfast erupted sporadically continuing until 1922, leading the local IRA leader, Roger McCorley, to comment: 'The pogrom lasted two years … the Truce lasted six hours only.'[67]

Recurring themes in the history of political and sectarian rioting in Belfast.

Whilst the traditional narrative has attributed the cause of the Bloody Sunday riots to the 'Raglan Street Ambush', the likelihood is that the outbreak of violence was the result of several overlapping factors including loyalist opposition to the news of the Truce and escalating sectarian tensions in the city in advance of the 12 July celebrations. The city of Belfast had been a flashpoint for warring communities and ideologies for almost a century prior to the War of Independence. This was usually the result of two factors, namely: negative reaction to political developments which heightened loyalist fears of Home Rule, and tension caused by the annual 'Twelfth of July' celebrations and Orange Order parades. With regard to the first; T. K. Wilson's study of political and sectarian violence in Ulster noted that outbursts of loyalist violence in the early 1920s were frequently a reaction to external stimuli, namely reports of IRA attacks in the south of Ireland including the assassination of District Inspector Smyth, and political developments such as the announcement of the Truce.[68] This was not a new phenomenon and there appears to be a definite pattern of Catholic-Nationalist political advances being quickly followed by Protestant-Loyalist violence in the city. Violent loyalist opposition to the first Home Rule Bill resulted in the 'Anti-Home Rule' riots of 1886 during which at least 30 people were killed. These riots were sparked by a Unionist MP who made a speech denouncing Catholicism as 'a system of sensualism, superstition and sin'. This

[65] RIC County Inspector's Report for Belfast, July 1921 (NAUK, CO 904 / 115).
[66] MacArdle, *The Irish Republic*, p. 437.
[67] McCorley, (UCDA, EOMN P17b/98).
[68] Wilson, *Frontiers of violence*, p. 159.

immediately led to an attack on Protestant-Loyalist enclaves by a Catholic-Nationalist mob. Gun battles between the RIC and loyalists ensued during which two rioters, a British soldier and an RIC Head Constable were killed.[69] Almost a decade later, the Second Home Rule Bill coincided with a spate of sectarian attacks in the Belfast shipyards which forced hundreds of Catholic workmen from their employment.[70] Shortly after the Third Home Rule Bill was passed in 1912, another loyalist mob rampaged through the Belfast shipyards forcing out almost 2,000 Catholic workers and a number of 'Rotten Prods' ie: Protestant republicans, nationalists and trade unionists.[71]

Belfast's annual 'Twelfth' celebrations frequently stoked sectarian tensions in the city and were often marred by violence. During the 1840s, Orange celebrations became so problematic that they were temporarily banned under the Party Processions Act of 1850.[72] In July 1857, an inflammatory anti-Catholic sermon by a Protestant preacher sparked a week of sectarian rioting, which included gun battles between Constabulary and Orangemen that reportedly led to several fatalities.[73] In the 1890s, loyalists occasionally opened fire on the RIC during 'Twelfth' celebrations because they perceived that the majority of the force were 'Fenian Police' ie: Catholic RIC constables from the south deployed in Ulster to tackle disorder. Constable Thomas Fennell who served in Belfast at the time, recalled that Orange parades were designed to inflame sectarian feeling:

> Orange drumming parties frequently went about … in the most provocative fashion, sometimes halting opposite Catholic houses, the drummers dancing in circles, something after the fashion of a Negro war dance …drumming parties … masqueraded with impunity, leading periodically to assaults and riots.[74]

Robert Lynch has noted in his study of political violence in Belfast that the 'Twelfth' became increasingly important during the War of Independence as an occasion to rally the Protestant-Loyalist faithful in response to the threat increasingly posed by republicanism. Speeches made at the Orange Order's 'Twelfth' celebrations became

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[69] Stanley H. Palmer, Police *and protest in England & Ireland 1780 - 1850*, (Cambridge, 1988), p. 527; Andrew Boyd, *Holy war* (Tralee, 1969), pp 142 - 9.
[70] Boyd, *Holy war*, p. 174.
[71] McDermott, *Northern Divisions*, p. 6.
[72] Boyd, *Holy war*, p. 9.
[73] Boyd, *Holy war*, pp 10 - 32.
[74] Thomas Fennell, *The Royal Irish Constabulary* (Dublin, 2003), pp 86 - 9.

rallying calls for all Loyal Ulster Protestants to defend themselves against perceived Catholic aggression. The unionist press carried letters each July warning of the dangers posed by Catholic machinations and urging readers to take swift action to prevent this. The recurring themes and siege imagery of the Orange celebrations served as a call to arms for those in attendance.[75] In many cases, loyalist politicians urged violent resistance against any nationalist or republican advances. On 12 July 1919, Edward Carson promised an assembly of Belfast Orangemen: 'If there is any attempt made to take away one jot or tittle of your rights as British Citizens … I will call out the Ulster Volunteers.'[76] The following year, with political fears amongst loyalists reaching a crescendo, Carson addressed a twenty-five thousand strong 'Twelfth' rally near Belfast telling his audience: 'be the consequences what they may, we in Ulster will tolerate no Sinn Féin … we will take the matter into our own hands. We will reorganise … throughout the province the Ulster Volunteers … And these are not mere words. I hate words without action.'[77]

Frederick Dane, a Canadian Orangeman, spoke in more blatantly sectarian terms blaming Catholics for Ulster's woes and telling his audience: that they: 'were fighting not an Ulster question alone but a well thought out plan for wrecking the British Empire at the instigation of the Church of Rome.'[78] This sectarian conspiracy theory was repeated at another 'Twelfth' rally by the Master of the Rathfriland District Orange Order, John Bradford, who declared that the violence in Ireland was caused by the machinations of the Pope and the Catholic Church and it was the duty of every Ulster Protestant to combat it and join the Orange Order.[79] Firebrands addressing similar gatherings in Belfast were alleged to have called for 'a show of revolvers to drive the Fenians out.'[80] After loyalist politicians had raised tensions to a fever pitch with violent rhetoric, it spilled over into actual physical violence a few days later when news spread of the assassination, by the IRA in Cork, of Colonel G. F. Smyth, Divisional Commissioner of the RIC in Munster.[81]

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[75] Robert Lynch, 'The people's protectors? The Irish Republican Army and the "Belfast Pogrom" 1920 - 1922', in Journal of British Studies, Vol. 47, No. 2 (April, 2008), p. 379.
[76] *Belfast Newsletter*, 14 July 1919.
[77] *Bellfast Newsletter*, 13 July 1920.
[78] *Irish News*, 13 July 1920.
[79] *Banbridge Chronicle*, 24 July 1920.
[80] Tim Pat Coogan, *The IRA* (London, 1995), p. 26.
[81] Michael Farrell, *Arming the Protestants: the formation of the Ulster Special Constabulary and the Royal Ulster Constabulary 1920*

A contemporary report in the *Westminster Gazette* alleged that the riots which followed were deliberately orchestrated and premeditated acts of violence planned in advance with the sole aim being 'to drive all the Home Rule workers in the shipyards out'.[82] An estimated 10,000 Catholic workers and up to 2,000 'rotten Prods' were expelled from the shipyards and Belfasts four largest engineering firms.[83] In retaliation, Catholics stoned Protestant shipyard workers en-route to the Belfast docks. In reprisal, loyalists burned down several Catholic-owned businesses in the east of the city. The isolated Catholic-Nationalist enclaves in Ardoyne and Clonard were attacked by Protestant-Loyalist rioters and a four thousand strong mob attacked St. Matthew's Catholic Church and the adjoining convent in the Short Strand.[84] Nineteen civilians (eight Protestants and eleven Catholics) were killed in this outbreak of violence.[85] Ultimately, incidents like this became so commonplace in Belfast each July that it was standard practice for the British authorities to deploy an additional 1,000 RIC and an equal number of soldiers to the city for the duration of the month in anticipation of violence.[86] The difficulties of policing sectarian tensions in Belfast were recognised by the RIC with the result that policing regulations and the religious balance of the rank and file in the city was even and this differentiated the city from the rest of Ireland.[87]

Aspects of the Bloody Sunday riots appear to have been nakedly sectarian and related to the annual tensions stoked by the Orange celebrations. For example, an elderly woman being threatened and harassed by a mob was reported to have appealed to a passing man for aid reminding him: 'You have a mother of your own and you would not like to see her murdered.' The man replied: 'I have but she is a decent Protestant, and not a Papist pig or cow' before calling on the mob to kill the woman.[88] Catholics alleged that Orangemen engaged in provocative and offensive behaviour during Orange parades in the city centre including 'party chants' and 'sash waving'. According to the *Irish News*:

- *27* (London, 1983), p. 25.

[82] Coogan, *The IRA*, p. 26.

[83] Lynch, *The Northern IRA and the early years of partition*, (Dublin, 2006), p. 28 ; McDermott, *Northern Divisions*, p. 37.

[84] Michael Farrell, *Northern Ireland: the Orange state*, (London, 1976) pp 28 - 29.

[85] Lynch, 'The people's protectors? The Irish Republican Army and the "Belfast Pogrom" 1920 - 1922', p. 380.

[86] Palmer, Police *and protest*, p. 528.

[87] Elizabeth Malcolm, *The Irish policeman 1822 - 1922: a life* (Dublin, 2006), pp 155 - 6.

[88] *Irish News*, 16 July 1921.

'This did not help to allay the excitement - in fact it added to the turmoil.'[89] Catholic-Nationalist gunmen attacked Orangemen returning from Protestant church services that afternoon.[90] The Orange Order's Catholic counterpart, the Ancient Order of Hibernians, was also active that day and led a number of sectarian attacks on Protestants and Protestant-owned business premises in West Belfast.[91]

The violence on Belfast's Bloody Sunday was partly due to a predictable reaction by loyalists to a major political development which threatened their position and this situation was worsened by the timing of that development occurring just days before the annual "Twelfth" celebrations when sectarian tensions were at their worst. However the British Government had little option but to schedule the Truce at such an inopportune time in mid-July owing to political considerations. The timetable for implementation of the Government of Ireland Act demanded that the new parliament of Southern Ireland be established by 12 July 1921. The British cabinet decided that, if this assembly had not met by that date, which was impossible given the Sinn Féin boycott, that Crown Colony Government and martial law would be imposed throughout the twenty-six counties and a 'surge' against the IRA would be launched by the British military. However the proposed date for the imposition of martial law and other drastic measures was immediately postponed to 14 July when Lloyd George was reminded of the significance of the 'Twelfth'.[92] Given the propensity for violence at the annual Orange celebrations, the timing of the Truce was far from ideal.

The news that the British authorities had agreed a ceasefire with Irish republicans was unlikely to receive a welcome reception amongst Ulster loyalists. The announcement of the Truce was a devastating blow to loyalism for several reasons. Firstly, the negotiations which followed had the potential to establish a hostile state on the borders of Northern Ireland. Secondly, the Truce effectively bestowed recognition from the British authorities upon the IRA, Sinn Féin and Dail Éireann and, naturally, there were grave loyalist fears that this could lead to an abandonment of partition. Furthermore, loyalists were alarmed that the terms of the Truce were to be applied to the new Northern Ireland

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[89] *Irish News*, 11 July 1921.
[90] *Belfast Telegraph*, 11 July 1921.
[91] *Roger McCorley*, (NAI, BMH, WS 389, p. 25).
[92] Hopkinson, *Irish War of Independence*, pp 194 - 5

state as well as the twenty-six counties of 'Southern Ireland', and this had been done without prior consultation with the Belfast parliament.[93] Wilson, in his study of political violence in Ulster, found that loyalists were extremely wary of the British Government's negotiations with Irish Republicans. They complained that the British had failed to press home their full military advantage over the IRA and suggested that this was the result of British incompetence, moral cowardice or deliberate treachery.[94]

Thousands of loyalist spectators were expected in Belfast city centre to view Orange Order church parades scheduled for Sunday 10 July and the ceasefire would come into effect just a few hours before the 'Eleventh Night' bonfires which were a highlight of the 'Twelfth' celebrations. The mobilisation of tens of thousands of Orangemen and the loyalist faithful in Belfast immediately after the British Government announced they had agreed an armistice with the IRA as a prelude to negotiations with Sinn Féin would likely have led to a forceful demonstration of loyalist feeling, even if the Raglan Street ambush had not occurred. RIC District Inspector J. J. McConnell, who was based in Belfast at the time, claimed that loyalist dissatisfaction with the news of the Truce was in a large part responsible for the intensity of the rioting. According to McConnell: 'The Northern Loyalists were determined to ignore the Truce, which they regarded as a surrender.'[95] Wilson notes that loyalist militancy was not 'mindless violence' it had a very definite purpose. The British Government's Irish policy was calibrated in response to the balance of forces in Ireland and violence directed by Belfast loyalists helped skew the balance in favour of loyalism, and served as a reminder to the English public and Conservative opinion that loyalists were still determined to maintain the Union. [96]

Revenge for Raglan Street? The 'Murder Gang' and British reprisals in Belfast.

Republican accounts of the Raglan Street ambush are adamant that the RIC and Special Constabulary patrol that was attacked was not a regular curfew patrol but a 'Murder

[93] Farrell, *Arming the Protestants*, pp 60 - 1.
[94] Wilson, *Frontiers of violence*, pp 85 - 6.
[95] J. J. McConnell, (NAI, BMH, WS 509, p. 6).
[96] Wilson, *Frontiers of violence*, pp 92 - 3.

Gang' intent on carrying out reprisal killings. Belfast republicans maintained that an RIC 'Murder Gang' similar to those described in the previous chapter operated in Belfast, and that this group usually exacted a swift revenge for any and all IRA attacks on the British forces. Recent academic studies have lent some support to these claims. Robert Lynch's study found that: 'In large part, the attacks on the Catholic minority [in Belfast] were a response to perceived provocations and … largely resulted from the activities of the IRA.'[97] His study also concluded that: 'IRA members were killed … largely at the hands of RIC murder gangs: extremist secret loyalist groups within the police force.'[98] Wilson claims that members of the RIC and Special Constabulary frequently engaged in reprisal killings and acted with impunity: 'A striking feature of the death squads … is the confidence with which they carried out their operations … they did not hide their identity as members of the security forces, but actively flaunted it. They wore police uniforms and caps; they left plenty of female witnesses.'[99]

The first reprisal killings in Belfast occurred on 25 September 1920 in reaction to the shooting of three RIC constables in two separate IRA attempts to disarm RIC constables on patrol in Catholic-Nationalist districts. One of the wounded RIC constables, Thomas Leonard of Springfield Road barracks, died of his wounds a short time later. That night unidentified raiders forced their way into the homes of a number of known republicans and shot dead three members of the IRA. There can be little doubt that members of the RIC garrison stationed at the Springfield Road barracks were responsible for these killings. Frederick Crawford, the District Commandant of the Special Constabulary in South Belfast, identified the assassins as policemen, and lauded their actions as an effective measure which he believed would prevent future IRA attacks:

> one policeman shot dead on Saturday night last and two badly wounded. Before morning the police retaliated by shooting three prominent Sinn Feiners. This seems drastic but to my mind it is the only way that we will stop these cold blooded murders … the patience of the police has been exhausted & … reprisals have taken place, I consider that they are justifiable & right in the eyes of God & man … The Sinn Feiners are quaking as they do not know who will pay the penalty next amongst them. Several of the leaders have been warned that if there is another policeman or soldier shot they will immediately be shot dead. [100]

[97] Lynch, 'The people's protectors? The Irish Republican Army and the "Belfast Pogrom" 1920 - 1922', p. 378.
[98] Lynch, 'The people's protectors? The Irish Republican Army and the "Belfast Pogrom" 1920 - 1922', p. 381.
[99] Wilson, *Frontiers of violence*, p. 107.
[100] Frederick Crawford, (PRONI, D640/11/1).

Members of the RIC working for IRA Intelligence reported that the killers were all members of the RIC, and had been led by a number of senior RIC officers including District Inspector Nixon. The IRA's informants also claimed that these killings were intended as reprisals for the death of Constable Leonard. The majority of the killers were stationed at Springfield Road, the same RIC barracks as the deceased, and the 'Murder Gang' had departed from there to avenge their comrade.[101] Furthermore, the mother of one of those killed later went to Springfield Road, confronted members of the RIC garrison there, and accused them of having murdered her son.[102]

On 26 January 1921, the IRA assassinated two members of the RIC who were staying at Roddy's Hotel.[103] The RIC established that one of the hotel's staff a barman named Michael Garvey, was involved. In an apparent case of mistaken identity three masked men in RIC uniform raided the home of a different barman named McGarvey and shot him dead whilst he lay in bed. RIC constables working for IRA intelligence later identified DI Nixon and members of the 'reprisal outfit' as the killers.[104] Two RIC Auxiliaries were shot by the IRA in Belfast city centre on 23 April, and immediately afterwards unidentified gunmen shot an IRA volunteer named Dan Duffin and his brother, an innocent civilian, dead in their home at Clonard Garden. Sympathetic RIC constables again told the IRA that the killers were members of the RIC.[105] District Inspector Ferris of the RIC was implicated in the killings. Ferris had only recently been transferred to Belfast, because he was also implicated in the assassination of Tomás MacCurtain, the Sinn Féin Mayor of Cork. At the time of the killings, Ferris was stationed at Springfield Road RIC barracks.[106]

Having identified those they believed were members of District Inspector Nixon's 'Murder Gang', the Belfast IRA marked them for assassination. Their first attempt to assassinate a member of the group occurred in June 1921 when Constable James Glover was mortally wounded in an IRA attack.[107] Two days later uniformed members of the RIC abducted Alexander McBride, William Kerr and Malachy Halfpenny from their

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[101] Confidential file on DI Nixon, Ernest Blythe Papers (UCDA, P24 / 176).
[102] McDermott, *Northern Divisions*, pp 60 - 1.
[103] Trotter, *Constabulary Heroes*, p. 15.
[104] Confidential file on DI Nixon, Blythe Papers (UCDA, P24 / 176).
[105] McDermott, *Northern Divisions*, pp 76 - 7.
[106] Kieran Glennon, *From pogrom to Civil War: Tom Glennon and the Belfast IRA* (Cork, 2013), pp 27 - 8, 62.
[107] Glennon, *Pogrom to Civil War*, p. 88.

homes and shot them dead. None of the three were members of the IRA and only one, Alexander McBride, was a member of Sinn Féin. McBride's widow identified District Inspector Nixon as leader of the gang of men in RIC uniform which had abducted and killed her husband.[108] On the same date Constable Thomas Sturdy was shot dead. He was the first member of the Special Constabulary killed in Belfast and members of that force ran amok in the Falls Road after his funeral, racing along the thoroughfare in their vehicles, firing indiscriminately at the local populace with rifles and machine guns.[109] One woman, Kathleen Collins, was killed, and three other civilians were wounded.[110] On 6 July Constable Thomas Galvin was mortally wounded in an IRA attack on Union Street.[111] Constable Galvin's shooting was followed by a serious outbreak of violence in the Catholic-Nationalist Union St, Upper Library St, North Queen St. and Old Lodge Road district. The *Irish News* denounced this as 'a wild night alarm, much worse than any hitherto experienced … on a terrifying scale … worse than anything previously heard in the city'. [112] The paper reported that the disturbances began when a group of armed and unidentified men, many of whom wore uniform, arrived in the district by vehicle and opened fire on Catholic homes. The local populace, fearing the intruders were members of the RIC 'Murder Gang', raised an alarm by shouting and blowing whistles. Armed locals, either members of the IRA or a rival nationalist group, responded by attacking the intruders with a barrage of revolver fire, and the raiders promptly withdrew. Given that the raiders were armed, arrived by vehicle, and wore uniform, the likelihood is that they were members of the RIC and Special Constabulary intent on exacting revenge for the shooting of Constable Galvin.

