

## THE DROMKEEN AMBUSH IN COUNTY LIMERICK 1921

An Online Exhibition Commissioned by Limerick Museum  
Researched and Curated by William O'Neill

This exhibition is part of the Limerick City and County Council Decade of Centenaries Programme which is organised by Limerick City and County Library Service and funded by the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media under the Decade of Centenaries 2012-2023 initiative.

## LUÍOCHÁN DHROM CAOIN I GCONTAE LUIMNIGH I 1921

Taispeántas ar Líne Coimisiúnaithe ag Músaem Luimnigh  
Taighde agus Coimeád déanta ag William O'Neill

Tá an taispeántas seo mar chuid de Chlár Dheich mBlíana na gCuimhneachán Chomhairle Cathrach agus Contae Luimnigh atá á eagrú ag Seirbhís Leabharlainne Chathair agus Chontae Luimnigh agus tá sé á chistiú ag an Roinn Turasóireachta, Cultúir, Ealaíon, Gaeltachta, Spóirt agus Meán faoi thionscnamh Dheich mBlíana na gCuimhneachán 2012-2023



An Roinn Turasóireachta, Cultúir,  
Ealaíon, Gaeltachta, Spóirt agus Meán  
Department of Tourism, Culture,  
Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media

## THE DROMKEEN AMBUSH

On 3 of February 1921, the East Limerick and Mid Limerick Brigades of the Irish Republican Army (IRA) launched an attack on a convoy of the Royal Irish Constabulary (RIC) at the village of Dromkeen in East County Limerick. Eleven policemen were killed, and historian Tom Toomey has referred to Dromkeen as 'the most successful IRA ambush in Munster, in regards to the lack of IRA deaths, and the number of casualties on the RIC side.'



June 1921 edition of An tOglach

## LUÍOCHÁN DHROM CAOIN

Chuir Briogáidí Óglaigh na hÉireann (IRA) Luimnigh Thoir agus Luimnigh Láir tús le hionsaí an 3 Feabhra 1921 ar thionlacan feithicli Chonstáblacht Ríoga na hÉireann (an RIC) ag sráidbhaile Dhrom Caoin in Oirthear Chontae Luimnigh. Maraíodh aon phóilín déag, agus dúirt an staraí Tom Toomey gurbh é Luíochán Dhrom Caoin 'an luíochán ba rathúla den IRA i Mumha, mar gheall ar a laghad ball den IRA a maraíodh, agus an méid ball den RIC a maraíodh nó a gortaíodh.'

# FORMING THE BRIGADES

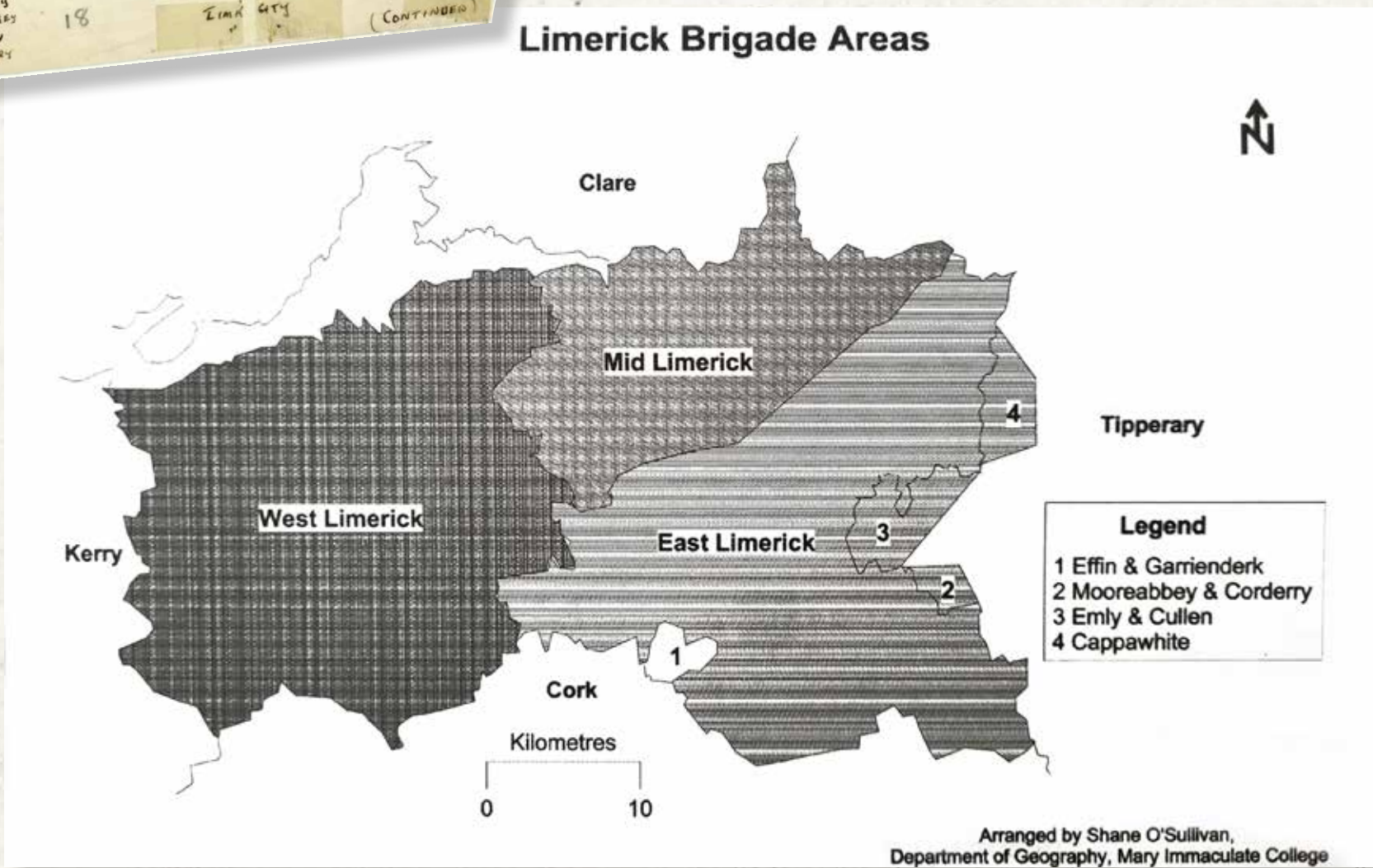
In the wake of the 1916 Rising, the Limerick branch of the Irish Volunteers were reorganised. A meeting of prominent Volunteer figures, chaired by Commandant Michael Colivet was held in late 1916, in the Fianna Hall on Barrington Street, Limerick City. Colivet had commanded the Volunteers in Limerick during the Rising and had obeyed Eoin MacNeill's orders to stand down.