The above establishes a definite pattern between IRA attacks on the members of the RIC or Special Constabulary and a succession of swift reprisal killings by members of the so-called 'Nixon Murder Gang' which was led by a group of RIC officers stationed at Springfield Road RIC barracks. The successful defence of Catholic-Nationalist homes in the Union St, Upper Library St, North Queen St. and Old Lodge Road district was the first time that the 'Murder Gang' had attempted to avenge an attack and failed.

[108] McDermott, *Northern Divisions*, pp 88 - 9.
[109] McCorley (NAI, BMH, WS 389, p. 21).
[110] McDermott, *Northern Divisions*, p. 90.
[111] Trotter, *Constabulary heroes*, p. 27.
[112] *Irish News*, 8 July 1921.

Immediately after this failure, two members of the RIC died in quick succession. The first being Constable Glover, an alleged member of the gang stationed at Springfield Road RIC barracks who succumbed to his wounds at the Royal Victoria Hospital on Thursday 7 July.[113] The following day Constable Galvin died at the Military Hospital in Victoria Barracks.[114] The failure of the previous reprisal attack in Library Street three nights earlier was the first time that attempts by members of the RIC and Special Constabulary to avenge fallen comrades had been foiled. The deaths of two comrades in quick succession in the days that followed would almost certainly have been sufficient motivation for the 'Murder Gang' to attempt another reprisal. If this were the case, the subsequent announcement of the Truce would have been a further aggravation to any members of the Belfast RIC or Special Constabulary who were considering reprisals.

Several hours prior to the Raglan Street ambush, IRA Volunteer Sean Mac Iomaire reported to Frank Crummey the local IRA brigade intelligence officer with the news that a senior RIC officer from Springfield Road RIC barracks had called to the parish priest at Saint Paul's Church. The RIC officer told the priest that he would be off-duty that night and DI Nixon was taking charge. The IRA was aware that a number of the RIC Constables wounded in previous IRA attacks were in a critical condition and consequently were on the alert in case of reprisals.[115] The reported presence of Nixon in the area heightened fears of a reprisal. Mac Iomaire recalled 'when Nixon was there we could guess what for. We returned to Company Headquarters and held a meeting to decide what action to take. We planned to order all arms and men to report before curfew.'[116] The reported demeanour of the RIC patrol which entered Raglan Street, apparently inebriated, disguised with blackened faces, and demanding that 'the bloody Fenians come out' would only have increased republican suspicions that they were facing members of the notorious 'Murder Gang'. Belfast historian Jim McDermott has suggested that Constable Conlon, who is known to have passed intelligence information to the IRA and warned them of several raids, was not the type of policeman who would

[113] Trotter, *Constabulary heroes*, pp 24 - 5.
[114] Trotter, *Constabulary heroes*, pp 26 - 7.
[115] McCorley, (EOMN UCDA P17b / 98).
[116] McAteer (ed.) *Down the Falls*, p. 17.

have consorted with members of the 'Murder Gang'.[117] However this tactic was sometimes used by republican sympathisers in the RIC to try and gather information about the membership and activities of the group. For example, IRA Volunteer Tom McAnally recalled that a Constable McCarthy, who like Conlon was also passing intelligence information to the IRA, often tried to go on patrol with the 'Murder Gang' so that he could learn more about its membership.[118]

The Raglan Street ambush had little in common with the contemporary IRA ambushes in Munster that still dominate public perceptions of the conflict throughout Ireland. It appears that the Raglan Street 'ambush' was more a haphazard defensive action by the IRA to protect the Catholic-Nationalist community in response to a real and present threat from a possible RIC reprisal gang, than a premeditated attack on the British forces. This would have been a typical operation for the Belfast IRA at that time and only differed significantly from the defence of the Upper Library Street - Old Lodge Road district a few days earlier by the fact that an RIC constable was killed and because it coincided with the announcement of the Truce. The 'Raglan Street Ambush' was apparently a defensive IRA operation mounted in response to a local threat of RIC and Special Constabulary reprisals Its portrayal in the contemporary unionist press and official reports by the British forces that interpreted the ambush as part of a wider IRA campaign in reaction to the announcement of the Truce to inflict as many casualties on the British forces as possible before the Truce took effect has no basis.[119]

Role of the Special Constabulary in the 'Bloody Sunday' riots

At least five of the twenty two-fatalities that occurred during the Bloody Sunday riots were unarmed civilians, killed by members of the RIC or Special Constabulary. Republicans have alleged that these killings were, at least in part, the result of a violent negative reaction on the part of members of the Special Constabulary towards the announcement of the Truce. In light of these allegations, it is appropriate to examine in

[117] McDermott, *Northern Divisions*, p. 100.
[118] Tom McAnally, (EOMN UCDA P17b / 99).
[119] See, for example: *Belfast Telegraph*, 11 July 1921; RIC County Inspector's Report for Belfast, July 1921 (NAUK, CO 904 / 115).

some detail the origins of the Special Constabulary and the nature of its role in the Bloody Sunday riots. During the War of Independence, Ulster loyalists were deeply sceptical of the loyalties of the RIC. This was largely due to the fact that 82 percent of the men in the force were Catholic.[120] In 1920, Protestant-Loyalists in Ulster still regarded the RIC as 'Fenian Police'.[121] This attitude was partially the result of naked sectarianism and partially justified as the RIC developed a practice of transferring constables with suspected republican sympathies to loyalist areas in the north where it was felt they could inflict minimal damage. Catholic RIC Constables already serving in the north found they had little choice but to lend support to republicans as the conflict intensified. Patrick Diamond, a member of the IRA in Derry, stressed that these men were crucial to IRA intelligence in the north and often supplied local IRA units with ammunition and weaponry:

> in self preservation the RIC [in the north] were forced into friendship with the IRA. The RIC were in a most difficult position. They were being classified as Black and Tans themselves … had they resigned and gone back to their native places they would have been shot in the back … Since conditions were bad it was impossible to get jobs, so all they could do was remain and try and be as friendly as they could to the IRA.[122]

In Belfast, Dawson Bates, secretary of the Ulster Unionist Council, who later became Minister for Home Affairs in the Northern Ireland government, complained: 'large numbers of the better type of [loyalist RIC] men were drafted to the south and men who could not be trusted … were sent into Belfast. Over 50 per cent of the force in the city are Roman Catholics, mainly from the south, and many of them are known to be related to Sinn Féin.'[123] In response to these fears about the abilities and loyalty of the RIC, the Ulster Unionist Council passed a motion in June 1920 calling for a revival of the UVF to act as a bulwark against the IRA.[124] Dawson Bates held informal discussions with a number of senior RIC officers and reported to Carson: 'I know they would be delighted with the help which they would receive by enrolling loyalist Special Constables. The old formation of the UVF could be used for this purpose.'[125] The British authorities appeared

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[120] Hezlet, *The 'B' Specials*, p. 25.
[121] Malcolm, *The Irish policeman*, pp 155 - 6.
[122] Patrick Diamond, (O'Fiaich Liabrary, Armagh, LOK IV, B 01).
[123] Farrell, *Arming the Protestants*, pp 13 - 4.
[124] Ryder, *The fateful split:Catholics and the Royal Ulster Constabulary* (London, 2004), p. 12.
[125] Bates to Carson, 14 May 1920, (PRONI, Carson Papers D1570/1/3/39).

to agree with this suggestion and Sir Wilfrid Spender, an Englishman who had commanded the 36th Ulster Division, a force largely recruited from the UVF, was approached by Sir Hamar Greenwood within days of the Ulster Unionist Council's motion and asked to oversee the reorganisation of the UVF. Spender was assured that Lloyd George and the British Government approved of the scheme but was also warned that 'it would be politically unwise to announce this publicly.'[126] The following month, Winston Churchill gave his backing to the proposal, suggesting that a large force of armed loyalists raised in Ulster would free up at least seven British Army battalions for action against the IRA in Munster.[127]

The British authorities in Dublin Castle were less enthusiastic about this proposal warning; 'There would be intense civil war [in Derry] and in other parts of Ulster … In Belfast Protestants would reduce the Catholics to a state of terror.'[128] Ignoring this warning, the British cabinet decided in September 1920 to 'take the necessary steps through the divisional commissioner of police to organise a force of special constables in Ireland.'[129] The original motion referred only to the area of Ulster to be partitioned but this was later altered to Ireland camouflaging the fact that the move was specifically intended to arm Protestant-Loyalists in the north. No effort was ever made to raise a Special Constabulary elsewhere. The details of the new Ulster Special Constabulary were announced the following month. The force consisted of three sections: 'A Specials' would be full time recruits aged between twenty-one and forty-five years who the authorities hoped would include a large number of ex-soldiers, namely veterans of the UVF and the 36th Ulster Division. 'B Specials' would be a part-time force operating roadblocks, mounting patrols and guarding buildings at night. 'C Specials' were to be a reserve force with no regular duties that could be called upon in an emergency.

From the beginning it was clear that the Special Constabulary would reflect the sectarian nature of Ulster loyalism. Catholics were actively discouraged from joining the force and recruitment was almost exclusively from the UVF's membership, which had already been involved in anti-Catholic pogroms in Belfast. The *Belfast Newsletter* carried

[126] Chris Ryder, *The fateful split*, p. 12.
[127] Ryder, *The fateful split*, p. 10.
[128] Farrell, *Arming the Protestants*, p. 33.
[129] Farrell, *Arming the Protestants*, p. 39

a special appeal for members of the UVF to enlist in the Special Constabulary.[130] Sir Wilfrid Spender encouraged the membership of the Belfast UVF to enlist in the force and suggested that the 20,000 special constables needed in the city should all be recruited from UVF ranks. Spender also proposed that enlistment forms for the force should be held at UVF battalion headquarters and completed 'en masse' by the local UVF membership.[131] Many UVF units were simply transformed into bodies of the Special Constabulary, and many of the new police force's senior officers, including Frederick Crawford and Major Robert Stevenson, were also senior officers in the UVF.[132] Some of them, notably Colonel McClintock in Tyrone, refused to enrol Catholics.[133] The leadership of the UVF in Tyrone issued a memo to their supporters assuring them that Catholics would not be tolerated as members of the new Special Constabulary and that the British Government's 'appeal to "all well disposed citizens" may be looked upon as camouflage'.[134] One Catholic ex-RIC constable and military veteran who applied to join the Special Constabulary in Belfast was told that he would not be accepted on account of his religious denomination.[135] A senior member of the new force assured UVF leaders that Catholics would not be admitted to the Special Constabulary; consequently through harassment and intimidation it was made clear to the handful of Catholics who did apply to join the force that they were not welcome.[136] The Special Constabulary became in effect a Protestant-Loyalist militia recruited largely from the UVF. So much so that Sir Henry Wilson claimed that the entire membership of the force consisted of 'Black Protestants'.[137]

The UVF's involvement in anti-Catholic pogroms and the sectarian make-up of the new police force caused Joe Devlin, the Irish Parliamentary Party M.P. for West Belfast to comment: 'The Chief Secretary is going to arm pogromists to murder the Catholics. … Their pogrom is to be made less difficult. Instead of paving stones and

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[130] *Belfast Newsletter*, 2 November 1920.
[131] Spender to Belfast Regiment UVF Battalion Commanders, 29 October 1920 (PRONI D1295/2/12).
[132] Spender to Rev B. Ingram, (PRONI D1295/2/16).
[133] Interview between S.G. Tallents and General Ricardo, June 1922 (NAUK, CO906 / 26).
[134] Memo to Tyrone UVF Battalion Commanders Sept 1920 (PRONI, D 1678/6).
[135] Statement by Sergeant John Murphy, 22 March 1922 (State Papers Office Dublin).
[136] Farrell, *Arming the Protestants*, pp 49 - 50.
[137] Ryder, *The Fateful Split*, p. 20.

sticks they are to be given rifles.'[138] Devlin was not the only voice in the British Parliament to denounce the establishment of the Special Constabulary. J. Clynes Hansard, a Labour MP, protested that the British Government was 'arming … one faction [Protestant-Loyalists] and making them even more powerful than ever for the sort of mischief which so far they have pursued [a reference to the Belfast Shipyard expulsions of July 1920].'[139] The *Westminster Gazette* commented that the establishment of the Special Constabulary was 'the most inhuman expedient the government could have devised.'[140] The force was not long established when its members began to face accusations of anti-Catholic sectarianism. One of the first companies of 'A Specials' recruited in Fermanagh paraded through Enniskillen singing Orange songs on their way to the training depot and fired shots at a Catholic church.[141] The platoon of 'A Specials' stationed in Newry was accused of harassing the Catholic populace, firing wildly in the streets and burning down a Sinn Féin hall. Within a few months of their deployment nine members of the force were court-martialed for looting, they shot dead a local Catholic youth in suspicious circumstances and the platoon was disbanded shortly afterwards.[142] The 'B Specials' in particular gained a reputation for sectarian attacks on the homes of northern Catholics and republicans and in some areas this intensified into a campaign of sectarian killings of Catholics and reprisals against suspected republicans.[143] These killings appear to have been actively encouraged by the leadership with Frederick Crawford suggesting:

> There is only one way to deal with a campaign of murder the rebels are pursuing and that is, where the murder of a policeman or other official takes place, the leading rebel in the district ought to be shot or done away with. If this policy were carried out the murders would soon cease as the whole pack of rebels are a lot of cowards.[144]

In July 1921, the strength of the Special Constabulary stood at 3,500 'A Specials', 15,900 'B Specials' and 1,310 'C Specials'.[145] The creation of the Special Constabulary

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[138] United Kingdom Parliamentry Debates, House of Commons, 5th Series, vol. 133, cols 1504 - 05, 25 October 1920.
[139] United Kingdom Parliamentry Debates, House of Commons, 5th Series, vol. 133, cols 1487 - 8, 25 October 1920.
[140] *Westminster Gazette*, 16 September 1920.
[141] Peader Livingstone, *The Fermanagh story* (Enniskillen, 1969), p. 302.
[142] *United Kingdom Parliamentry Debates*, House of Commons, 5th Series, vol. 133, cols 1291 - 2 ; vol. 138, col.93 ; vol 139, cols. 22 - 3 and 1678 - 82 ; 20 December 1920 ; 16 February 1921; 7 - 17 March 1921.
[143] See, for example, the killings of the O'Reilly brothers, P. McGennity, P. Quinn and T. McAnuff in Chapter Six.
[144] Crawford Diary, 29 September 1920, (PRONI, D640/11/1).
[145] Weekly returns of Special Constabulary strength, 1921 (PRONI, FIN 18/1/13).

gave Protestant-Loyalists in Ulster a sense of security that the actions of the regular RIC and British Army did not. The level of crossover between the UVF and the Special Constabulary and its exclusively Protestant membership meant that Protestant-Loyalists were now self-reliant in control of their own defence. Consequently, the Special Constabulary, and in particular the 'B Specials', were hugely popular with Protestant-Loyalists who saw them as 'their' police, a protection against the 'Fenian' threat that was more reliable than the existing 'Fenian police'. Wilson suggests that; 'The B Specials came close to squaring the impossible circle between the [loyalist] need to identify with the British State and the persistent mistrust of British intentions.'[146] The assurance that the formation of the 'B Specials' gave was quickly eroded by the announcement of the Truce. RIC officers in Northern Ireland issued orders on 10 July that all 'A Specials' were to be disarmed and all 'B Specials were to be suspended from duty as soon as the terms of the Truce took effect.[147] News of the Truce was greeted with dismay by Ulster Loyalists and rumours were rife in Belfast that the Special Constabulary was to be disarmed or disbanded and these concerns were reported in the unionist press and expressed by the leadership of the UVF.[148] These fears were further stoked by Unionist politicians during the 'Twelfth' celebrations. One Unionist MP denounced the Truce as a 'nauseating criminal weakness' on the part of the British Government and stated that: 'Loyal men were humiliated when they saw the highest servants of the Crown meeting and discussing terms with men who were nothing more than common murderers' … 'Right through the troubles the hands of the police and soldiers had been tied by a vacillating government'.[149]

Unionist politician John Porter urged members of the 'B Specials' to resist any attempt to disarm them in the wake of the Truce telling them: 'I know the "B" men will hold onto their guns. Hold on to them for as long as you can for we all look to you.'[150] The rank and file of the Special Constabulary were reportedly the section of the Protestant-Loyalist community which was most hostile to the Truce. Sir Hamar Greenwood reported that: 'There was grave dissatisfaction on the part of the Ulster

[146] Wilson, *Frontiers of violence*, p. 90.
[147] Abbott, *Police casualties*, p. 267.
[148] *Belfast Telegraph*, 12 July 1921 ; Sir Wilfrid Spender to W. Kennedy 12 July 1921 (PRONI, CAB 6/21/1).
[149] *Belfast Telegraph*, 12 July 1921.
[150] *Fermanagh Herald*, 19 July 1921.

loyalists, especially amongst those who had enrolled in the Special Constabulary.'[151] Sean Lehane, commander of the IRA's 1st and 2nd Northern Divisions, later claimed that members of the Special Constabulary had little regard for the Truce and breached it on several occasions by carrying out attacks on Catholic-Nationalist communities:

> While the memorable Truce was generally honoured in the South of Ireland, it will be recalled that there was no attempt made to recognise a similar situation in the North, and more especially in the present Six Counties [of Northern Ireland], Eastern Donegal, and the areas close to the … border. The Crown Forces - Tans, Ulster Special Police etc, whether they were supposed to honour their truce or not still backed up the loyal minority of … Ulster in directing their programme in Belfast and their general reign of terror against nationalists.[152]

The British forces in Belfast were responsible for the deaths of at least five civilians killed during the Bloody Sunday riots. In many cases, it is difficult to establish precisely which branch of the British forces were involved. Regular RIC constables had by then ceased wearing identification numerals on their tunics and were indistinguishable at a glance from the 'A Specials'. Members of the 'B Specials frequently did not wear any form of police uniform and were alleged, in some cases, to have led sectarian attacks on Catholics whilst dressed in civilian clothing.[153] However, in most instances, such as the killing of James Lenaghan, the Special Constabulary were identified as the killers by republicans and members of the Catholic-Nationalist community.[154] The Special Constabulary in Belfast was apparently enraged by the announcement of the Truce and this, in combination with the IRA attack in Raglan Street, was alleged to have been a major factor in the Bloody Sunday riots.

Discipline amongst the Special Constabulary in Belfast was already exceptionally poor prior to the announcement of the Truce. On 5 July 1921, three days before the Truce was announced, without any apparent provocation or cause for reprisal, members of the Special Constabulary went on a drunken rampage in the loyalist Blyth Street - Sandy Row area. Colonel Frederick Crawford, the commander of the South Belfast Police District and a senior member of the UVF, witnessed drunken Special Constables acting aggressively and firing their guns in the air. They continued with a hostile and aggressive

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[151] Sir William Spender's interview with Sir Hamar Greenwood, 10 August 1920, (PRONI, CAB 4/14/7).
[152] Sean Lehane (UCDA, EOMN, P17b / 108).
[153] Pearse Lawlor, *The outrages: The IRA and the Special Constabulary in the border campaign 1920 - 1922* (Cork, 2011), p. 189.
[154] McDermott, *Northern Divisions*, p. 102.

attitude towards Crawford even after he had identified himself as a senior police officer. According to Crawford, one Special Constable was 'considerably the worse of liquor … he smelt strongly of spirits … The active sergeant in charge of the lorry showed he was decidedly the worse of drink.'[155] Given such poor discipline and the highly partisan and sectarian nature of the force, it is unsurprising that its members are alleged to have reacted violently to the announcement of the Truce. Belfast IRA leader Roger McCorley reported that members of the force had run wild in West Belfast and were bent on destruction the night before the Truce:

> The British, especially the Special Constabulary, seemed to be completely out of hand and were bent on massacre. Armoured cars passed through all our areas and kept up a continuous fire into the houses. Anything moving, man woman or child was fired upon. … one messenger informed me that …judging from the demeanour of the Specials, there would be a massacre of the nationalist population.[156]

Daniel Joseph Hughes widow witnessed her husband's killing and testified that police opened fire without warning, shooting him dead at point blank range.[157] The shots that killed William Tierney whilst he did housework in his kitchen were fired by a patrol of Special Constabulary which claimed to have been under attack at the time. The jury at Tierney's inquest found that Tierney 'was shot in the course of a riot by some persons unknown.'[158] At the inquest into Mary McGowan's killing, local residents claimed that the area had been peaceful and quiet before the Special Constabulary arrived. One witness testified that he had seen members of the 'B Specials' fire the shots that killed Mary McGowan from an armoured vehicle as it travelled through Ross Street. The jury at the inquest returned the verdict that the young girl had been killed by 'Crown forces'. Furthermore, the jurors suggested that 'in the interests of peace' the Special Constabulary should not be solely deployed to police Catholic areas'.[159] The RIC district inspector objected to this finding and was successful in asking that it be changed to record that McGowan had been killed by the 'Special Constabulary' in particular.[160] The RIC appears to have been responsible for killing Francis Robinson, a sixty-five year-old

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[155] Frederick Crawford Diary, 5 July 1921, (PRONI, D640/11/1).
[156] McCorley, (NAI, BMH, WS 389, p. 23).
[157] *Irish News*, 13 July 1921.
[158] *Belfast Telegraph*, 9 August 1921.
[159] *Belfast Telegraph*, 21 August 1921.
[160] McDermott, *Northern Divisions*, p. 102; *Irish News*, 11 July 1921; *Belfast Telegraph*, 21 August 1921.

Protestant ex-serviceman, who suffered a fatal bullet wound to the head whilst lying in bed at his home on Brown Street. George Robinson, the son of the deceased, stated at the inquest into his fathers death, that he had seen the RIC firing directly into the house from behind a gate about fifteen yards away, and that up to 100 shots had been fired into their home. District Inspector Deignan later admitted that bullets found in the house had been fired by RIC constables.[161]

Attacks by loyalist snipers, mobs and gangs of armed men accounted for the majority of fatalities during the 'Bloody Sunday' riots. Republican veterans insisted that off-duty members of the Special Constabulary, and in particular the 'B Specials', regularly participated in these attacks and had led these mobs. Peter Carleton recalled that The Bone, Carrick Hill and other small Catholic-Nationalist enclaves were under constant attack from gangs led by members of the 'B Specials'[162] Roger McCorley claimed that members of the 'B Specials' frequently used their service rifles to snipe these same areas and were responsible for killing a large number of Catholic civilians.[163] Of course, it is impossible at this remove to verify these specific allegations, or the suggestions that members of the Special Constabulary comprised a hardcore of the mobs which attacked Catholic civilians during the 'Bloody Sunday' riots.

Role of the IRA, Hibernians and nationalist gunmen in the Bloody Sunday riots.

Contemporaneous reports by the British forces, editorials in the unionist press and statements by British politicians all blamed Irish republicans for the Belfast violence. They accused 'the gunmen of the IRA' of deliberately exploiting the announcement of the Truce for their own ends, and accused 'Sinn Féin snipers' of stoking sectarian tensions by carrying out attacks on defenceless Protestant civilians.[164] The British authorities automatically equalled all acts of Catholic-Nationalist violence with the IRA. However, these claims are wrong in assuming that the IRA and militant republicanism was the sole physical force movement in the wider Belfast Catholic community. So-

[161] *Belfast Telegraph*, 9 August 1921.
[162] MacEoin, *Survivors*, p. 305.
[163] McCorley, (NAI, BMH, WS 389, p. 14).
[164] RIC County Inspector's Report for Belfast, July 1921 (NAUK, CO 904 / 115); *Irish News*, 12 July 1921.

called ‘constitutional nationalists’, including members of the Ancient Order of Hibernians, nationalist ex-servicemen’s associations and other supporters of Joe Devlin and the Irish Parliamentary Party played a significant role in the Bloody Sunday riots including sectarian attacks against the Protestant-Loyalist community.

Throughout the War of Independence the Belfast IRA was always numerically weak, suffered a crippling shortage of arms and as a result of these weaknesses in combination with other factors, never enjoyed the support of a majority of the Catholic-Nationalist populace.[165] Initially, the leadership of the Belfast IRA attempted to remain aloof from the sectarian violence and ‘fratricidal strife’ in the city. IRA volunteers were given orders to refrain from attacking loyalist mobs and told that attacks on British troops could only be sanctioned if they were attacking Catholic-Nationalist civilians. Unsurprisingly this policy proved unpopular and resulted in the takeover of the IRA’s Belfast brigade by a younger, restless and more aggressive group of republicans in the spring of 1921.[166] In his study of the Belfast IRA between 1920 and 1922, Robert Lynch noted that the IRA’s restraint in the face of sectarian attacks on Catholics in July 1920 allowed other contenders, most notably the Hibernians, to claim the mantle as defenders of the Catholic-Nationalist community.[167]

Support for the Irish Parliamentary Party was particularly strong in West Belfast because the local MP, Joe Devlin, was one of the leading lights of the party and commanded a great deal of local loyalty. Consequently, large swathes of the Catholic-Nationalist community in Belfast were opposed to the re-emergence of republicanism, Sinn Féin and the IRA following the 1916 Rising,[168] In the early 1900s Devlin had presided over the revival of the Ancient Order of Hibernians as an adjunct to the Irish Parliamentary Party. The hibernians were frequently employed as a strong arm of the party to harass and obstruct its political opponents. When Sinn Féin emerged as a rival force to the IPP in Belfast physical confrontation between Hibernians and republicans became increasingly common. The republican leader, Seán MacDiarmada, was physically

[165] McDermott, *Northern Divisions*, p. 36.
[166] Lynch, *The Northern IRA*, pp 29 - 30.
[167] Lynch, ‘The people’s protectors? the Irish Republican Army and the “Belfast Pogrom” 1920 - 1922’, p. 382.
[168] Lynch, ‘The people’s protectors? the Irish Republican Army and the “Belfast Pogrom” 1920 - 1922’, p. 382.

assaulted by Hibernians in Tyrone in 1906.[169] In the post-Rising period, Catholic homes on the Falls Road which flew the republican tricolour, or displayed photographs of the executed 1916 leaders, were attacked by Hibernians.[170] During the 1918 General Election, when de Valera challenged Devlin for control of the West Belfast seat, there were frequent outbreaks of violence amongst their rival supporters. Hibernians and nationalist ex-soldiers attacked election rallies held by de Valera's campaigners and these meetings often had to be abandoned as a result.[171] One Hibernian from the Falls Road recalled that although 'Joe Devlin … didn't believe in the gun', his supporters frequently resorted to physical force 'We used beat the rebels … We murdered them. Saucepans, pots and everything were fired at them.'[172] Rivalry to secure the political loyalties of the Catholic-Nationalist community in Ulster frequently led to bloodshed and the IRA killed at least nine Hibernians during the period.[173]

There were significant differences between the IRA and their Hibernian-Nationalist rivals in how they interpreted the conflict. This in turn influenced their respective military operations. The IRA regarded loyalists as misguided fellow Irishmen and viewed the British Government and its armed forces as their principal enemy. One republican summed up the situation as: 'our gospel was a simple one; free Ireland from the English.'[174] Republicans feared that local sectarian conflict would distract from the broader struggle for independence and the Belfast IRA attempted, as far as possible, to defend the Catholic-Nationalist enclaves from attacks by members of the British forces whilst abstaining from intercommunal sectarian violence.[175] By contrast, Hibernians and other Catholic-Nationalist gunmen were more interested in fighting Orangemen than Englishmen and frequently welcomed British troops to their areas as a protective force.[176] Hibernians attempted to mobilise the Catholic-Nationalist community in confrontation with Protestant - Loyalist mobs and consequently Hibernians led Catholic-Nationalist

[169] Brian Feeney, *Seán MacDiarmada* (Dublin, 2014), p. 167.
[170] McAteer (ed.) *Down the Falls*, p. 15.
[171] Jack McNally, *Morally good - politically bad* (Belfast, 1987), p. 5.
[172] McAteer (ed.) *Down the Falls*, p. 15.
[173] Wilson, *Frontiers of violence*, p. 129.
[174] Wilson, *Frontiers of violence*, p. 125.
[175] Lynch, *The Northern IRA*, pp 29 - 31; Wilson, *Frontiers of violence*, p. 129.
[176] Wilson, *Frontiers of violence*, p. 125.

mobs during much of the street violence in Derry and Belfast.[177]

Wilson's study of political violence in Belfast has noted that the majority of Catholic rioters in Belfast were Hibernians not IRA volunteers, and that groups of nationalist ex-servicemen played a predominant role in the violence.[178] A large contingent of the Hibernians and Devlin's supporters were British Army veterans of the First World War and as a result, had access to arms and ammunition. Hibernians were also known to have stolen arms from the IRA for their own purposes.[179] These munitions were frequently employed in defence of Catholic enclaves and in attacks on Protestant-Loyalist districts during sectarian rioting. In Lurgan a sectarian attack on the Catholic populace was repelled by armed members of the 'Faugh-A Ballaghs' a group of ex-British soldiers linked to the Irish Parliamentary Party.[180] Lynch's study of the most vicious street violence in Belfast concluded that Hibernians and nationalist ex-soldiers' groups which supported the Irish Parliamentary Party 'did the most to protect Catholic areas and inflicted the most casualties on their loyalist opponents.'[181]

There is evidence to suggest that the Hibernians were involved in sectarian attacks during the Bloody Sunday riots. IRA Volunteer Seamus Woods recalled that, prior to the Truce, only a quarter of Catholic-Nationalists supported the IRA but 'with the signing of the Truce the Catholic population, believing for the moment that we had been victorious and that the Specials and UVF were beaten, practically all flocked to our standard.'[182] There is no doubt that agreement of the Truce had a huge impact on the struggle between the IRA and the Hibernians for the support of the Catholic-Nationalist community in Belfast. The armistice boosted the status of Sinn Féin and the IRA amongst the Catholic-Nationalists and led to growing fears on the part of Hibernians and supporters of the Irish Parliamentary Party that they had finally been eclipsed by republicanism. Hibernian involvement in the Bloody Sunday riots can therefore be seen as an attempt by them to maintain their position, prevent the further erosion of their political support base and undermine Sinn Féin, the IRA and republicanism. According to Roger McCorley they

[177] Wilson, *Frontiers of violence*, p. 128.
[178] Wilson, *Frontiers of violence*, p. 128.
[179] John McCoy, (NAI, BMH, WS 492, p. 114).
[180] *Cork Examiner*, 26 July 1921.
[181] Lynch, 'The people's protectors? the Irish Republican Army and the "Belfast Pogrom" 1920 - 1922', p. 382.
[182] Woods to Mulcahy, 27 July 1922, (UCDA, RMP, P/7/B/77).

were responsible for looting and a spate of sectarian arson attacks on the morning of the Truce:

> An element of the nationalists under the control of the Hibernians started to loot the unionist business premises in the Falls Road area. They also set fire to the stabling yard of Messrs Wordie Haulage Contractors. It was obvious that this was due to pique at the fact that our people were now accepted by the British as the official representatives of the Irish people. On several occasions during the day our men had to turn out and fire on the mob. They fired on their heads but later on in the evening I gave instructions that if the mob gave any further trouble they were to fire into it. We also sent our patrols with orders to arrest the ring leaders of this group and bring them to Brigade Headquarters. This was done and we ordered several of the ring-leaders to leave the city within twenty four hours, otherwise they would be shot at sight. This action ended this Hibernian attempt to break the Truce. It is unfortunate that we did not go after the instigators of this attempt rather than their dupes.[183]

One IRA volunteer who had attempted to prevent the Hibernian led mob destroying the business was him self attacked and beaten by them.[184] The attack on the Messrs Wordies & Co. led to the death of William Brown, a forty-five year-old Protestant from March Street, who worked as a haulage contractor for the company. Brown had been shot in the thigh as he approached his workplace, and despite receiving medical treatment, died a few hours later.[185] Given that the attack on Messrs Wordies was led by Hibernians, it is likely that they were responsible for killing Brown. It is impossible to establish if Hibernians were involved in the sniping attacks on loyalist districts which claimed the lives of other Protestant civilians during the Bloody Sunday riots, but given their role in leading the attack on Wordies and their previous activities it must be considered a distinct possibility. Consequently, the tendency to link the deaths of all Protestant civilians killed during sectarian violence in Belfast with IRA militancy must be treated with caution. One of the five Protestant civilians killed in the Bloody Sunday riots was killed by the Special Constabulary and another was seemingly killed by Hibernians.

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[183] McCorley, (NAI, BMH, WS 389, p. 26).
[184] Operations Report, 3rd Northern Division, 12 July 1921 (UCDA, RMP, P7/A/22).
[185] *The Belfast Telegraph*, 9 August 1921 ; *The Irish Times*, 12 July 1921.

Assessment

The Bloody Sunday riots were the most violent episode that erupted in reaction to the Truce. Whilst the death toll of twenty-two people killed during the Bloody Sunday riots may seem inordinately high, it is not remarkably higher than the number of fatalities caused by the sectarian rioting which occurred in the city the previous year.[186] Furthermore it is worth noting that Belfast had the highest death rate per capita of any part of Ireland during the conflict with an estimated 460 fatalities occurring in the city in a two year period, over 80% of whom were civilians.[187] Just 24.1% of Belfast's population were Catholics, yet Catholics accounted for the overwhelming majority of the victims of political violence in that city.[188] During the rioting following the shipyard expulsions of July 1920, eleven of the nineteen people killed, or 58% of the fatalities were Catholics. Catholics killed by loyalists accounted for fourteen of the twenty-two people killed, or 63.5% of the fatalities. Despite the fact that the Catholic-Nationalist community suffered the most fatalities, arson attacks and forced evictions during the rioting the British authorities and Ulster loyalists interpreted the Bloody Sunday riots as an outburst of IRA violence. This perception has dominated the historiography of these events to date. Despite the fact that the IRA only killed one member of the RIC, and that this apparently occurred as part of a defensive effort against members of the British forces who were planning a series of reprisals, and members of the British forces killed far more people in the violence that followed, blame for the Bloody Sunday riots is still levelled at the Belfast IRA which was widely perceived as the aggressor.