At this meeting, it was decided that the former Limerick Volunteer forces would be split into three: the East Limerick Brigade, the Mid Limerick Brigade, and the West Limerick Brigade. Each brigade was divided into battalions which were in turn divided into companies. By 1919, the Volunteers nationwide had become known as the Irish Republican Army (IRA).

| Structure of the Limerick IRA |                      |                     |
|-------------------------------|----------------------|---------------------|
| 3 Brigades                    | Number of Battalions | Number of Companies |
| East                          | six                  | forty-one           |
| West                          | five                 | thirty-six          |
| Mid                           | four                 | Twenty-five         |



Belt worn by IRA volunteer



Map of Limerick Brigades operational areas

# NA BRIOGÁIDÍ A CHRUTHÚ

Rinneadh brainse Luimnigh d'Óglaigh na hÉireann a chur in eagar arís tar éis Éirí Amach 1916. Cuireadh cruinniú ar siúl ar fhreastail baill mhóra le rá d'Óglaigh na hÉireann air agus a ndearna an Ceannfort Michael Colivet cathaoirleacht air go déanach i 1916, i Hall na bhFianna ar Shráid Barrington i gCathair Luimnigh. Ghlac Colivet ceannas ar na hÓglaigh i Luimneach i rith an Éirí Amach agus chloigh sé le horduithe scoir Eoin MacNeill.

Rinneadh an cinneadh ag an gcrúinniú seo go ndéanfaí iarfhórsaí Óglaigh Luimnigh a roinnt ina dtrí bhriogáid: Briogáid Luimnigh Thoir, Briogáid Luimnigh Láir, agus Briogáid Luimnigh Thiar. Roinneadh gach briogáid ina cathláin agus roinneadh na cathláin ina gcomplachtaí. Tugadh Óglaigh na hÉireann (an IRA) ar na hÓglaigh ar fud na tíre faoin mbliain 1919.

| Structure of the Limerick IRA |                 |                     |
|-------------------------------|-----------------|---------------------|
| 3 Bhriogáid                   | An Lion Cathlán | An Lion Complachtaí |
| An tOirthear                  | Sé Cinn         | Daichead a hAon     |
| An Iarthar                    | Cúig Cinn       | Tríocha a Sé        |
| An Lár                        | Ceithre Cinn    | Fiche a Cúig        |

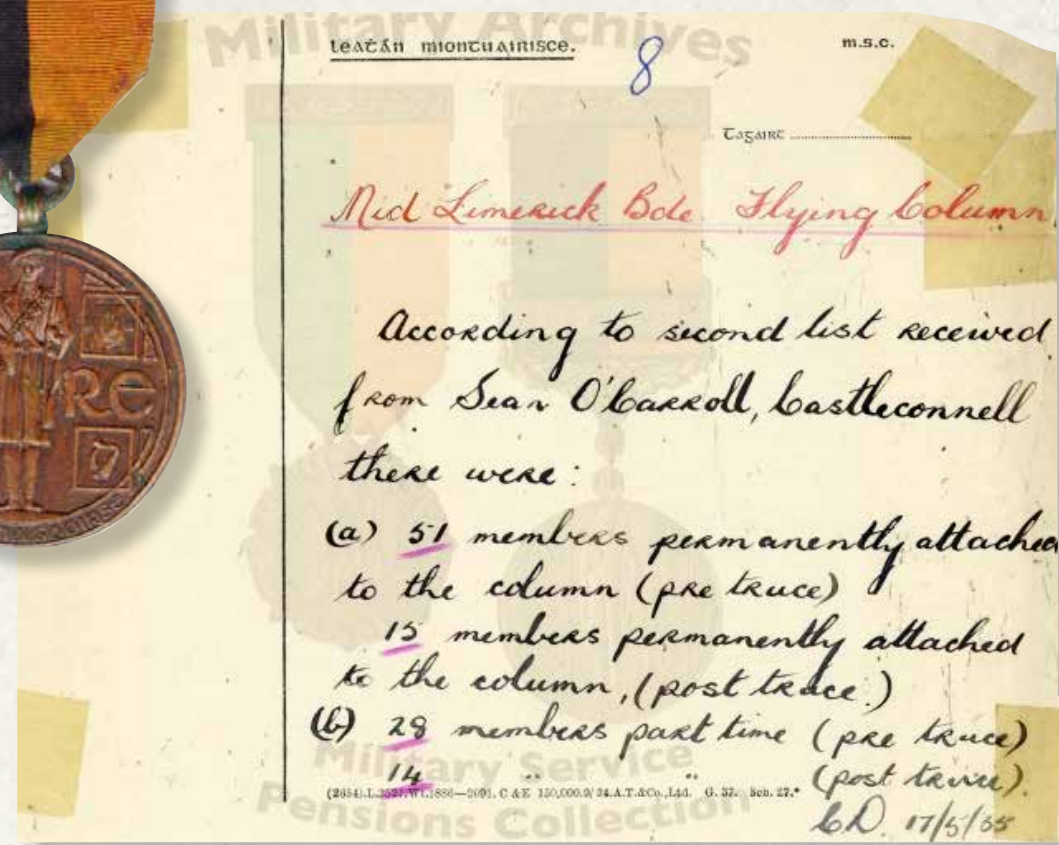


# THE WAR OF INDEPENDENCE IN LIMERICK DURING 1920 AND 1921

In 1920, January saw the attack on Murroe RIC Barracks by the Mid Limerick IRA. Ballylanders RIC Barracks was also successfully attacked in April 1920, followed in May by Kilmallock RIC Barracks. This year also saw a spate of other attacks and ambushes in County Limerick, including Foynes, Newcastle West, Oola, Ballyneety, Abbeyfeale, Grange, Garryspillane, and Shanagolden. In the four weeks between 10 December and 5 January 1921, twenty-two people had died in the Limerick area due to the War of Independence: six civilians, four members of the RIC, and twelve IRA men. The beginning of 1921 was to get even bloodier, largely due to the Dromkeen ambush.



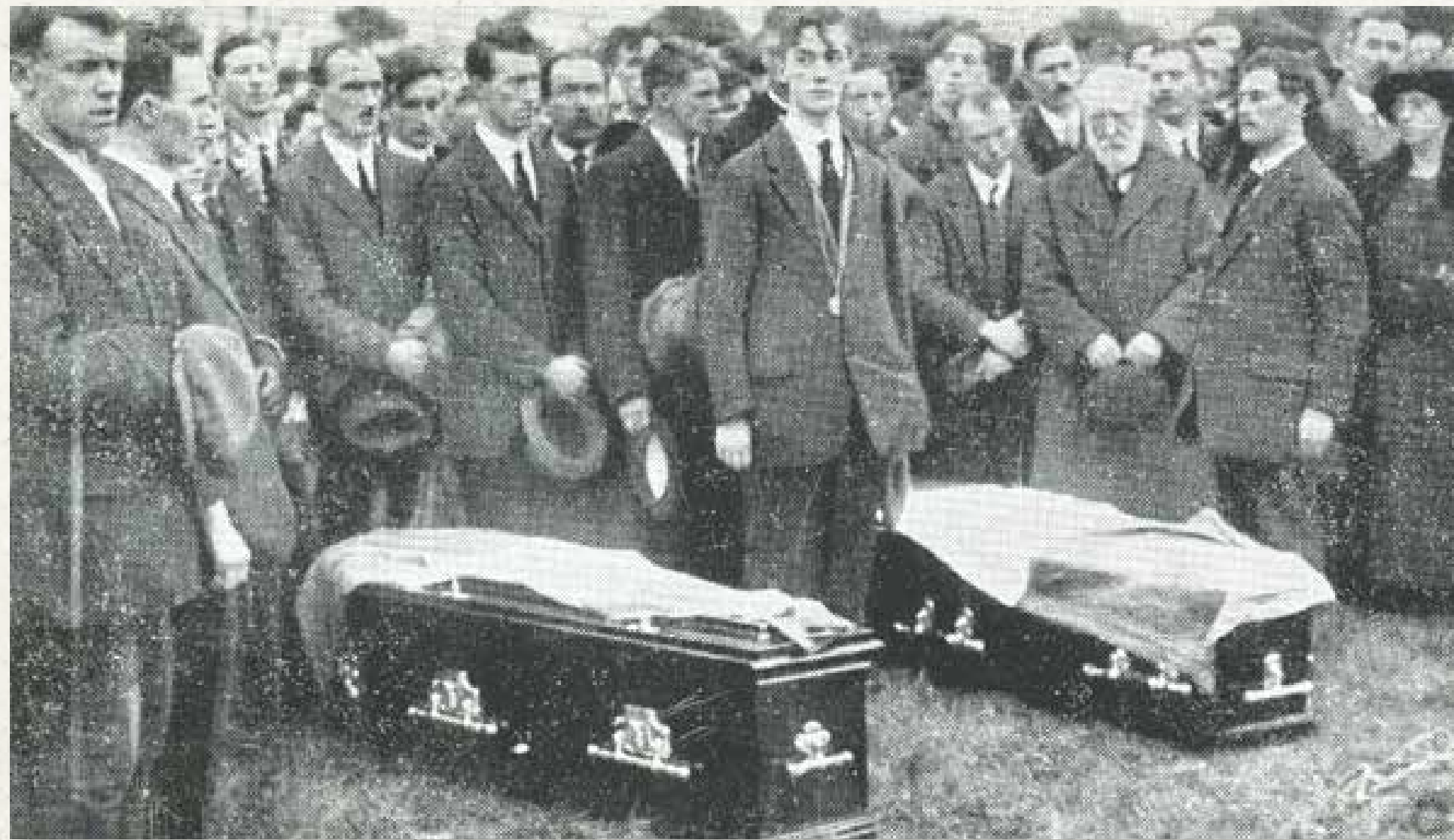
Medal awarded to all IRA veterans of the War of Independence