Whilst the Raglan Street ambush was a key factor in sparking the riots, it was not the sole root cause of the violence. Its contribution to the subsequent Bloody Sunday riots was in combination with a number of other related factors. These included; the significant annual increase in sectarian tensions as the 12th July approached, the activities of Hibernians and nationalist ex-soldiers in expressing opposition to the Truce by conducting sectarian attacks on Protestants, and an existing loyalist tradition of expressing opposition to political change by resorting to violent protest. Loyalist fears

[186] Robert Lynch, 'The people's protectors?, p. 380.
[187] Lynch, 'The people's protectors?', p. 375.
[188] McDermott, *Northern Divisions*, p. 44.

about the disarmament of the Special Constabulary, poor discipline within that force, the activities of the RIC 'Murder Gang', and a desire on the part of the Belfast RIC and Special Constabulary to avenge comrades killed by the IRA, were also major contributory factors.

Chapter Eight

Conclusion

The overwhelming evidence from the testimony of both IRA and British forces' veterans is that they had no prior knowledge that the Truce was imminent. Some combatants had learned that clandestine peace negotiations between Sinn Féin and British emissaries had taken place. However, the constant press reports from late 1920 onwards that continually predicted that peace was imminent had been proved wrong so often that they were dismissed as speculation. The volume of these reports, coupled with the failure of a number of high profile but ill-advised peace initiatives had the effect of 'crying wolf' so that when press reports about a ceasefire finally began to have a valid foundation in July 1921 their credibility was thoroughly damaged and they were instantly dismissed. Protagonists on both sides realised the practical difficulties that this posed for ensuring that their adherents were aware of and were prepared to fully comply with the Truce before it took effect. In light of this, a three day delay was factored in to the agreement to allow for compliance with, and communication of, the cesefire order. Consequently, many of the combatants who took part in military operations on 8 and 9 July 1921 did so in complete ignorance that the conflict was about to end. These men were primarily motivated by local tactical considerations and completely unaware that any military advantage gained from these exploits would soon be redundant. In some instances, IRA units operating in isolated areas in the west of Ireland did not learn that a ceasefire had been agreed until after it came into effect. In these cases, it is highly unlikely that any resulting fatalities were deliberately inflicted for vengeful purposes by perpetrators motivated by a belief that they could soon avail of an amnesty.

Both IRA GHQ and the British military command in Ireland honoured the letter of the Truce agreement by attempting to ensure that its conditions were fully complied with and made strenuous efforts to ensure that all combatants under their respective commands did not engage in offensive military operations after noon on 11 July 1921. The commanders of both armies also acted in the spirit of the agreement by cancelling planned military operations. Acting on the orders of de Valera, IRA GHQ immediately

cancelled the large scale military offensive which had been scheduled to begin in Dublin on the same date, whilst the British command ordered their troops to cease military operations immediately without waiting for the ceasefire to begin. The Truce despatch issued to provincial IRA units ordered them to observe the impending ceasefire, but was ambiguous as to what action was to be taken in the interim. Some IRA commanders opted to cancel all military operations immediately, whilst others decided to carry out operations which had been scheduled in advance of the Truce. There is no credible evidence to suggest that IRA GHQ favoured or encouraged a policy of exploiting the advent of the Truce for short-term military advantage or as a final chance to engage in reprisal killings.

Just three provincial IRA units issued specific orders to launch military offensives following the announcement of the Truce. The order issued by Seamus Finn, adjutant of the 1st Eastern Division IRA, specifically called for the execution of loyalist civilians suspected of assisting British intelligence and the assassination of Irish RIC constables. However, these aspects of Finn's instructions were clearly ignored by the IRA units in the division as not a single suspected informer was executed or a single RIC constable assassinated in the divisional area after the order was issued. The sole result seems to have been an increase in sniping attacks on RIC barracks which did not result in any fatalities. Unquestionably, there was a surge in IRA activity in Kerry in the final days of the conflict, in particular attacks on British patrols and RIC Barracks that resulted in a number of British fatalities. However, IRA veteran testimony suggests that these were intelligence-based and had been planned several weeks in advance at a time when IRA officers were unaware that a ceasefire was just beyond the horizon. There was no uniform response amongst the Kerry republicans after the announcement of the Truce as to whether or not attacks should be carried out in light of the development. In some instances, local IRA officers protested strongly against orders to carry out attacks, arguing that the potential loss of life could not be justified in light of the impending end of the conflict and cancelled planned operations. In other cases, such as the shooting of Sergeant Mears in Killarney, the IRA members involved decided to carry out an attack which, given the impending Truce, had no military value. The decision by some IRA officers in Kerry to follow through with these plans after they learned of the Truce was of

questionable military value but it did not in any way violate the letter of the agreement.

The Tipperary No. 3 Brigade IRA also reacted to the Truce by issuing orders directing local IRA units to mount sniping attacks on RIC barracks. Again, this resulted in a myriad of Barracks attacks in the final twenty-four hours of the conflict. In some instances, the same British garrisons were attacked several times within a few hours, suggesting that these were not serious attempts to capture the barracks or kill members of their garrisons but were launched as a symbolic, psychological and propaganda exercise. They sent a public message that the British forces had not defeated the IRA. Statistical analysis of the IRA's final military operations reveals that, contrary to previous claims, there was not a last minute change in IRA tactics as part of an effort to inflict a maximum number of fatalities on their opponents before the Truce began through attacks on so-called 'soft targets'. In fact the evidence shows that there was a drop in the level of these attacks in the final days of the conflict as the IRA concentrated instead on symbolic attacks on British barracks which were less likely to cause British fatalities.

Nor does the evidence suggest that the IRA exploited the announcement of the Truce as an opportunity to exercise religious prejudices and kill Protestant civilians on the pretext that they were spies. As has been demonstrated, the number of suspected civilian spies killed by the IRA in the immediate pre-Truce period has been significantly overestimated in previous research. The actual number of civilians killed as alleged spies following the announcement of the Truce was not inordinately high when compared with similar periods during the conflict. A number of these civilians were killed before their IRA executioners were aware that a ceasefire had been agreed and therefore knowledge of the Truce could not have been a motivational factor for their killers. Most of those targeted for execution appear to have had recent contact with the British forces and there is evidence to suggest that those killed were suspected by the IRA of having assisted the British forces. Suggestions that sectarianism was often a motivating factor for IRA violence directed against Protestant civilians, and in particular the killing of Protestants whom the IRA later alleged were spies has dominated this field of research and public discourse on this period of Irish history for well over a decade. Yet this study has found little corroboration for the claim. The vast majority of suspected civilian spies executed by the IRA during the conflict were Catholics shot by their co-religionists. With specific

regard to the claim that anti-Protestant sectarianism was a motivational factor in the killing of civilians by the IRA immediately before the Truce, the available evidence suggests that Protestants and Catholics were targeted by the republicans in almost equal numbers.

Regarding allegations of similar prejudice against ex-soldiers suspected of spying by the IRA, this study has demonstrated that the case for such prejudice has been overstated and that ex-servicemen joined the IRA in very significant numbers during the War of Independence. Many were promoted to senior positions within the IRA leadership. Furthermore, it has been shown that there was a strong economic and political incentive for loyalist ex-soldiers to assist the British forces and that the British forces regularly employed local ex-servicemen for intelligence purposes during the War of Independence. All of the civilians executed by the IRA as suspected spies following the announcement of the Truce had strong associations with the British forces, being either ex-soldiers, former RIC constables or RIC applicants. In the cases of Eric Steadman, Major O'Conor, John Poynton and John Begley, it would appear that the IRA was primarily suspicious of them because of their apparent recent contacts with the British forces. All of these men appear to have been under IRA investigation for some time previously, suggesting that their killings were not the result of opportunistic prejudice. The timing of the capture of two of these men, William Nolan and John Begley, occurring within minutes of the beginning of the Truce, and their subsequent execution after the Truce came into effect, were breaches of the agreement that must be considered completely unjustifiable from a military standpoint as they occurred during peace time. There is no evidence to suggest that the IRA engaged in a 'rush for justice', attempting to kill as many suspected civilian spies as possible before the Truce came into effect. In many instances, the IRA took non-fatal action against those they accused of being British intelligence agents and, as well as abducting and killing six suspected civilian spies, it released unharmed an equal number whom it had been holding captive.

One of the most controversial aspects of the IRA's military campaign in the immediate pre-Truce period has been the assassination of RIC constables. Yet, an analysis of these killings shows that they were typical of IRA operations carried out during the conflict. A number of these killings were perpetrated by IRA volunteers who

were unaware that a ceasefire had been agreed and it is therefore unreasonable to cite the Truce as a factor in these killings. Members of the RIC who were attacked by the IRA following the announcement of the Truce were deliberately targeted for assassination, usually because of their involvement in intelligence work or reprisal killings. In these instances, the members of the British forces attacked had been marked down for assassination long before the political developments which led to the Truce. In these cases, the Truce can be seen as a catalyst, speeding up a process that was already in motion. The killing of off-duty British soldiers such as Private Larter and Sergeant Mears were different in nature in that they were opportunistic killings with little or no military value. However, they were similar to attacks which had occurred earlier in the conflict and there is no evidence to suggest that they were planned specifically to coincide with the Truce. By contrast, the execution of four British soldiers taken prisoner by the IRA at Ellis Quarry the night before the Truce was unprecedented in scale but not in nature. New evidence presented in this thesis establishes a link between this incident and the killing the previous night of an IRA volunteer by the British forces in similar circumstances, which strongly suggests that this was a reprisal killing primarily motivated by local factors rather than the announcement of the Truce as had been previously claimed. The IRA can not have been said to have made a point of killing as many enemies as possible up until the last minute before the Truce as previously claimed, since at least seven members of the British Army and five members of the RIC captured after the announcement of the Truce were released unharmed. Furthermore, the 'general hit up', a widespread series of coordinated attacks against RIC personnel that had been planned, was cancelled at the last moment precisely because of the Truce. The recurring popular historical narrative is that, by July 1921, the IRA nationally had been so weakened by the actions of the British forces that the republicans were incapable of continuing a military campaign against legitimate military targets and had instead switched their focus to 'soft targets'. In fact there were far more IRA attacks on British Army convoys, RIC curfew patrols and barracks than there were on off-duty members of the British forces in the same time period.

One of these operations the 'Raglan Street Ambush' has been cited as the cause of sectarian rioting in Belfast the day before the Truce which resulted in over twenty

fatalities, the worst single day of violence in Belfast's long and troubled history. However, this study has uncovered evidence which suggests that the 'ambush' was not planned as a 'last minute' offensive against the British forces, but appears to have been a defensive operation against an aggressive RIC and Ulster Special Constabulary incursion into the Fall's Road area. An existing loyalist tradition of expressing opposition to political change by resorting to violent protest was probably equally as important in fomenting the pre-Truce violence in the city. Loyalist fears about the disarmament of the Special Constabulary and the activities of Hibernians and Nationalist ex-soldiers in expressing opposition to the Truce by conducting retaliatory sectarian attacks on Protestants were also a contributory factor. Other causes which were entirely coincidental to the announcement of the Truce including the significant annual increase in sectarian tensions as the 12 July approached, poor discipline within the Special Constabulary, the activities of the RIC 'Murder Gang' and a desire on the part of the Belfast RIC and Special Constabulary to avenge comrades killed by the IRA, were also major contributory factors. Although analysis and criticisim of this bout of sectarian violence has primarily apportioned blame to the IRA as its instigator, the British forces were also culpable in instigating the violence and were responsible for a number of the subsequent killings.

Analysis of the activities of the British forces in the final days of the conflict shows that, contrary to popular accounts, a number of military units did launch aggressive military actions targeting Irish republicans following the announcement, on 8 July 1921 of the Anglo-Irish Truce. The established narrative that the British forces withdrew to their barracks to adopt a policy of passive defence whilst awaiting the arrival of the ceasefire is true to the extent that the British military hierarchy in Ireland issued orders to refrain from offensive action, and cancelled the executions of a number of republican prisoners. However, there were numerous instances where rank and file members of the British Army and RIC did not comply with this order. Instead these troops continued their standard modus operandi, causing a significant number of civilian and republican fatalities in the process. The timing and nature of many of these offensive actions, including the 'Kilgobnet Mine disaster', indicates that they were regular operations planned in advance of the announcement of the Truce on 8 July. Their

occurrence so close to the ceasefire was entirely coincidental, and any resulting fatalities from these incidences can not be reasonably considered as evidence of pre-ceasefire 'blood lust' on the part of the British forces. In other cases, such as the fatal shootings of John Foley and Hannah Carey, it is impossible to say to what extent, if any, news of the Truce motivated the British personnel responsible. However, the discipline of the British forces at the time was so poor that such killings were commonplace and it would be wrong to assume that Foley and Carey were killed in pre-mediated acts by British troops seeking vengeance in the final hours of the conflict. By contrast the killing of Denis Spriggs, the attack on the Keogh family home which killed Margaret Keogh, and the attempted assassinations of Tomás Malone and Patrick O'Reilly, were apparently premeditated attempts at reprisal killings carried out by members of the British forces who were aware that the Truce was imminent.

The announcement of the Truce caused British forces' personnel to react in a number of different ways. Some welcomed the forthcoming armistice, immediately withdrew from the battlefield, and reprieved prisoners who they had been due to execute. Some of those angered by the announcement of the ceasefire sought opportunities for vengeance, or a final chance to confront the enemy in battle. Others carried out their duties as normal up to the final hour but were careful not to breach the Truce once it began. An equally diverse range of actions and attitudes existed within the IRA at the time, yet the final acts of the republican military campaign have received infinitely more attention than their British counterparts. The allegation that the IRA exploited the immediate pre-Truce period as an opportunity to inflict maximum fatalities on their civilian and military opponents is not borne out by careful empirical analysis. This allegation first arose in the contemporary unionist press as a means of expressing hostility to republicanism. The allegation was later re-iterated in the memoirs of former British combatants. Subsequently it was used in the Irish Free State as a propaganda device to attack anti-Treaty republican 'Truciliers'. This, despite the fact that those responsible for some of the most controversial pre-Truce killings such as the assassination of Constable Clarke and the 'Ellis Quarry Shootings', had taken a pro-Treaty stance during the Irish Civil War and were later appointed to senior political and police commands within the new Irish Free State. Subsequent generations of historians have often repeated the claim

that the IRA exploited the advent of the Truce to launch an unwarranted and unprecedented last minute campaign, without examining its veracity. By focusing inordinately on IRA killings in the pre-Truce period, they perpetuated a historical imbalance and a hierarchy of victimhood by ignoring equally significant killings by the British forces in the same period.

The Irish War of Independence began with two significant events on 21 January 1919: the first meeting of Dáil Eireann in Dublin and the shooting of two RIC constables in Soloheadbeg, Tipperary. Whilst the Soloheadbeg ambush is inextricably linked in our public consciousness with the national political events in Dublin, the fact is that the ambush was motivated by local military considerations and its occurrence the same day Dáil Éireann first met was entirely coincidental. The same applies to the last fatalities of the War of Independence, inflicted after the announcement of the Truce. Most of the military operations which caused these fatalities had either been planned in advance, in ignorance of political developments in Dublin, or were the result of immediate local events and conditions largely unrelated to the Truce. In short, there is no proof of a concerted military campaign by either side to inflict a maximum number of fatalities following the announcement of the Truce and the events of the final days of the conflict were not unique.

Appendix 1: Fatalities that occurred after the announcement of the Truce mentioned in the text

Frederick Cormer	RIC Constable	Shot by IRA.
David Cummins	Civilian	Shot by IRA.
Denis Spriggs	IRA Volunteer	Shot by British forces.
Eric Steadman	Civilian	Shot by IRA.
Draper Holmes	Civilian	Shot by IRA.
Alfred G. Needham	RIC Constable	Shot by the IRA.
Thomas Burke	Civilian	Killed by mine set by British forces.
Thomas Cahill	Civilian	Killed by mine set by British forces.
James Dunford	Civilian	Killed by mine set by British forces.
William Dunford	Civilian	Killed by mine set by British forces.
Richard Lynch	Civilian	Killed by mine set by British forces.
Sean Quinn.	IRA Volunteer	Killed by mine set by British forces.
Margret Keogh	Cumann na mBan	(Suspected killed by British forces).
Bridget Dillon	Civilian	Shot by IRA.
Thomas Conlon	RIC Constable	Shot by IRA.
William Baxter	Civilian	Shot by nationalist / republican sniper.
Ernest Park	Civilian	Shot by nationalist / republican sniper.
Henry Mulholland	Civilian	Shot by loyalist gunmen.
Alexander Hamilton	Civilian	Shot by loyalist gunmen.
Peter Mackey	Civilian	Fatal fall fleeing raiders at his home.
Bernard Monaghan	Civilian	Shot by loyalist gunmen.
James McGuiness	Civilian	Shot by loyalist gunmen.
Frederick Craig	Civilian	Shot by loyalist sniper.
Dan Hughes	Civilian	Shot by loyalist sniper.
Patrick Hickland	Civilian	Shot by loyalist gunmen.
William Mullen	Civilian	Shot by nationalist / republican sniper.
David McMullen	Civilian	Shot by nationalist / republican sniper.
William Mullen	Civilian	Shot by nationalist / republican sniper.
Patrick Devlin	Civilian	Shot by loyalist gunmen.
James Lenaghan	Civilian	Shot by British forces.
Daniel Joseph Hughes	Civilian	Shot by British forces.
William Tierney	Civilian	Shot by British forces.