Details of Mid-Limerick Brigade flying column

| DATE  | ENGAGEMENT                        | SUMMARY |
|---|-----------------------------------|---------|
| MAY 1920  | ATTACK ON GAFF A.I.C. BARRACKS    | 21      |
|   | LACKELLY AMBUSH                   | 22      |
|   | STAAHEALA AMBUSH                  | 23      |
|   | ATTACK AT KILTRELY BY TANS.       | 24      |
| JUNE 1921   | ATTACK ON A.I.C. AT GALBALLY      | 25      |
|   | ENGAGEMENT OF SHOTS AT OOLA       | 26      |
|   | RAID PIA BARRACKS AT KILBALLYOWN. | 27      |
|   | AMBUSH OF TAN AT RATHMOE          | 28      |
|   | BALLYGADDY AMBUSH NO. 1.          | 29      |
| JULY 1921   | ATTACK ON A.I.C. AT KILMALLECK    | 30      |
|   | BALLYGADDY AMBUSH NO. 2.          | 29      |
| A.S.U. ACTIVITIES   |                                   | WWW     |
| See 3, 7, 10, 15, 18, 23, 68-7, 80-6, 91-3, 102-9, 113-7, 120-8, 148-153. |                                   | WWW     |

List of East Limerick Brigade activities



The funeral of murdered Mayors of Limerick, Clancy and O'Callaghan.