Francis Robinson	Civilian	Shot by British forces.
William Brown	Civilian	Shot by nationalist / republican sniper.
Mary McGowan	Civilian	Shot by RIC / Special Constabulary.
Seamus Ledlie	IRA Volunteer	Shot by British forces.
R. W. Williams	British soldier	Killed by IRA.
John Foley	Civilian	Shot by British forces.
Private Letter	British soldier	Shot by IRA.
John Flynn,	IRA Volunteer	Shot by British forces.
Richard Shanahan	IRA Volunteer	Shot by British forces.
Jack Prendiville	IRA Volunteer	Shot by British forces.
Sergeant Davis	British soldier	Shot by IRA.
Private William Kelly	British soldier	Shot by IRA.
William Ross	British soldier	Shot by IRA.
George Rankin	British soldier	Shot by IRA.
Captain Mayer	British soldier	Shot by IRA.
Hannah Carey	Civilian	Shot by British forces.
Alfred Cannim	British soldier	Shot by IRA.
Albert Powell	British soldier	Shot by IRA.
Harold Dacker	British soldier	Shot by IRA.
Henry Morris	British soldier	Shot by IRA.
George O’Conor	Civilian	Shot by IRA.
Sergeant Reynolds	British soldier	Shot by IRA.
John Poynton	Civilian	Shot by IRA.
Alexander Clarke	RIC Constable	Shot by IRA.
Sergeant King	RIC Constable	Shot by IRA.
Willie Nolan	Civilian	Shot by IRA.
James Bagley	Civilian	Shot by IRA.

Appendix 2: Analysis of the reasons for the failure of the December 1920 truce negotiations

Thomas Johnson had written to Lloyd George in July 1920, a full year before the conflict ended, stressing that the 'repression, however drastic, will still leave the Irish problem unsolved' and the Government could only pursue two options; attempt to continue to pacify Ireland by force or offer 'An immediate attempt to conclude a pact with the leaders, Sinn Féin and the revolutionists' on the basis of Dominion Home Rule for Southern Ireland.[1] The British Prime Minister ignored Johnson's advice. Less than twelve months later, Lloyd George presided over a formal Truce between the IRA and the British forces, followed by negotiations of a settlement which was broadly in line with Johnson's suggestion. In supporting the eventual treaty which followed, Warren Fisher wrote: 'Better late than never, but I can't get out of my mind the unnecessary number of graves.'[2]

Given the multiplicity of peace initiatives launched in the autumn of 1920, and the fevered efforts of those involved, it is worth exploring in greater detail than permitted in the main text as to why an armistice between the IRA and the British forces was not reached at that time. There certainly seems to have been a genuine willingness on the part of the Irish Republican leadership to end the military conflict at that time. So much so, that the Dail Éireann Cabinet met twice in late 1920 to consider the possibility.[3] Analysis of the negotiations suggests that the British Government were less convinced of the need for a truce and sought to extract a political victories from the situation by forcing Republican Ireland to accept punitive measures unacceptable to their adversaries.[4]

The peace initiatives led by Moylett and Clune were the only ones which had any chance of success. This was because they were conducted in secret with the assent of the senior republican figures in Dublin, namely Griffith and Collins. Ultimately, Moylett's efforts were eclipsed by Clune's shuttle diplomacy which had come close to success. Asquith lamented that Clune's efforts to secure a truce were 'the big missed opportunity'[5] But, why was this opportunity missed?

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[1] Jones, [Middlemas (ed.)], *Whitehall diary*, p. 31.
[2] Hopkinson, *The Irish War of Independence*, p. 177.
[3] Risteard Mulcahy, *My father the general: Richard Mulcahy and the military history of the revolution* (Dublin, 2009) p. 127.
[4] Hopkinson, *The Irish War of Independence*, p. 185.
[5] Sturgis, [Hopkinson (ed.)], *Sturgis diaries*, p. 193.

The possibility of executions taking place during the proposed truce

One of the chief difficulties that arose as a result of the peace terms proposed by the British which the IRA were unlikely to agree to was the right reserved by the British to continue executing captured IRA volunteers during the Truce who had been tried by 'due court martial'.[6] The first IRA volunteer executed by the British was Kevin Barry who was hanged at Mountjoy Prison on 1 November 1920. Barry's execution, which coincided with the last stages of MacSwiney's hunger strike, shocked liberal opinion in both Britain and Ireland and proved a boon for republican propaganda, mainly because of Barry's youth and the fact that he was executed on a church holiday.[7] Before Barry's execution, the Catholic archbishop, and the lord mayor of Dublin had held a meeting with Anderson warning him off Barry's execution telling him 'Don't exact this penalty or you make peace impossible.'[8] On 15 December 1920 whilst the negotiations with Clune were still under way Sturgis commented in his diary regarding proposals for a truce: 'We would delay any Court Martial likely to stir up public feel[ing] but *some* C[ourt] M[artial]s would of course have to go on.'[9] A few days later he commented: 'The case against such men as we have got - or think we've got - whom we can try for the [Bloody] Sunday murders hangs terribly.'[10] This reference to Patrick Moran, Thomas Whelan and the other members of the IRA who had been arrested following the Bloody Sunday attacks and were later executed suggests that their pending courts-martial were proving problematic for the British in their negotiations with the republicans.

The British were initially cautious about carrying out any more executions and no more IRA volunteers were executed by the British until February 1921, by which time both Clune and O'Flanagan's attempts to broker a truce had ended. When the British resumed the executions by shooting a number of republican prisoners in Cork on 28 February 1921 the local IRA responded with a series of ferocious and well planned

[6] Jones, [Middlemas (ed.)], *Whitehall diary*, pp 45 - 6.
[7] Hopkinson, *The Irish War of Independence*, pp 87 - 8.
[8] Hopkinson (ed.) *Sturgis diaries*, p. 62.
[9] Hopkinson (ed.) *Sturgis diaries*, p. 92.
[10] Hopkinson (ed.) *Sturgis diaries*, p. 94.

retaliatory attacks. That night the IRA killed six British soldiers and wounded ten more , most of whom had been unarmed and out of barracks courting local girls.[11] Prior to this, the IRA in Cork had not considered unarmed British soldiers a legitimate military target. The extremity of this response implies that the IRA would have been loathe to agree to any truce which would allow the British the right to carry out executions. Furthermore if the British had exercised this power whilst a truce was in place, it is likely that republican discipline would not have been strong enough to prevent the comrades of the executed IRA volunteers from immediately breaching the ceasefire with attacks on the British forces.

Confusion over the form that a truce / ceasefire would take

Confusion about the nature and status of the proposed truce resulted in further difficulties. The truce terms proposed by the republicans were based on the idea of an unofficial bilateral truce. Sturgis declared that those in Dublin Castle administration seeking peace had wanted an 'Informal Truce'.[12] Sir John Anderson suggested a *quid pro quo* arrangement 'a damping down …They stop outrage, we stop raiding and incidentally, burning shooting etc.'

By contrast, the British Government wanted a more carefully staged managed and public process leading to a cessation of hostilities. This was to be started following a public meeting of Dáil Éireann, after which the IRA would announce a formal, unilateral ceasefire. Once this was in effect the British forces were to respond by ensuring their troops did not engage in reprisals. This sequence of events had first been proposed by the British during the Phillips - Moylett discussions of November 1920. Despite the significant political and military developments that occurred in the interim, the British again insisted on this template for implementing an informal truce when they began negotiations with Clune a month later. A unilateral IRA ceasefire declared without an equal and immediate reciprocal arrangement by the British, would have amounted to 'a

[11] Borgonovo, *Anti-Sinn Féin Society*, p. 88.
[12] Hopkinson (ed.) *Sturgis diaries*, p.98.

leap of faith' on the part of the republicans. Given the breakdown of discipline that had occurred within the British forces in Ireland, there was reason to doubt whether they, and in particular the RIC, would have respected the terms of such an informal agreement. There was also considerable doubt given the intensifying military situation as to whether any of the combatants could be bound by a ceasefire. Stephen Gwynn, the former MP for Galway, voiced this concern to Sturgis telling him: 'Dail Eireann no more controls the gunmen than you control the police.'[13] A danger also existed for the republicans that a unilateral IRA ceasefire, without an immediate similar public declaration or commitment from the British forces, would be interpreted as an admission of military defeat. The dichotomy between the republican desire for a bilateral informal truce and the British demand for a public unilateral ceasefire by the republicans would have to be overcome if a truce was to be implemented and maintained.

The surrender of IRA arms as an essential criterion of a proposed truce

The greatest obstacle which prevented the agreement and implementation of a truce in December 1920 was the British insistence that the IRA would have to surrender its arms. According to Michael Collins, the multiplicity of peace feelers emanating from various republican sources led the British cabinet to conclude that the IRA was desperate to sue for peace, and this prompted them to press for a surrender of arms, a condition which the IRA's leadership would not countenance:

> seven months before England granted the Truce of July 1921 she wanted very much to withdraw the Black and Tans from Ireland and end the murderous war which she had begun to realize could never be won … Unhappily … several of our most important men gave evidence of an over-keen desire for peace while tentative proposals were being made and considered. So it was that, although the terms of the truce had been virtually agreed upon, the English statesmen abruptly terminated the discussions when they discovered what they took to be signs of weakness in our councils. They conditioned the truce, then, on surrender of our arms; and the struggle went on. British aggression continued; our defence continued. It was now war to the death in very truth![14]

Alfred Cope attributed the British demand for IRA decommissioning on internal

[13] Hopkinson (ed.) *Sturgis diaries*, p. 88.
[14] Hayden Talbot, *Michael Collins' own story told to Hayden Talbot* (Dublin, 2012). p. 91.

divisions between the British military commanders and British officials in Dublin. When Cope and his supporters in Dublin Castle had agreed draft terms for a truce with Clune in early December, news of this development had enraged the 'hawks' within the Castle's administration. There was great tension between the British officials in the Dublin Castle administration who were willing to negotiate a settlement and senior British military officers serving in Ireland who wanted to impose a settlement on the republicans by force. The attitude of British officers serving in Ireland at that time is summed up by Major Harvey de Montmorency who later described Dublin Castle as 'too flaccid, too weak and too sentimental'.[15]

The Chief Secretary, Sir Hamar Greenwood, and the military commanders were enraged to learn someone could cross from London and hold several interviews with Collins whilst the British Secret Service in Dublin could not 'run him to ground'. In discussions with Cope, Fogarty learned that Greenwood's supporters had sent a deputation to Downing Street demanding the surrender of arms by the rebels as a necessary preliminary for any truce. Cope told Fogarty that this 'was a ruse to kill the truce negotiations, for Dublin Castle knew that Mick Collins and his men would never surrender their arms.'[16] Significantly the British had not demanded a surrender of arms during their negotiations with Moylett to secure an IRA ceasefire. Clune claimed that Lloyd George had not introduced this as a necessary prerequisite for a truce until 8 December.[17] Sturgis's diary entry for 18 February 1921 supports Clune's claim: 'Speaking last night on the Clune peace talks the PM [Prime Minister] said that all his advisors said Truce without the surrender of arms was impossible , this is contrary to my recollection and back pages bear me out.' [18] From the beginning of Clune's peace initiative it had been emphasised that the IRA would not countenance the surrender of arms to secure a truce. Staines, speaking as a member of the IRA, had made this abundantly clear to Griffith during the talks held with Clune in Mountjoy.[19]

The only precedent for militant republicans surrendering arms to their British foes had occurred as part of the 'unconditional surrender' which ended the 1916 Rising. When

[15] Hittle, *Collins and the Anglo Irish War*, p. 10.
[16] McMahon. (NAI, BMH, WS 362, p. 27).
[17] McMahon. (NAI, BMH, WS 362, p. 28).
[18] Hopkinson (ed.) *Sturgis diaries*, p. 129.
[19] Staines (NAI, BMH, WS 944, p. 16).

this was announced, many republicans threatened mutiny, others opted to destroy their arms rather then surrender them.[20] In 1916 Seán MacDermott had urged Limerick republicans to swear 'that the hillsides of Ireland would be dyed with their blood before they gave up any arms'.[21] When some senior republicans in Limerick city surrendered their arms to the British military following the 1916 Rising, it led to significant infighting within the local IRA.[22] There can be little doubt that a truce involving the surrender of arms in 1920 would have been regarded by the IRA as tantamount to a second 'unconditional surrender'. The decision by the British to impose this requirement must have been taken in that knowledge since Sturgis declared that, if the IRA agreed to disarm it would have been ' a surrender not a truce'.[23] Carl Ackerman, a reporter for the *Philadelphia Ledger* who had supplied the British information on his contact with Michael Collins and other republican leaders, stated that Lloyd George wanted to impose a 'truce of surrender' upon the IRA in December 1920.[24]

The British cabinet's ultimate decision to insist on a surrender of republican arms was heavily influenced by the reports of their military advisors. In December 1920, following the proclamation of martial law in counties Cork, Kerry, Limerick and Tipperary, the British declared an amnesty for anyone who was willing to surrender illegally held arms by 27 December.[25] Under this amnesty, arms could be surrendered to all British Army and RIC barracks, or to clergymen of any denomination who would pass them on to the British forces. The British cabinet rejected Clune's proposals for a truce without a surrender of republican arms, on the basis of information they had received which suggested a truce would jeopardise a surrender of arms which was then believed to be weakening the IRA's military campaign: 'Stress was laid on the importance of doing nothing to check the surrender of arms at a time when the forces of the crown had at last definitely established the upper hand.'[26] Following the collapse of Clune's peace initiative, Sturgis remarked to Sir Hamar Greenwood, that Clune's efforts had a good

[20] Fearghal McGarry, *Rebels: voices from the Easter Rising* (Dublin, 2011), pp 284 - 91.
[21] O'Callaghan, *Revolutionary Limerick*, p. 47.
[22] O'Callaghan, *Revolutionary Limerick*, p. 43.
[23] Hopkinson (ed.) *Sturgis diaries*, p. 100.
[24] Maurice Walsh, *The news from Ireland, foreign correspondents and the Irish revolution* (London, 2008) p. 146; Carl Ackerman, 'The Irish education of Mr Lloyd George', *Atlantic Monthly*, May 1922, p. 606.
[25] Hopkinson (ed.) *Sturgis diaries*, pp 88 - 9.
[26] Middlemas (ed.) *Whitehall diary*, p. 47.

chance of success but that if the IRA had given up their arms it would have been tantamount to 'surrender' on their part. Greenwood, bolstered by a belief that a victory for the British forces was imminent, replied: 'Why not? They ought to surrender; I hope we shall have no more Truce Talk just yet.'[27]

Exclusion the IRA leadership from terms of the proposed truce

After the question of an IRA surrender of arms, the next most problematic issue was the British insistence that the terms of any ceasefire would not apply to the IRA's leadership. In April 1921, Wilfred Ewart, a former British Army officer turned journalist, asked Basil Clarke if a truce could have been agreed if Lloyd George had not insisted on a republican surrender of arms Clarke replied: 'Perhaps. The question of an amnesty as regards Collins, Mulcahy, and the two others remains the difficulty, though.'[28] Lloyd George's proviso that he would only be prepared to negotiate with Irish Republicanism's political leaders in Sinn Féin and that no accommodation could be reached with Collins and the IRA leadership would prove a constant stumbling block in the early attempts to arrange a political settlement and military truce. In July 1920, when Lloyd George approached Sir Charles Russell asking him to make contact with the Irish Republicans to see if there was any prospect of negotiating a settlement, it was made clear to Russell that the British Government was only willing to engage with Sinn Féin and that no talks would be held with Collins or members of the IRA leadership.[29] Similarly, in their discussions with Clune, the British were insistent that members of the IRA who were also Sinn Féin TD's would not be permitted to attend public meetings of Dáil Éireann that were to be held with the design of securing an IRA ceasefire. The British included this precondition in the terms for a truce which they sent to Clune on 11 December 1920 stating that they would draw up a list of Sinn Féin TD's who would not be allowed to attend public meetings of Dáil Éireann.[30]

[27] Hopkinson (ed.) *Sturgis diaries*, p. 100.
[28] Wilifrid Ewart, *A journey in Ireland 1921* (Dublin, 2009), p. 9.
[29] O'Brien to Collins, 8 July, 19 August 1920, (NLI, AOBP, MS 8430)
[30] Middlemas (ed.) *Whitehall diary*, pp 45 - 6.

In their discussions with Moylett in November the British went further by insisting that immunity from prosecution inherent in any agreement would not cover Dan Breen, Michael Collins, and other named IRA leaders.[31] Whilst the British were prepared to offer an amnesty to ordinary IRA volunteers, they apparently hoped to exact retribution for certain 'outrages' which they held them responsible for. As late as January 1921, Sturgis was of the opinion that a ceasefire could be negotiated without the British having to concede an amnesty for Collins whom he believed 'would perhaps be off abroad and not risk breaking a chance of peace by complicating the issue with his presence.'[32] There was little chance that negotiations to reach a political settlement could be successful or even take place without a pause in the republican military campaign and Mulcahy, Collins and the IRA's leadership were unlikely to agree to this unless they had first consolidated their own position.