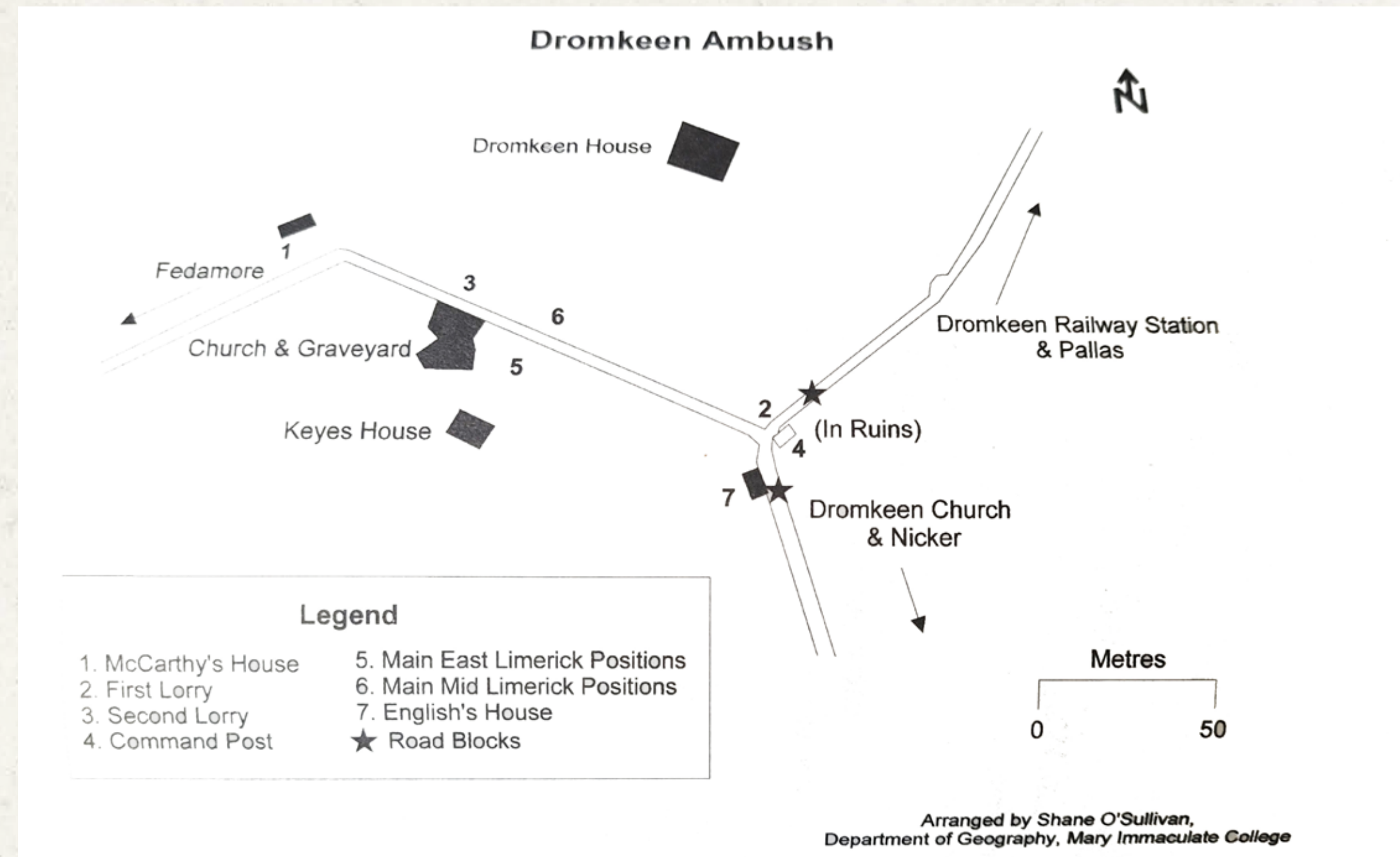
# COGADH NA SAOIRSE I 1920

Rinne IRA Luimnigh Láir ionsaí in Eanáir 1920 ar Bheairic RIC Mhaigh Rua. Rinneadh ionsaí rathúil ar Bheairic RIC Bhaile an Londraigh freisin in Aibreán 1920, agus ar Bheairic RIC Chill Mocheallóg i mBealtaine. Rinneadh go leor ionsaithe agus luíochán eile an bhliain sin i gContae Luimnigh, i bhFaing, an Caisleán Nua, Úlla, Baile an Fhaoitigh, Mainistir na Féile, an Ghráinseach, Garraí Uí Spealáin, agus Seanghualainn. Maraíodh fiche a dó duine i gceantar Luimnigh sna ceithre seachtaine idir an 10 Nollaig agus an 5 Eanáir 1921 mar gheall ar Chogadh na Saoirse: seisear sibhialtach, ceathrar ball den RIC, agus dáréag ball den IRA. Dhoirtfí ní ba mhó fola ag tús na bliana 1921, go mór mór mar gheall ar Luíochán Dhrom Caoin.



## PLANNING THE AMBUSH

In the two months preceding the Dromkeen Ambush, both the East Limerick and Mid Limerick brigades had suffered heavy losses, more than they had in the entire previous year, due to their members being either killed or arrested almost every week. In response, a decision was made to strike at the heart of the RIC by attacking the police convoy which travelled from Fedamore Barracks to the district headquarters at Pallasgreen on the first Thursday of every month. The role of this convoy was to resupply the Fedamore garrison, and deliver the constables' monthly pay. John Purcell, a Caherconlish-based intelligence officer, was the first to notice the convoy's unchanging routine, which was contrary to RIC operating procedures.



Map of the Dromkeen Ambush site



Powers Cross, where the first RIC lorry came under fire



McCarthy's house, Dromkeen

## AN LUÍOCHÁN A PHLEANÁIL

*Maraiodh go leor ball de Bhriogáid Luimnigh Thoir agus Luimnigh Láir sa dá mhí roimh Luíochán Dhrom Caoin, agus ba mhó seo ná an méid ball a maraiodh an bhliain iomlán roimhe sin, mar gheall gur maraiodh nó gur gabhadh a mbaill beagnach gach seachtain. Mar fhreagairt dó sin, rinneadh cinneadh ionsaí a dhéanamh ar cheartlár an RIC tríd an tionlacan póilíní a ionsaí a thaistil ó Bheairic Fheadamair go dtí an cheanncheathrú cheantair ag an tSeanphailís ar an gcéad Déardaoin gach mí. B'éard a rinne an tionlacan seo ná soláthairtí a chur ar fáil do gharastún Fheadamair, agus a bpá miosúil a thabhairt do na constáblaí. Ba é John Purcell, oifigeach faisnéise a bhí bunaithe i gCathair Chinn Lis, an chéad duine a thug faoi deara nár tháinig aon athrú ar ghnáthamh an tionlacain, a tháinig salach ar nósanna imeachta oibriúcháin an RIC.*



## PLANNING THE AMBUSH AN LUÍOCHÁN A PHLEANÁIL

However, it was Mid Limerick Commandant Richard O'Connell who made the decision to ambush the convoy. He asked the East Limerick Brigade to join in on the operation, both because the RIC had seized a large quantity of the Mid Limerick's arms and the large size of the RIC convoy. To ensure a successful ambush, O'Connell contacted Donnchadh O'Hannigan, the head of the operational wing of the East Limerick brigade.

Members of both brigades made preparations for the ambush. Dromkeen was chosen as the best possible location between Fedamore and Pallasgreen, because of the sharp bend in the road, and the amount of cover offered by the surrounding roadside walls, both of which allowed a large number of men to conceal themselves with little chance of being spotted.

It was decided to ambush the convoy when it was returning from Fedamore, even though it would have already delivered its supplies, as the darkness of the evening would provide the IRA with greater cover during the ambush and facilitate their escape afterwards.



IRA armoured train from 1922



Flag of the Patrickswell Company,  
Mid-Limerick Brigade

*Ba é Ceannfort Luimnigh Láir, Richard O'Connell, a rinne an cinneadh, áfach, luíochán a dhéanamh ar an tionlacan. D'iarr sé ar Bhriogáid Luimnigh Thoir páirt a ghlacadh san oibriocht, de bharr gur ghabh an RIC go leor d'airm Luimnigh Thoir agus de bharr go raibh tionlacan an RIC mór. Lena chinntiú gur éirigh leis an luíochán, rinne O'Connell teagmháil le Donnchadh O'Hannigan, ceann rannóg oibrioachta Bhriogáid Luimnigh Thoir.*

*Rinne baill den dá bhriogáid ullmhúcháin don luíochán. Roghnaíodh Drom Caoin mar an áit is fearr idir Fheadamair agus an tSeanphailís, mar gheall ar an gcor géar sa bhóthar agus ar an bhfoscaidh a chuir na ballaí ar an dá thaobh den bhóthar ar fáil, agus cheadaigh na ballaí seo líon mór fear dul i bhfolach laistiar díobh agus gan ach baol beag a bheith ann go bhfeicfí iad.*

*Rinneadh an cinneadh luíochán a dhéanamh ar an tionlacan nuair a bhí sé ag filleadh ó Fheadamair, cé go mbeadh a chuid soláthairtí seachadta aige cheana féin, mar gheall go gcuirfeadh dorchadas an tráthnóna foscadh breise ar fáil don IRA i rith an luíocháin agus go gcabhródh sé lena n-éalú ina dhiaidh sin.*

# THE AMBUSH

One hundred Mid and East Limerick IRA members took part in the operation, of whom forty were directly involved in the ambush. At 11am, the convoy, consisting of two lorries containing thirteen RIC men, was spotted and the IRA then mobilised around Dromkeen. Over the next few hours, members of the IRA seized a number of local people and detained them in their own homes. This was not only for their own protection, but also to ensure that nothing was leaked to local Crown forces.

Road blocks were set up on both roads leading out of Dromkeen, in case the convoy did indeed change route at the last minute. An IRA command post was set up in the ruins of a house nearby, manned by O'Hannigan, Seamus Malone, and James McCarthy. Most of the East Limerick Brigade were based in the graveyard on the south side of the road, under the command of Dick Tobin. On the opposite side, behind the roadside wall, Dick O'Connell and Sean Carroll commanded the Mid Limerick Brigade's riflemen.



Commandant Liam Hayes, the only IRA casualty at Dromkeen



Captain David Guerin, one of the first IRA members to fire on the RIC convoy

See H 8, 83, 115, 134, 104 for original

**E. LIMBICK BRIGADE 2ND SOUTHERN DIVISION.**

Date FEB. 1921. Engagement DROMKEEN Townland (17)

Nature of Engagement AMBUSH

See also H<sup>o</sup> Batt. records.

| I.R.A.                         | Enemy.                      | I.R.A. Engaged.        | Unit.                          |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------------|------------------------|--------------------------------|
| No. Engaged                    | Military <u>Police</u>      | <u>Patch, McGuire</u>  | <u>6<sup>th</sup> Co. Dub.</u> |
| (a) Actively                   | Tans <u>W. P. O'Connell</u> | <u>Mich. Landon</u>    | <u>Lands.</u>                  |
| (b) Scouting, etc.             | R.I.C.                      | <u>Ed. Tobin</u>       | " "                            |
| TOTAL:                         |                             | <u>Gas. Finn.</u>      | " "                            |
| Arms.                          | No. engaged                 | <u>John Meade.</u>     | " "                            |
| Rifles                         | How armed                   | <u>Justin McCarthy</u> | <u>Kilfinane</u>               |
| Shotguns                       | Transport.                  | <u>Jack McCarthy</u>   | " "                            |
| Revolvers                      | Shots Fired.                | <u>Denis Norman</u>    | " "                            |
| Bombs                          | Casualties.                 | <u>Peter Hennessey</u> | " "                            |
| Shots fired                    |                             | <u>John Lynch</u>      | <u>4<sup>th</sup> Co. Dub.</u> |
| Casualties                     |                             | <u>John Murray</u>     | " "                            |
| Names and nature of casualties |                             | <u>Pat Hennessey</u>   | " "                            |
|                                |                             | <u>McC. Angill</u>     | " "                            |
|                                |                             | <u>Mc. Marshall</u>    | <u>Kilmallock</u>              |
|                                |                             | <u>Jim. Carahan</u>    | <u>Collingwood</u>             |
|                                |                             | <u>McC. Meade.</u>     | <u>Sm. Co.</u>                 |

Initial attack by \_\_\_\_\_

Duration \_\_\_\_\_

Distance between parties \_\_\_\_\_

Terrain \_\_\_\_\_

Position of I.R.A. \_\_\_\_\_

Position of enemy \_\_\_\_\_

REMARKS.

List of IRA members who took part in the ambush

**THE COUNTY LIMBICK AMBUSH.**

**Nine Policemen Killed.**

**Two Deaths From Wounds.**

General Headquarters, Dublin, issued on Thursday night the following statement relating to the ambush between Dromkeen and Newpallis:—

"Two police cars were ambushed near Palleegreen, Co Limerick, about 14.30 hours on Thursday.

"Nine policemen were killed and 2 dangerously wounded. No rebel casualties."

Additional particulars point to the conclusion that the attack was well and carefully delivered.

Limerick Chronicle, 5 February 1921

# AN LUÍOCHÁN

Ghlac céad ball de IRA Luimnigh Thoir agus Luimnigh Láir páirt san oibriocht agus bhí baint dhireach ag daichead díobh sa luíochán. Chonacthas an tionlacan, ina raibh dhá leoraí ina raibh triúr déag fear den RIC ag 11 a chlog ar maidin agus bhailigh an IRA timpeall Dhrom Caoin ansin. Rinne baill den IRA roinnt daoine áitiúla a ghabháil agus a choinneáil ina n-áiteanna cónaithe féin sna chéad cúpla uair an chloig ina dhiaidh sin. Rinneadh seo ní hamháin ar mhaithe le hiad a chosaint, ach lena chinntiú nach sceithfí aon rud le Fórsaí áitiúla na Corónach.