British expectation of imminent military victory

The senior British military figures advising the British cabinet assured them that if the IRA refused to accept the surrender of arms as a condition of the proposed truce it would be of no consequence since the British campaign to defeat the IRA and restore order in Ireland would soon be brought to a swift and successful conclusion, negating any need for a negotiated truce. Senior British politicians voiced the belief throughout 1920 that republican violence was a localised problem. During his negotiations with Moylett, Fisher had insisted that 'The Irish Murder Gang' was confined to the counties of Cork and Kerry.[33] Even after the military situation intensified in November 1920 Lloyd George struck an optimistic note, informing the cabinet that 'There have been 12 counties in Ireland in which there has been no murder'[34] Churchill responded by advocating a concentration of British troops, whose effectiveness would be increased by an influx of

[31] Moylett (NAI, BMH, WS 767, p. 71).
[32] Hopkinson (ed.) *Sturgis diaries*, pp 113 - 4.
[33] Moylett (NAI, BMH, WS 767, p. 59).
[34] Middlemas (ed.) Jones' *Whitehall diary*, p. 43.

armoured cars and motor vehicles, in the districts where the IRA were most active.[35]

Playing upon this optimistic assessment of the situation, the British Government's military advisors continually exaggerated the likelihood of an outright military victory. In May 1919 Sir Hamar Greenwood informed the British cabinet that the principal challenge facing the British forces in Ireland was to 'deal with the Thugs, a number of whom are going about shooting in Dublin, Limerick and Cork.'[36] In September 1920 General Tudour declared to Sturgis that 'Sinn Féin was beaten - that there was abundant evidence that the people were dead sick of it'[37] The same month General Tudor, the Chief of Police in Ireland, and Sir Ormonde Winter, the Deputy Police Adviser and Head of Intelligence in Ireland, expanded on this claim by suggesting that the British forces could secure victory in just two months if they were given the proper support by the civilian authorities.[38]

In late December, the British cabinet was assured by its military advisors that 'the forces of the Crown had at last definitely established the upper hand' and was consequently told that 'Sinn Féin was now rapidly being discredited in Ireland'[39] The British military interpreted the glut of republican peace initiatives in early December 1920 as proof that the IRA's military campaign was on the verge of collapse and that its leaders were desperate for peace. On 9 December, Sturgis recorded in his diary: 'The military are very cock-a-hoop and report that the arrest of IRA officers, gunmen etc. is having an immediate effect in making the majority who want peace more coherent and also has resulted in a very large increase in information coming in from unexpected sources.' [40] Confident of victory, Greenwood wrote to Lloyd George reporting: 'The SF Cause and organisation is breaking up. Clune and everyone else admits this … there is no need of hurry in settlement. We can in due course and on our own and fair terms settle this Irish Question for good.'[41]

By December of 1920, Greenwood was so confident of a British military victory that he told General Boyd, the GOC Dublin District, that the conflict would be over

[35] Jones, Middlemas (ed.) Jones' *Whitehall diary*, pp 42 - 3.
[36] Jones, Middlemas (ed.) *Whitehall diary*, p. 17.
[37] Hopkinson (ed.) *Sturgis diaries*, p. 35
[38] Hopkinson (ed.) *Sturgis diaries*, pp 41 - 2.
[39] Middlemas (ed.) *Whitehall diary*, p. 43.
[40] Hopkinson (ed.) *Sturgis diaries*, p. 88.
[41] Greenwood to Lloyd George, (PA, LGP, F/19/2/31).

within two months.[42] Greenwood's assertion that the republican cause was floundering, and that there was no onus on the British to seek a settlement, was undoubtedly reinforced by the number and frequency of peace initiatives and would-be envoys emanating from Ireland. The multiplicity of these peace initiatives by moderate republican politicians led the British to devalue their worth, leading Sturgis to conclude: 'it seems only necessary for one, two or three Peace Balloons to burst for another to take its place in the sky. There *must* be a very real anxiety to settle.'[43] This gave the British the option of pursuing numerous negotiations at the one time. They could pursue negotiations where they were able to exact significant concessions, and discontinue any negotiations where the republicans refused to concede. This would ensure that, if any of these negotiations were successful and the British did agree to a truce, they would have secured the best possible terms from their standpoint.

Assured by his military advisors that the IRA was about to be defeated, and confident that republican Ireland was desperate, Lloyd George began demanding more stringent terms for a truce than had initially been sought, in particular the surrender of arms. Lloyd George knew from Clune's protestations that the IRA was incredibly loathe to agree to these terms. Had the IRA agreed to halt its military campaign on unfavourable terms dictated by the British, including IRA disarmament, this would have been tantamount to surrender and therefore an admission of British victory. Had the IRA rejected these terms, which it undoubtedly would, the British were confident that the republicans would in a short time, when they faced defeat, return willing to accept these same truce terms. The British Government's rejection of Clune's peace initiative on this advice caused the Irish nationalist politician, Tim Healy, to write to Lord Beaverbrook decrying the decision as an act of folly: 'the silly Cabinet turned him [Clune] down, believing they can crush the Shinns, and that their acceptance of a truce spelled weakness. No worse incident has occurred for 100 years.'[44]

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[42] Sheehan, *British voices*, p. 90.
[43] Hopkinson (ed.) *Sturgis diaries*, p. 103. (Emphasis in original)
[44] Healy to Beaverbrook, 23 December 1920, (NLI, MS 23628).

Political factors

Political factors were also important in preventing the British Government from agreeing to a truce on terms acceptable to the republicans. Of the 484 MPs supporting Lloyd George‘s Coalition Government, 338 were members of the Conservative Party. Similarly fifteen members of the twenty-two man British cabinet were Conservatives, the majority of whom were hostile to any political settlement which granted greater measures of independence to southern Ireland. Lloyd George had complained to Lord Riddell that his ability to broker a political solution was always hampered by coalition: ‘It is no use being Prime Minister unless you can do what you want to. It is useless for me to say that I can, because I can‘t … take the Irish question. If I had a clear majority in the House of Commons I could soon settle it, but I have not.’[45] Furthermore the Government of Ireland Act had been passed through the British parliament on 23 December 1920. This was due to come into effect six months later on 3 May 1921, by which time it was envisaged that Northern Ireland would have come into existence with its own functioning government. This scenario would effectively have resolved the ‘Ulster question’ to the satisfaction of the Conservatives and the Ulster Unionists. If this political situation was successfully implemented, and the extremely optimistic predictions of the British Government’s military advisors came to pass, then Lloyd George would have enjoyed a much greater deal of freedom to negotiate with Sinn Féin concerning the future of ‘Southern Ireland’ by May of 1921. This optimistic political outlook was undoubtedly a factor in the British decision to end the peace talks with Clune. Lloyd George’s secretary spelled this out to Clune in late December 1920 when terminating the negotiations, stating:

> the [British] Government had come to the conclusion that it was better to see the thing through as was done in the American and South African wars unless meanwhile the Sinn Féiners surrender their arms and publicly announce the abandonment of violent measures: that the government felt sanguine that the new Home Rule Bill when studied and understood would be worked, in fact they felt sanguine that within six months all would be working in harmony for Ireland.[46]

[45] Hopkinson, *Irish War of Independence*, p. 178.
[46] Clune to Fogarty, 1 January 1921, McMahon. (NAI, BMH, WS 362, p. 27).

Conclusion

Clune's peace initiate undoubtedly offered the best chances of arranging an armistice between the Irish Republicans and the British Government in 1920 which could have led to political negotiations that had a prospect of reaching a successful conclusion. The prospect of a truce had been considered at two meetings of the republican Cabinet in the autumn of 1920, and the IRA's Chief of Staff, Richard Mulcahy, later expressed a belief that Clune's efforts had a prospect, however slim, of success.[47] The negotiations came so close to success that the principal negotiator on the republican side, Michael Collins, told his comrade, Liam Deasy, that they 'nearly had a truce' but gave him the impression that it had been made impossible by General Macready.[48] However, Lloyd George's introduction of harsh preconditions which had not been a feature of the initial discussions with Clune made agreement increasingly unattainable. Lloyd George must have been aware that the republican militants would never consider accepting the exclusion of senior republican figures, the continuation of British executions, or the surrender of IRA arms as part of a truce. During the negotiations, Lloyd George had pursued an unworkable dual approach of private diplomacy and public intransigence. Lloyd George favoured a definite resolution to the 'Irish question', achieved through the destruction of the IRA by the British forces which would have allowed him to impose a political settlement favourable to British interests. He had expressed this view in a letter to Churchill: 'De Valera has practically challenged the British Empire, and unless he is put down the Empire will look silly. I know how difficult it is to spare men and material, but this seems to me to be the urgent problem for us.'[49]

Lloyd George had sent out peace feelers in the autumn of 1920 only to withdraw them in reaction to political developments, or in the hope that British victories would make the acceptance of terms offered by the rebels short of unconditional surrender unnecessary. Hopkinson's conclusion that 'Responsibility for the abortive initiative and its consequences lies squarely with Lloyd George himself' is difficult to fault.[50] The

[47] Risteard Mulcahy, *My father the general,* p. 127.
[48] Liam Deasy, (UCDA, EOMN, P17b / 086).
[49] McCall, *Tudor's toughs,* p. 37.
[50] Hopkinson, *Irish War of Independence*, p. 185.

collapse of the truce negotiations in these circumstances had a negative impact on future negotiations for some time. The British Government's military advisors continued to insist throughout the spring of 1921 that it was inapposite to consider a truce when the British forces were on the brink of success. Whilst, for their part, the republicans became increasingly suspicious of Lloyd George's integrity and negotiations with the British. Sturgis reported in his diary:

> the Shins regard themselves as tricked and sold over Clune. Clune saw them all and went to London with terms in his pocket and was led on and then turned down . That as soon as London saw SF ready to treat it thought them beaten and cried off. Of course, I said "not so" but that's *their* reading of it.[51]

The failure of political will on the part of Lloyd George and the British Government prevented them from offering realistic peace terms to the republicans. The British insistence on imposing punitive and what were essentially humiliating truce terms upon the IRA ensured that the conflict dragged on for another seven months. Carl Ackerman summed up the situation acutely when he wrote that Lloyd George 'was not yet in favour of a "peace without victory"'.[52] Lloyd George and his Cabinet only appear to have seriously reconsidered the necessity of a truce in the late spring and early summer of 1921 whilst, in the interim, the IRA had escalated and intensified their military campaign making the victories promised by the British Government's military advisors seem all the more fantastic.

[51] Hopkinson (ed.) *Sturgis diaries*, p. 146.
[52] Carl Ackerman, 'The Irish education of Mr Lloyd George' in *Atlantic Monthly*, May 1922, p. 606.

Appendix 3: The IRA's military capability at the time of the Truce.

There has been a considerable range of opinion as to whether the IRA was negotiating from a position of relative military strength when it agreed to the Truce, or if it was forced into these negotiations because its military campaign was on the brink of collapse. For example the British historian Michael Burleigh has argued that the IRA was so desperately short of war material and hampered by loss of active personnel that its armed campaign would have collapsed within three weeks.[1] By comparison, his compatriot, John Pimlott, the deputy head of war studies at the Royal Military Academy in Sandhurst, has stated that the conflict was 'an unexpected defeat for the British Army'.[2] Given the polarity of opinion amongst historians as to the final military result of the conflict, it is worth examining the IRA's military capabilities at the time of the Truce in some detail. This can best be analysed using the framework of four areas of military operations devised by IRA GHQ in March 1921.[3]

1. The Dublin Area

The capital was identified by IRA Chief of Staff, Richard Mulcahy, as the most important military theatre of operations: 'The grip of our forces in Dublin must be maintained and strengthened at all costs … it cannot be too clearly stated that no number nor any magnitude of victories in any distant provincial areas have any value if Dublin is lost in a military sense.'[4] In the early stages of the war, the IRA's Dublin Brigade had scored a number of important victories. Following a spate of IRA attacks, which targeted and killed several of the most active DMP detectives who were engaged in anti-republican operations, morale within the force plummeted. In October 1920 the commissioner of the DMP made contact with the IRA and made an agreement with it whereby DMP Detectives would cease carrying weapons and assisting the British military in searches in

[1] Michael Burleigh, *Blood & rage: a cultural history of terrorism* (London, 2008), p. 23.
[2] Pimlott, *History of the British Army*, p. 122.
[3] The four districts devised by IRA GHQ also loosely corresponded with the British military's four operational areas in Ireland which were each occupied by a different army Division.
[4] Richard Mulcahy, Staff Memorandum 24 March 1921(UCDA, RMP P7/A/17).

return for an end to IRA attacks on members of the force. The assassinations of the DMP detectives and the agreement with the IRA, starved the British forces in Dublin of experienced local intelligence officers. This agreement, combined with the assassination of several high ranking British intelligence officers on Bloody Sunday, struck a serious blow to British intelligence network in Dublin.[5] The IRA set a target of three operations per day, targeting the British forces within Dublin city. Although they frequently met, and sometimes exceeded this target, the IRA faced numerous challenges in conducting urban operations in Dublin. Rifles were impractical for urban guerrilla operations, and where possible, the Dublin Brigade exchanged rifles for small arms held by provincial IRA units. It was relatively easy for British motor patrols to change their route to avoid ambushes. Unlike rural areas, the IRA in Dublin city could not block alternative routes to prevent the advance of British reinforcements. Furthermore, there was a greater risk of incurring civilian casualties in urban operations which had the potential to damage the IRA's popular support. The Dublin IRA adapted to these challenges by mounting multiple small scale ambushes attacking British patrols with small arms and grenades. British troops were regularly harassed en-route to, and from, their barracks. Ambushes in the Aungier Street - Camden Street area became so common that British soldiers dubbed the district 'the Dardanelles'. By May 1921, IRA attacks within the city were so frequent that even consignments of British rations had to be protected by armoured cars.[6]

Mulcahy frequently referred to the IRA 'holding' Dublin for the Republic, but its grip was tenuous. The Dublin Brigade expended huge quantities of ammunition in attacks, but, unlike its rural counterparts, was rarely in a position to recoup this expenditure by capturing enemy weaponry in ambushes. The Dublin Brigade was reliant on the purchase of arms from disloyal members of the British forces and clandestine IRA arms shipments. British successes in discovering IRA arms dumps within the capital ensured that the Dublin Brigade was hard pressed to supply its volunteers with arms. Between 22 March and 25 April 1921, the British military discovered several IRA arms dumps, capturing 3 machine guns, 16 rifles, 97 revolvers, 305 grenades and over 10,000 rounds of ammunition from the Dublin Brigade.[7] On 4 May 1921, the IRA's Glasgow

[5] Hittle, *Collins and the Anglo Irish War*, pp xxiii, 156.
[6] Hopkinson, *Irish War of Independence*, p.101.
[7] Townshend, *British campaign*, p. 175.

Brigade, described by British intelligence as 'the most dangerous centre of Sinn Fein activity in Britain' was decimated by arrests following the killing of a police inspector during a botched rescue attempt.[8] Glasgow was a vital part of the IRA's arms network and a cache of gelignite, thirty five revolvers and almost 1000 rounds of ammunition were discovered during the arrests.[9] This was precisely the type of war material that the Dublin Brigade required. Liam Mellows, the IRA Quartermaster General, reprimanded the Glasgow IRA for wantonly jeopardising such a vital source of weaponry.[10] The IRA suffered a further setback when a shipment of 495 Thompson machine guns was seized by US Customs.[11] The gun was an ideal weapon for the urban guerrilla, having a rapid rate of fire and being easy to transport and conceal. Just nine Thompson machine guns reached Ireland before the Truce. Whilst the Dublin Brigade employed these weapons in several ambushes during the final weeks of the war, it never possessed a sufficient number of the weapons, or an ample supply of ammunition, to make a decisive impact.[12]

The burning of the Custom House cost the lives of five IRA volunteers. A further eighty were taken prisoner, including several key members of 'The Squad', and dozens of revolvers and pistols were captured, thus leaving the Dublin Brigade critically short of the arms, ammunition and experienced volunteers necessary to carry out successful military operations. As a consequence of these losses, all units of the Dublin Brigade were ordered to increase their activity in an effort to impress on British intelligence that these losses had not had a negative effect on IRA's military capacity.[13] The number of IRA operations in the capital fell from a record height of 117 in May 1921 to 93 in June. Given that figures for March and April were 53 and 67 respectively the Dublin IRA had succeeded in keeping up the pretence.[14] However the Dublin Brigade could not keep up this charade indefinitely. The members of 'The Squad' still at liberty merged with the Dublin Brigade's Active Service Unit to form a new unit called 'The Guard' but members of this unit, whilst experienced, were desperately short of war material. William James Stephenson recalled his comrades were 'greatly handicapped' by a lack of arms as

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[8] Report on the Revolutionary Organisations in the United Kingdom, 2 February 1920, (NAUK, CAB 24/98/cp620).
[9] Stephen Coyle, *High noon on High Street: the story of a daring ambush by the IRA in Glasgow in 1921* (Glasgow, 2008), p. 63.
[10] Coyle, *High noon on High Street*, p. 123.
[11] Hart, *IRA at war*, p. 181.
[12] Hart, *IRA at war*, p. 181. Three of the guns arrived in Dublin that May, a further six reached the city via Liverpool on 6 July. *Ibid*.
[13] Joseph O'Connor (NAI, BMH, WS 487, pp 58 - 9).
[14] Yeates, *City in turmoil*, pp 265, 277.

a result of the Custom House losses and the capture of 'The Squad's' arms dump shortly afterwards.[15] Some units of the Dublin Brigade were so desperate that they tried to doctor rifle ammunition for use in small arms which resulted in serious accidents. Others stole ammunition from neighbouring IRA companies. Daniel McDonnell, a member A Company 1st Battalion, recalled 'things were so bad with all the units that it was a question of how long could they last, would we last, a week, a month, a fortnight? The only reason was we had little left to fight with. We had no ammunition; we had a few guns.'[16]

Mulcahy would later declare that a Truce was necessary because of the real possibility of a military collapse. 'There was not one of us who did not know that the Truce came just in the nick of time. I think that if the war had gone on much longer it might have ended in collapse.'[17] Given the reported IRA strengths in provincial areas and Mulcahy's insistence that control of Dublin was the key factor in the conflict his comments were probably based on the precarious position which the IRA's Dublin Brigade which was still intact militarily, but was faced with a chronic shortage of ammunition. Likewise Collins' claim that the IRA only had enough ammunition for a few more weeks was probably more pertinent to Dublin than anywhere else in Ireland.[18]

2. Ulster

In Mulcahy's analysis, the military and political situation in Ulster was of huge importance and was linked to developments in Dublin:

> Ulster is the English lever for governing Ireland. The military importance of Ulster has increased in proportion as Dublin has passed into National hands … Ulster is becoming a bridgehead that the English cannot afford to lose … it is necessary to attack them with all the force that can be deployed there - Military, Economic, Propagandist and the attack should be steady and persistent.[19]

[15] William J. Stapleton, (NAI, BMH, WS, 822, pp 86 - 7).
[16] Daniel Mc Donnell, (NAI, BMH, WS, 486, p. 21).
[17] McCall, *Tudor's Toughs*, p. 174.
[18] M. E. Collins. *Ireland 1868 - 1966* (Dublin, 1993), p. 63.
[19] Richard Mulcahy, Staff Memorandum, 24 March 1921(UCDA, RMP P7/A/17).