Cuireadh baic bhóthair in airde ar an dá bhóthar amach ó Dhrom Caoin, sa chás gur athraigh an tionlacan an bealach ag an tráth deireanach. Bunaíodh post ceannais an IRA i bhfothrach tí a bhí suite i ngar, faoi cheannas O'Hannigan, Séamus Malone, agus James McCarthy. Bhí formhór Bhriogáid Luimnigh Thoir bunaithe sa reilig ar an taobh theas den bhóthar, faoi cheannas Dick Tobin. Bhí Dick O'Connell agus Seán Carroll i gceannas ar fhir raidhfil Bhriogáid Luimnigh Láir ar an taobh eile, laistiar den bhalla ar thaobh an bhóthair.



## THE AMBUSH AN LUICHÁN

After the second lorry turned the corner at Dromkeen, the IRA started shooting so that it would not be out of their line of fire. This caused the first lorry to speed up, lose control, and crash into the road block ahead. Michael Hennessy, of the East Limerick Brigade, killed Constable Sidney Millin the driver of the second lorry. District Inspector Sanson, who were in charge of the convoy and Constable Cox managed to escape from the ambush as they were not in uniform and therefore mistaken for hostages. Once the two supposed 'hostages' had fled, O'Hannigan ordered the rest of his men to continue firing upon the two lorries. They shot at and lobbed grenades at the lorries for several minutes. Eventually, three men in the first lorry and all eight men in the second were to die in the ambush.

As the firing ended, the IRA members collected arms and ammunition from the dead and wounded. Constables Arthur Pearce and Henry Smith were still alive but

seriously wounded. They were taken into the farmhouse of a Mr. English and as one of them was a Catholic, Father Thomas Nolan, curate of the local Kiltteely parish, was brought in to comfort the man, who appeared to be dying. Both died soon afterwards.

Two of the RIC constables were captured either unhurt or with minor wounds and were subsequently executed by IRA member Maurice Meade. Some of the Volunteers claimed that the pair had feigned death, before being later discovered to be alive. In the heat of battle, it was difficult to identify the names of the executed prisoners, but one was certainly Samuel Adams and other was either William Doyle or Patrick Foody.

The IRA then moved quickly out of the area, traveling southwest, toward Bruff, taking with them thirteen captured rifles and about 500 rounds of ammunition. Soon after, the Crown forces struck back harshly, burning houses and farms around the locality, particularly those belonging the families of known IRA members.

*Nuair a thiomáin an tionlacan thar Theach Dhrom Caoin, chuir scabhtai an IRA an post ceannais ar an eolas agus d'ullmhaigh daichead fear raidhfil iad féin don chath. Bhí buntáiste mór ag an IRA ar lá an luíocháin, ní hamháin mar gheall gur thaistil an tionlacan an gnáthbhealach míosúil, ach mar gheall go raibh na leoraithe á dtiomáint i ngar dá chéile.*

*Tar éis don dara leoraí tiomáint timpeall an chúinne ag Drom Caoin, thosaigh an IRA leis an lámhach chun nach ngabhfadh sé as a líne lámhaigh. Thosaigh an chéad leoraí ag tiomáint ní ba thapúla dá bharr, cailleadh smacht air, agus tiomáineadh an leoraí isteach sa bhac bóthair a bhí roimhe. Mharaigh Michael Hennessy, le Briogáid Luimnigh Thoir, an Constábla Sidney Millin, tiománaí an dara leoraí. D'éirigh leis an gCigire Ceantair Sanson, a bhí i gceannas ar an tionlacan agus an Constábla Cox éalú ón luíochán mar gheall nach raibh éide á caitheamh acu agus gur ceapadh gur ghiolla iad dá bharr. A luaithe a d'éalaigh an bheirt 'ghiolla', mar dhea, d'ordaigh O'Hannigan an chuid eile dá fhir leanúint ag scaoileadh leis an dá leoraí. Scaoil siad agus chaith siad gránáidí leis na leoraithe ar feadh cúpla nóiméad. Ar deireadh thiar, maraíodh triúr fear sa chéad leoraí agus gach duine den ochtar fear sa dara leoraí sa luíochán.*

*De réir mar a tháinig deireadh leis an scaoileadh, bhailigh na baill den IRA airm agus armlón ó na mairbh agus na daoine a gortaíodh. Bhí na Constáblaí Arthur Pearce agus Henry Smith fós beo ach gortaíodh go dona iad. Tugadh iad go teach feirme an Uasail English agus, mar gheall gur Chaitliceach duine díobh, tugadh an tAthair Thomas Nolan, sagart cúnta Pharóiste áitiúil Chill Tile, i láthair chun sólas a thabhairt don fhear, a raibh an chuma air go raibh bás á fháil aige. Fuair an bheirt díobh bás go gairid ina dhiaidh sin.*