In March 1921 IRA GHQ divided Ulster into five divisional areas for organisational purposes. This was the first region organised into divisions and Robert Lynch has identified this reorganisation as a seminal moment in the War of Independence in Ulster, describing it as 'the birth of the Northern IRA'.[20] Prior to this, IRA activity in the six counties that became Northern Ireland had largely been limited to arms raids, arson attacks on evacuated RIC barracks and attempts to support the Belfast boycott through the destruction of 'Belfast Goods'. The IRA was hampered by several political factors in the north. The Catholic-Nationalist population was split between those who favoured the IPP and others who supported Sinn Féin and the IRA's military campaign. It was impossible for the IRA to operate outside of Catholic-Nationalist areas and Protestant-loyalists actively assisted the authorities. IRA attacks on the British forces were sporadic, with Tyrone the most active area. The organisation of Special Constabulary further retarded the IRA's campaign. The organisation of divisions in the spring of 1921 marked a significant intensification of the conflict within the six counties. The IRA had inflicted thirteen fatalities on the British forces in these counties in the ten-month period between May 1920 and February 1921. In the four months between March to July 1921, the British forces suffered a further twenty-two fatalities in the same area.[21] However these IRA's campaign within Ulster differed greatly from one IRA division to another and the republicans there were never in a position to seriously challenge the British hold on the province. GHQ had encouraged operations by the IRA's Northern divisions, hoping these would have the practical effect of relieving the military pressure on IRA units in Munster, and the political effect of disturbing British rule as a method of expressing local opposition to partition.[22]

County Donegal and Derry city formed the area of the 1st Northern Division. Like Belfast, the IRA in Derry was largely confined to the defence of Catholic-Nationalist districts. IRA attacks on members of the British forces, like the assassination of RIC Sergeant Denis Moroney in May 1920, were counter-productive and resulted in widespread rioting and sectarian attacks.[23] Realising this, Paddy Shiels, the IRA

[20] Lynch, *The Northern IRA*, p. 47.
[21] Lynch, *The Northern IRA*, p. 47.
[22] Fergal McCluskey, 'The "Tan War" in Tyrone 1920 - 1921: a comparative analysis of the violence of the IRA and Crown forces', in *The Irish Sword*, Vol. XXVII, No. 109, p. 279.
[23] Gallagher, *Violence and nationalist politics in Derry city 1920 - 1923*, p. 23

commander in Derry, arranged an unofficial truce with the British forces in the city. This agreement allowed the local IRA volunteers to relocate to Donegal where they were active in operations against the British forces.[24] The Donegal IRA faced a number of obstacles in mounting a military campaign. The county's agricultural community eked out a living on a barren countryside and seasonal emigration had a negative effect on the IRA's recruitment and organisation.[25] Initially the local IRA brigades in Donegal concentrated on destroying British movements and communications by trenching roads and destroying railway lines. This was followed by a series of arms raids on isolated RIC barracks and coastguard stations.[26] The formation of IRA flying columns in January 1921, and an influx of IRA volunteers from Derry, led to a significant increase in IRA activity in Donegal including attacks on British troop trains and a rise in IRA ambushes which resulted in six RIC fatalities.[27] However infighting between the different IRA leaders in Donegal resulted in a failure to capitalise on this momentum.[28]

In theory, the 2nd Northern Division comprised all IRA units in counties Tyrone and Derry. However, because of large pockets of Protestant-Loyalist territory in County Derry, the majority of IRA activity took place in Tyrone. The appointment by IRA GHQ of Kerry IRA Leader Charlie Daly to organise republicans there achieved tangible results. Daly's arrival in the autumn of 1920 instigated a series of successful arms raids which were quickly followed by three successful ambushes. However these initial successes were short lived as Daly was arrested in Dublin in December 1920[29] The same month the RIC district inspector noted a decrease in IRA activity in Tyrone and attributed this to the recent deployment and activities of the Special Constabulary which he stated had a 'deterrent effect on the evilly disposed section of Sinn Féin.[30] In January 1921, motorised convoys of heavily armed Special Constabulary began patrolling the county, enabling the British forces to reoccupy nine RIC barracks that had been abandoned the previous year in response to increased IRA activity.[31] The RIC county inspector noted that 'no

[24] Lynch, *The Northern IRA*, p.54 - 6.
[25] Divisional Commander to Chief of Staff, 26 June 1921 (UCDA, RMP 7/A/22).
[26] Ó Duibhir, *The Donegal awakening*, pp 308 - 9.
[27] Hopkinson, *Irish War of Independence*, p.139; Abbott, *Police casualties*, pp 200, 212, 233, 243, 260.
[28] Ó Duibhir, *The Donegal awakening*, p. 310 ; Hopkinson, *Irish War of Independence*, pp 139 - 40.
[29] McCluskey, 'The "Tan War" in Tyrone 1920 -1921', p. 285.
[30] RIC County Inspector's Report for Tyrone, December 1920, (NAUK, CO904 / 113).
[31] McCluskey, *The "Tan War" in Tyrone 1920 - 1921*, p. 286.

opposition has been shown by the IRA or Sinn Féin' to the reoccupation of these barracks.[32] Fergal McCluskey's study of the conflict in Tyrone has found that attempted IRA operations following the deployment of the Special Constabulary were swiftly followed by violent and indiscriminate attacks on isolated Catholic-Nationalists living in predominantly Protestant-Loyalist areas. Consequently some IRA volunteers were reluctant to carry out attacks on the British forces because they feared they would be unable to protect isolated Catholic-Nationalists from reprisals.[33]

County Antrim and north Down formed the 3rd Northern Division but IRA activity in this area was almost entirely centered on Belfast. The Catholic-Nationalist community comprised a small minority of the population in this divisional area, who were scattered in isolated pockets. An aggressive IRA campaign in this area would not only have been difficult to sustain, but it would also have been counter productive as it was likely to lead to widespread reprisals against their supporters.[34] The shooting of Colonel Smyth in July 1920 resulted in widespread riots in Banbridge, Dromore and Lisburn. The assassination of District Inspector Swanzy in Lisburn the following month led to further violence and widespread sectarian attacks on Catholic-Nationalists where local IRA units were incapable of defending them.[35] The leadership of the Belfast IRA initially attempted to remain aloof from the sectarian violence and 'fratricidal strife'. IRA volunteers were ordered to refrain from attacking loyalist mobs and told attacks on British troops could only be sanctioned if they were attacking the Catholic-Nationalist civilians. This policy proved unpopular and resulted in the takeover of the IRA's Belfast Brigade by a younger, more aggressive leadership in the spring of 1921.[36] This change resulted in a marked increase in republican attacks within the city and the number of RIC / USC fatalities increased from just two in 1920 to ten between January and July 1921.[37] These attacks frequently met with violent responses from the British forces and loyalists. The IRA's Belfast Brigade became increasing embroiled in the defence of Catholic-Nationalist districts which put a huge strain on its resources and abilities. Thomas Flynn,

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[32] RIC County Inspector's Report for Tyrone, January 1921, (NAUK, CO904 / 114).
[33] McCluskey, The "Tan War" in Tyrone 1920 - 1921, pp 285, 290, 293 - 4.
[34] Hopkinson, *Irish War of Independence*, p. 154.
[35] Pearse Lawlor, *The burnings 1920* (Cork, 2009), pp 57 - 151.
[36] Lynch, *The Northern IRA*, pp 29 - 30.
[37] Trotter, *Constabulary heroes*, pp 8 - 29.

captain of D Company, 1st Battalion of the Belfast Brigade recalled that by June 1921 the republicans were under incessant pressure: 'The position in Belfast for about seven weeks before the Truce was so critical and the pressure on our nationalist districts so great that I did not get my clothes off for most of that time. I was getting no regular sleep and I was reduced to a state of extreme exhaustion.'[38]

The IRA's 4th Northern Division in Armagh and Southern Down and County Louth was the most active IRA unit in Ulster, inflicting a total of sixteen fatalities on the RIC.[39] Matthew Lewis's work on the IRA's Newry Brigade found that the republican military campaign there was more akin to the republican guerrilla warfare practiced by southern IRA units than their northern counterparts.[40] Nonetheless, they were frustrated by a lack of arms and initially their activities were restricted to arson attacks on evacuated RIC barracks. The Newry Brigade became increasingly active following a series of successful arms raids and the importation of weaponry from England. Consequently the number of republican attacks on the British forces increased from five attacks causing two casualties in 1920, to seventeen attacks causing eight fatalities in the final six months of the war. The Newry Brigade also succeeded in derailing a British troop train carrying a cavalry unit which had attended the opening of the Northern Ireland parliament in 1921.[41] Despite the introduction and activity of the Special Constabulary the IRA in Armagh and South Down had sustained its military campaign. It was coming under increasing pressure by the summer of 1921, with some units finding it increasingly difficult to mount attacks on the British forces and was forced to respond to British reprisals forces with counter-reprisals on the local loyalist populace.[42]

Despite the military advantages bestowed on the IRA's 5th Northern Division by being outside the six county area the republican military campaign there was poor. Prior to May 1921, the IRA's military campaign in Cavan had inflicted just one fatality on the British forces.[43] It was reported that 'Local Volunteers were very slow and do not seem to grasp anything at all. They are just typical of the sleepy place, and seem to hold enemy

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[38] Thomas Flynn (NAI, BMH, WS 429, pp 13 - 4).
[39] Trotter, *Constabulary heroes*, pp 8 - 26; O'Donnell, *Black and Tans in County Louth*, p. 23
[40] Matthew Lewis, 'The Newry Brigade and the War of Independence in Armagh and South Down 1919 - 1921' in *The Irish Sword* Vol. XXVII No. 108 p. 225.
[41] Lewis, 'The Newry Brigade', pp 229 - 30.
[42] Lewis, 'The Newry Brigade', pp 230 - 1.
[43] Abbott, *Police Casualties*, p.166.

forces in great dread.'[44] In an effort to improve the IRA's fighting capability in the county a flying column made up of IRA volunteers from Belfast were sent to Cavan in April 1921. This unit had some initial successes but lax security resulted in the flying column being encircled by British forces near Cootehill. One IRA volunteer was killed and thirteen others were captured. This action not only destroyed the flying column, it also effectively ended successful IRA operations within the county.[45] Despite the deployment of Special Constabulary and the presence of a large and hostile loyalist population, the IRA in Monaghan became increasingly active in early 1921, killing ten members of the British forces in a series of successful ambushes.[46]

The deployment of organisers from IRA GHQ and the creation of the divisional structure saw significant advances in the IRA's military campaign in Ulster which, to an extent, helped relieve the military pressure on the IRA in the south-west. In terms of challenging British rule, the IRA's military campaign was most successful in parts of Donegal and Monaghan where republican dominance allowed them to set up alternative governmental structures such as the Sinn Féin courts but it was impossible to implement this system throughout Ulster. The formation of the Special Constabulary meant that the IRA in the six counties faced an effective, determined, well-equipped adversary with local knowledge, which made any further military or political advances exceptionally difficult.

3. Secondary Country Areas

The 'Secondary Country Areas' as defined by Mulcahy comprised the Irish counties outside of Dublin and Munster which were not under martial law. These made up a huge swathe of territory including the whole province of Connacht in the north-west, and most of the Irish midlands. This area was equivalent to the British military's '5th Divisional Area'.[47] The most successful IRA units in the North West were in counties Galway,

[44] Notes from O/C Cavan Flying Column, May1921, (UCDA, RMP P7/A/18).
[45] Lynch, *The Northern IRA*, pp 58 - 62.
[46] McGarry, *Eoin O'Duffy*, pp 70 - 3 ; Abbott, *Police casualties*, pp 179, 188, 247, 276.
[47] Townshend, *The Republic*, p. 252; Townshend, *The British campaign*, p. 86.

Mayo and Roscommon. In Mayo the success of the IRA's military campaign is evident in the escalating number of fatalities suffered by the British forces and corresponding decrease in the number of RIC barracks representing in effect a local British withdrawal. In 1920 there were forty-seven RIC barracks in Mayo and just two members of the British forces had been killed. By 1921 there were just twenty-three RIC barracks and the British suffered fifteen fatalities in the final five months of the conflict.[48] Due to a shipment of arms from IRA GHQ and their success in capturing weaponry, the IRA in the county were also comparatively well armed. Patrick Joseph Cannon, a member of the West Mayo Brigade Flying Column, recalled 'The Truce found us in good form and our morale high … We had about 100 rounds per rifle. In fact we had more arms than we had ammunition for. We could put more men under arms by re-distributing the ammunition and this was our intention'.[49] A similar situation existed in Galway where the IRA became increasingly active in early 1921 and had inflicted a total of 17 fatalities on the British forces.[50]

In contrast, the IRA's military campaign in Longford was in decline from the spring of 1921. Until March 1921, the county had been described by IRA GHQ as 'a very valuable focus of action in the North-Midlands' and was being used as a training base to expand the republican campaign.[51] Under Sean MacEoin's command, the North Longford Flying column had carried out a number of successful attacks and nine members of the British forces had been killed in the county by March 1921. However IRA activity in the county went into decline after McEoin's capture. Just three members of the British forces were killed in Longford in the final three months of the conflict. Attempts to organise a flying column in the south of the county produced few results and the original flying column floundered without Mac Eoin's leadership. It suffered from infighting and inactivity and, by May of 1921 GHQ considered merging it with another weakened flying column in Leitrim. To make matters worse for the republicans, the strength of the RIC in the county was increased; it became increasingly mobile and reoccupied barracks which

[48] RIC returns by County, 1920 and 1921 (NAUK, HO 184 / 61-62); Richard Abbott, *Police Casualties*, pp 89, 104, 213, 216, 228, 232, 244, 250, 264 ; http;//www.cairogang.com/soldiers-killed/list-1921.html (accessed 17 August 2014).
[49] Patrick Joseph Cannon (NAI, BMH, WS 830, p. 14).
[50] Abbott, *Police casualties*, pp103, 112, 120, 209, 219, 224, 241, 260, 281; http;//www.cairogang.com/soldiers-killed/list-1921.html (accessed 17 August 2014).
[51] Suggestions Re: The Longford Area, March 1921 (UCDA, RMP P7/A/17).

had been abandoned previously. IRA units in the county suffered from a chronic shortage of ammunition and could do little other than trench roads to hamper the movement of the British forces and launch occasional sniping attacks.[52] Events in Leitrim closely mirrored those in Longford. In February 1921, the Longford IRA leader, Seán Connolly, was sent by IRA GHQ to organise the Leitrim IRA into an effective fighting force. The flying column organised by Connolly was destroyed in March 1921 when he and five other IRA volunteers were killed by the British forces at Selton Hill and the Leitrim IRA, already in a weak position, found it difficult to recover from this blow.[53]

Although they had one of the poorer fighting records amongst western IRA units, at the time of the Truce, the Sligo IRA was becoming increasingly active and was engaged in regular harassment of the British forces. The British forces suffered 14 fatalities in the county, the majority of whom were killed between March and July 1921. In mounting these attacks, the IRA had gained valuable military experience, their morale was high and they remained capable of continuing the fight and inflicting further casualties on the British forces. Farry's recent study of the war in Sligo concluded that 'There was no indication that Sligo IRA was on its last legs by July 1921.'[54] A similar situation prevailed in Roscommon where there was no sign of a decrease in IRA activity. Senior IRA officers in the county including Luke Duffy, commander of the 3rd Battalion, South Roscommon Brigade recalled 'We were in a better position than ever before to have carried on the fight. Our morale was very high and gaining strength'.[55] Pat Mullooly, quartermaster of the North Roscommon Brigade, agreed with Duffy that despite a lack of armaments and problems with local IRA leadership 'the morale of our forces … was very high and we were in no way overawed by the British forces when the Truce came.'[56]

Undoubtedly, republican opposition to British rule was weakest in the midlands and southeastern counties where IRA activity was negligible and resulted in few British fatalities. Hopkinson has described the IRA's campaign in counties Meath and Westmeath as 'intermittent and extremely small-scale military action' Just three RIC

[52] Coleman, *Longford and the Irish revolution*, pp 127 - 33.
[53] Bernard Sweeney, (NAI, BMH, WS 1147, p. 17); Hopkinson, *Irish War of Independence*, p. 144.
[54] Michael Farry, *The Irish revolution 1912 - 23 Sligo* (Dublin, 2012), p.73.
[55] Hegarty Thorne, *They put the flag a-flyin*, p.115.
[56] Pat Mullooly (NAI, BMH, WS 955, p. 33).

constables were killed in each county and there were no major attacks on RIC barracks in Westmeath.[57] The majority of IRA activity in these counties was limited to hampering British troop movements by blocking roads and sabotaging communication networks. Local IRA leader Seamus Finn stated that 'at no time were we … in possession of sufficient arms, ammunition or other war materials to engage any large sized force of the enemy'.[58] Oliver Coogan commented in his study of the War of Independence in Meath that; 'Certainly if the efficiency of an army is measured by the amount of blood it spills then the Meath Volunteers of 1919 -21 would be deemed a complete failure'.[59] The Carlow IRA campaign was equally poor. The local IRA leadership blamed unsuitable terrain, organisational difficulties and a lack of arms for their failures.[60] The concentration of British military forces at the Curragh, and a disorganised local IRA network with a small membership limited activity in Kildare.[61] The IRA were so inactive in Wicklow that IRA veteran Andrew MacDonnell commented: 'Wicklow will never be any good until we burn the town of Wicklow and blame it on the Tans, then the bastards will fight.'[62] Just one RIC constable had been killed there prior to the appointment of Sean MacBride to the county as an IRA organiser in the summer of 1921. MacBride proposed a number of schemes to the local IRA leadership but his efforts bore little fruit. A planned county-wide attack on the RIC in early July resulted in just one attack in Wicklow town.[63] The IRA's Offaly Brigade were more active than its counterparts in Kildare and Wicklow but its operations were sporadic and the county did not come close to achieving their military potential until GHQ appointed organisers arrived in the summer of 1921.

'The Secondary Country Area' was aptly named by Mulcahy as the conflict there had not reached the intensity that it had in Dublin and Munster. By the summer of 1921 however, the IRA in the western counties were military active, increasingly self-reliant and their actions posed a serious challenge for the British forces. Even in eastern and

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[57] Hopkinson, *Irish War of Independence*, p. 144.
[58] Oliver Coogan, *Politics and war in Meath 1913 - 23* (Dublin, 1983), p. 116
[59] Coogan, *Politics and war*, pp 190 - 1.
[60] William Nolan, 'Events in Carlow 1920 - 21' in the *Capuchian Annual*, 1970.
[61] Terence Dooley, 'IRA activity in Kildare during the War of Independence', in William Nolan and Thomas McGrath (eds) *Kildare: history and society* (Dublin, 2005), pp 650 - 1.
[62] Hopkinson, *Irish War of Independence* (Dublin, 2004), p. 145.
[63] Christopher Byrne (NAI, BMH WS 1014, p. 14).

midlands counties, where IRA military activity rarely resulted in British fatalities and was largely confined to hampering the British forces by felling trees, trenching roads and cutting telegraph lines, the fact that the IRA existed and operated in defiance of British rule was a problem. The existence of the IRA in these areas meant there was a potential for a more widespread and effective republican military campaign if IRA GHQ succeeded in organising and motivating local IRA brigades. According to Mulcahy this was a real possibility: 'it is a matter of organisation, of linking up and such development as is possible. There is … a good prospect of getting something done in these areas.'[64]
By July 1921 the commander of the 5th Division, Major General Sir Hugh Jeudwine, saw that the British military's current strategy had little chance of success. Like Macready he urged to British Government to either implement draconian measures and prepare for the political consequences or sue for peace with an offer of generous terms to the IRA:

> There must be either war or peace. The present policy, viewed from a military standpoint, can only end in disaster. If the Government elects for war it must be waged with all the resources of war unsparingly used, and it must be begun at once and fought to the finish. The more dramatic, complete and immediate the measures taken the less the cost, and the quicker the end will be reached. If the Government elects for peace, it must pursue peace openly at once, and make an offer of terms. It is not in a position to dictate, and unless its terms are generous they will not be accepted.[65]

4. The War Zone

The 'War Zone' comprised the eight counties where martial law had been declared which were garrisoned and occupied by the British Army's 6th Division. In March 1921, Mulcahy outlined IRA GHQ's analysis of the importance of the 'War Zone' to the overall military situation:

> Here the enemy has accumulated strong numerical and material resources … and in general is exerting serious military effort … our forces are so far holding their own without danger and there is reasonable ground to assume they can continue to do so … It should … be the aim to maintain the skilful and very successful warfare of this area as far as possible … and [it] must be kept munitioned as fully as possible.[66]

Counties Cork, Kerry, Limerick and Tipperary were the first to be proclaimed under

[64] Richard Mulcahy, Staff Memorandum, 24 March 1921 (UCDA, RMP P7/A/17).
[65] Sheehan, *Hearts & mines*, p. 180.
[66] Richard Mulcahy, Staff Memorandum 24 March 1921 (UCDA, RMP P7/A/17).

Martial law in December 1920, with counties Clare, Kilkenny, Waterford and Wexford being added to the martial law area the following month. The latter three south-eastern counties were by far the weakest in this area where the IRA concentrated on harassing the enemy by trenching roads and breaking communications. Wexford had been divided into two IRA brigades based in the north and south of the county but both of these failed to produce military results. Just three members of the RIC were killed in Wexford, the most prominent of whom, District Inspector Lea Wilson, was assassinated by an IRA unit sent from Dublin. The situation was so poor in the south of the county that the local IRA brigade never formed a flying column.[67] IRA activity in Kilkenny also produced few results except in the north of the county where co-operation with the South Tipperary Brigade resulted in a number of successful ambushes.[68] Difficulties relating to leadership and organisation hampered IRA activity in Waterford but the western half of the county showed an increase in activity as the conflict intensified. In total eight members of the British forces (7 RIC and 1 British soldier) were killed in Waterford between November 1920 and the Truce in July 1921. Almost all of these fatalities having in the western half of the county, as there was very little IRA activity east of Kilmacthomas.[69]

In Clare the IRA inflicted forty-one fatalities on the British forces. By contrast just fifteen IRA volunteers and one Fianna Éireann scout had been killed - the vast majority of whom were killed during British reprisals or summarily executed after capture.[70] IRA activity was uneven across the county with the IRA's West Clare Brigade having a very poor record.[71] In the most active districts in the county, longstanding and intense rivalry between the Barrett and Brennan families, who respectively led the Mid and East Clare Brigades, hindered cooperation, the development of the 1st Western Division and the Clare IRA's ability to launch large-scale military operations. Despite these limitations, the IRA succeeded by the summer of 1921 in making the county ungovernable for the British authorities. IRA activity in Clare caused the destruction or

[67] Hopkinson, *Irish War of Independence*, p.123.
[68] Hopkinson, *Irish War of Independence*, p. 122.
[69] Mooney, *Cry of the Curlew*, pp 93 - 315, Hopkinson, *Irish War of Independence*, p. 122; Abbott, *Police casualties*, pp 119, 151, 156, 205, 211, 254, 262; http;//www.cairogang.com/soldiers-killed/list-1921.html (accessed 17 August 2014).
[70] Ó Ruairc, *Blood on the banner*, p. 260.
[71] Hopkinson, *Irish War of Independence*, pp 130 - 1.

abandonment of forty-four RIC barracks, leading to the 'liberation' of large districts that were devoid of a British military or police presence and were increasingly used as operational bases by the republicans.[72] The British forces rarely entered these districts except in force, travelling in large motorised convoys protected by one or more armoured vehicles. The IRA harassed these convoys with occasional sniping attacks but focused their attention on ambushing smaller motorised patrols which they were capable of ambushing and destroying - but these ambushes were frequently abandoned due to an elusive or evasive enemy. Despite a shortage of arms, the Clare IRA had vastly improved its fighting ability during the conflict, and at the time of the Truce was capable of continuing its military campaign indefinitely, even if it was never in a position to dislodge the British forces from their heavily fortified barracks in the county's urban centres.[73] The IRA's policy of counter-reprisals and the destruction of stately homes likely to be commandeered as British barracks exacted a heavy toll on the local loyalist population. In the summer of 1921, wealthy unionist landowners in Clare began approaching representatives of the IRA offering to use their political influence and British military connections to secure an end to British reprisals and the negotiation of some form of Truce.[74]

Tipperary experienced one of the most active local IRA campaigns during the War of Independence and fifty-five members of the British forces were killed there during the conflict.[75] British intelligence, and in particular RIC intelligence gathering in the county, became increasingly ineffective compared to the IRA's more active and efficient intelligence network. RIC morale in the county was weakened and there was friction between Irish RIC constables and RIC recruits from Britain.[76] Although the IRA in North Tipperary was affected by an RIC campaign of reprisal killings, it was still able to continue their military campaign at the time of the Truce. James A. MacDonald, the RIC district inspector for Tipperary North Riding, reported that RIC morale in the county was poor and the republicans were growing in strength:

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[72] Ó Ruairc, *Blood on the banner*, p. 260.
[73] David Fitzpatrick, *Politics and Irish life 1913 - 1921: provincial experience of war and revolution* (2nd ed., Cork, 1998), pp 186 - 90.
[74] Paddy 'Con' McMahon, (UCDA, EOMN P17b / 130).
[75] Richard Abbott, *Police casualties*, pp 29, 30, 39, 44, 51, 62, 63, 68, 75, 90, 92, 127, 148, 149, 165, 166, 184, 199, 205, 212, 225, 231, 240, 241, 249, 262, 279, 285; http;//www.cairogang.com/soldiers-killed/list-1921.html (accessed 17 August 2014).
[76] Hogan, *Black and Tans in north Tipperary*, p. 456.

> Sinn Féin is the only one [organisation] active … its membership is immense, its organisation good and its ramifications wide … At stations which are strong and from which good fighting patrols can be sent out, the morale is good, but in smaller stations where the men are doing nothing but holding the post, with little exercise and no recreation, it is only natural to find pessimism and a fed up spirit. They naturally want to hunt the rebels … they want to see the government give a free hand to those who are charged with settling the country … Only by stringent measures can we deal with the enemy. If necessary he should be starved into surrender and absolute submission. At present they only laugh at our proclamations which we cannot enforce. Unless something effective is done, we shall find ourselves entirely cut off.[77]

Although the level of IRA activity in North Tipperary waned in the final months of the conflict there was a corresponding rise in IRA activity in the south of the county where the RIC incurred more fatalities in the final six months of the conflict than it had in the previous two years.[78]

A similar situation prevailed in Kerry where the IRA's military campaign gained increasing momentum as the conflict progressed. The RIC in Kerry suffered the highest number of casualties in any county excepting counties Dublin and Tipperary. Kerry had witnessed a rapid transition from IRA attacks on RIC barracks to ambushes of RIC patrols.[79] There was a rapid escalation in IRA activity in Kerry in the spring and early summer of 1921. The British forces were dealt serious blows by fatalities inflicted at the Headford Ambush in March when eight British soldiers were killed, and the Castlemaine Ambush which resulted in the deaths of five RIC constables.[80] These operations had a considerable psychological effect on the morale of the British forces in the county[81] Although the IRA in Kerry was hampered by internal divisions and poor leadership in the north of the county, intervention by IRA GHQ in early 1921 had addressed this problem. By the summer of 1921 the IRA, the IRA throughout Kerry was beginning to demonstrate its developing military capabilities to the extent that the British military sent an overture to representatives of the IRA offering a local bilateral ceasefire in North Kerry, which was rejected by the republicans. The British forces in the county reported an increasing level of IRA activity in the final months of the conflict, which although not indicative of a preemptive change in the military status quo, was an indication that the

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[77] Hogan, *Black and Tans in north Tipperary*, p. 390.
[78] Abbott, *Police casualties*, pp 29, 30, 90, 149, 166, 184, 199, 205, 212, 225, 241, 262, 279.
[79] Hopkinson, *Irish War of Independence* (Dublin, 2004), p. 125.
[80] *Abbott, Police casualties*, p. 248, http;//www.cairogang.com/soldiers-killed/list-1921.html (accessed 17 August 2014).
[81] Hopkinson, *Irish War of Independence*, p. 127.

IRA in the county were capable of continuing its military operations for some time.[82]

County Limerick can also be viewed as a successful theatre of operations for the IRA. At least forty-five members of the British forces were killed by the IRA in Limerick, with half of these casualties occurring in the final six months of the conflict.[83] The first IRA flying column had been formed in the east of the county, and by 1921, the East Limerick Brigade was one of the most active and successful IRA units. It was able to draw on the benefits of a strong, unified local leadership and a large pool of experienced IRA volunteers. The ambush at Dromkeen in East Limerick was the largest IRA ambush to occur outside of County Cork, and was arguably the most successful ambush nationally. Nine RIC constables and Black and Tans were killed in the attack and two others, captured in the engagement, were summarily executed. The IRA suffered no casualties. However, British military intelligence was particularly active in the area afterwards and the East Limerick Brigade suffered a number of fatalities as a result of entrapment operations set by the British military at Lackelly and Shraharla. The republican military campaign in the western half of the county had not been as intense as in the eastern part of the county, but by the summer of 1921, the area was increasingly active. Cooperation between the West Limerick and North Cork Brigades allowed the IRA to launch increasingly large-scale operations involving up to 100 armed men, supported by road blocking parties, signalling and engineering units. Although weakened by internal divisions and a formidable concentration of British forces there the IRA in Limerick city, like its counterparts in the county areas, remained active at the time of the Truce and continued to carry out military operations.[84] In short, the British forces had failed to either extinguish or exhaust the military capabilities of the IRA in Limerick which was in a very strong position to continue the fight at the time of the Truce.[85]

In terms of British fatalities, activity, armament, and organisation the IRA's three Cork Brigades were the most successful and effective republican guerrilla units rivalled only by the IRA's Dublin Brigade.[86] Recent studies have produced a divergence in scholarly opinion about the balance of military power in the county at the time of the

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[82] Sinéad Joy, *The IRA in Kerry 1916 - 1921* (Cork, 2005), pp 91 - 3.
[83] O'Callaghan, *Revolutionary Limerick*, p. 159.
[84] Toomey, *War of Independence in Limerick*, pp 616 - 32.
[85] O'Callaghan, *Revolutionary Limerick*, p. 154 - 5.
[86] Hopkinson, *Irish War of Independence*, p. 107.

Truce. Hart found that the IRA had become increasingly adept at adapting to British offensives, responded to British military victories with increasingly ferocious responses and tightened its grip on the political life of the county.[87] This is contradicted by Sheehan, who argues that the British military were successful in developing counter-insurgency tactics so that 'the IRA [in Cork] had ceased to provide a significant military threat, and by 1921, their operations had been reduced to measures that constituted a terrorist rather than a military campaign.'[88] An analysis of RIC county inspectors' reports shows that the IRA's military campaign in West Cork became more intense as the conflict continued and was effective in destabilising British rule. The RIC county inspector hailed the introduction of martial law in December 1920 as 'the turning point' in favour of the British forces, who were 'getting the situation in hand'. Just two months later, the RIC reluctantly reported that 'the Riding could hardly be in a worse state'.[89] A total of fifty-four members of the RIC were killed in West Cork and the number of RIC outposts was reduced from forty in January 1919 to nineteen in July 1921. The RIC withdrawal from smaller towns and villages facilitated IRA activity in the final months of the conflict.[90] Although the IRA's Cork No. 3 Brigade was hampered by a shortage of ammunition and expertise in explosives, which made operations increasingly difficult, local IRA leader Tom Barry felt that the Cork No. 3 Brigade become increasingly self-reliant and was capable of maintaining its campaign for some time.[91]

The IRA was also in a strong position in Cork city and the eastern half of the county. Here, as well as fighting units, the IRA had developed a whole guerrilla infrastructure which included a sophisticated intelligence network, a republican police force, engineering, signaling, communications and transport units which despite a huge garrison of British forces continued to operate efficiently at the time of the Truce. Even if they had been successful in making the change to wireless IRA intelligence had already preempted this development. One of the most significant military developments was the establishment of covert IRA munitions factories which were capable of producing up to ninety grenades per night. The output of these factories resulted in a direct increase in the

[87] Hart, *IRA & its enemies*, p. 107.
[88] Sheehan, *Hard local war*, p. 168.
[89] RIC County Inspector's Reports, for Cork West Riding December 1920, February 1921 (NAUK, CO 904 / 114).
[90] Diarmuid Kingston, *Beleaguered: a history of the RIC in West Cork during the War of Independence* (Cork, 2013), pp 191 - 4.
[91] Tom Barry, *Guerrilla days*, p. 190, 205 - 13.

number of IRA grenade attacks on the British forces in Cork throughout May and June of 1921.[92]

By 1921, the military situation in Cork and the southwest was weighing on the mind of senior British military officers stationed there. Major General Strickland, commander of the British Army's 6th Division, recorded his view of the worsening military situation in his personal diary on New Years Day 1921, *'Last year was bad enough but nothing to this … I hope and trust I won't be here on 1.1.22.'* Brigade Major Bernard Law Montgomery, Intelligence Officer with the 17th Infantry Brigade in Cork, found that the morale and effectiveness of the various British forces in Cork at the time was poor:

> There was little co-ordination between the Irish police, the 'Black and Tan' auxiliary forces, and the uniformed British Army. As a result Intelligence was feeble, counter-productive hostility was induced by the lack of control over the 'Black and Tans' and the military was torn between those who thought it best to ride out the storm, letting politicians negotiate a settlement, and those who advocated sterner measures designed to stamp out the IRA completely.[93]

Colonel Sir Hugh Elles, Commandant of the Royal Tank Corps, was shocked by the condition of his troops when he visited Ireland in May 1921:

> Officers must move not only armoured, and in bodies but with their revolvers very handy; in motor cars they carry them actually in their hands. Troops sleep in defended barracks - behind barbed wire. Communication is becoming increasingly difficult. To go from Dublin to Cork one may fly or one may go very slowly, by armed train … This is a curious situation for a force whose raison d'etre in the country is to maintain order.[94]

[92] John Borgonovo, 'The Guerrilla Infrastructure: IRA Special Services in the Cork Number One Brigade 1917 - 1921', in *The Irish Sword* Vol. XXVII No. 108, pp 205 - 16.
[93] Sheehan, *British voices*, p. 151.
[94] Colonel commanding Tank Corps Centre to Cabinet by Sec. of State for War, 24 June 1921, (NAUK, CAB 24/124).

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