*Gabhadh beirt de chonstáblaí an RIC nár gortaíodh nó nár gortaíodh ach go héadrom agus chuir an ball den IRA Maurice Meade chun báis ina dhiaidh sin iad. Dúirt roinnt de na hÓglaigh gur lig an bheirt acu orthu go bhfuair siad bás, agus gur cuireadh in iúl dóibh ina dhiaidh sin go raibh siad beo. Ba dheacair, i lár an chatha, ainmneacha na bpríosúnach a cuireadh chun báis a shainithint, ach is cinnte gur Samuel Adams a bhí i nduine amháin díobh agus gurbh é William Doyle nó Patrick Foody an duine eile díobh.*

*D'fhág an IRA an ceantar ansin go tapa, agus thaistil siad siar ó dheas i dtreo an Bhrú, agus thug siad trí raidhfil déag agus thart ar 500 urchar armlóin leo a ghabh siad. Bhain Fórsaí na Corónach díoltas dian amach go gairid ina dhiaidh sin, agus rinne siad tithe agus feirmeacha a dhó timpeall an cheantair áitiúil, go háirithe iad siúd de chuid theaghlaigh na ndaoine arbh eol gur bhaill den IRA iad.*



## SEAN WALL (1887-1921)

Seán Wall was born in 1887 and raised in Bruff, Co. Limerick. He was a successful engineer and builder who established a company called Wall and Forde which had been responsible for constructing a number of creameries in Limerick. He was a member of the All-For-Ireland-League, a Home Rule party opposed to John Redmond, and attended one of their meeting in Bruff in 1906. However, some of his later colleagues surmised that he may have been a member of the Irish Republican Brotherhood prior to his election as leader of a Volunteer company which he helped establish in Bruff in 1917. Subsequently, the Bruff, Grange, Bruree, Dromin and Athlacca companies were merged to form the East Limerick Battalion. At the instigation of Michael Collins, Wall was elected Commandant of the battalion after a split emerged between the supporters of Liam Manahan and Donnchadh O'Hannigan, two other prominent candidates for the role. Wall, who was a brilliant organiser, immediately divided the brigade into six battalions, each consisting of six or seven companies, mostly according to parish area.

When the War of Independence broke out, Wall was elected the officer commander of the first flying column in Ireland. Flying columns were small, highly mobile, independent military units within the IRA and both Wall and Donnchadh O'Hannigan have been credited with their invention. The East Limerick Brigade soon became very active, carrying out attacks on the RIC barracks in Ballylanders, Doon and Kilmallock. Like Michael Collins, Wall was a masterful organiser and tactician, rather than an active participant in the fighting.

Seán Wall served as chairman of Limerick County Council from 1920 to 1921 and was active in the Dáil courts. He was also in charge of organising the Dáil Loan (bonds issued by Dáil Éireann to finance its activities) in the East Limerick constituency. Wall collected around £32,000, the highest of any constituency in Ireland. Next came West Limerick, where £18,000 was raised. By contrast, Cork City only raised £12,000 and Waterford City £636.

On 6 May 1921, Wall was shot dead by Crown forces in Newtown, Annacarty, County Tipperary.

## SEÁN WALL (1887-1921)

*Rugadh agus tógadh Seán Wall in 1887 sa Bhrú, Contae Luimnigh. B'innealtóir agus tógálaí rathúil é a bhunaigh cuideachta ar tugadh Wall and Forde air a bhí freagrach as roinnt uachtarlann a thógáil i Luimneach. Ba bhall é den Chonradh 'All-For-Ireland-League', páirtí Rialtas Dúchais a chuir in aghaidh John Redmond, agus d'fhreastail sé ar cheann dá gcruinnithe sa Bhrú i 1906. Cheap roinnt dá chomhghleacaithe ina dhiaidh sin, áfach, go bhféadfadh gur bhall de Bhráithreachas Phoblacht na hÉireann é sular toghadh é mar cheannaire complachta Óglaigh na hÉireann ar chabhraigh sé lena bhunú sa Bhrú i 1917. Rinneadh complachtaí an Bhrú, na Gráinsí, Bhrú Rí, na Dromann agus an Átha Leacaigh a thabhairt le chéile ó Chathlán Luimnigh Thoir. Tar éis gur mhol Mícheál Ó Coileáin amhlaidh, toghadh Wall ina Cheannfort ar an gcathlán tar éis gur tháinig deighilt idir lucht leanúna Liam Manahan agus Donnchadh O'Hannigan, beirt iarrthóirí móra le rá eile don ról. Rinne Wall, ar eagraí den scoth é, an bhriogáid a roinnt láithreach ina sé chathlán, ina raibh sé nó seacht gcomplacht, de réir cheantar an pharóiste, den chuid ba mhó.*

*Nuair a thosaigh Cogadh na Saoirse ag réabadh, toghadh Wall ina cheannasaí ar an gcéad cholún reatha in Éirinn. B'aonaid bheaga an-soghluaiste neamhspleácha mhíleata*



Sean Wall

*iad colúin reatha laistigh den IRA agus deirtear gurbh iad Wall agus Donnchadh O'Hannigan a chruthaigh iad an chéad uair. Bhí Briogáid Luimnigh Thoir an-ghníomhach ina dhiaidh sin, agus thug siad faoi ionsaithe ar bheairic an RIC i mBaile an Londraigh, Dún Bleisce agus Cill Mocheallóg.*

*Cosúil le Mícheál Ó Coileáin, b'eagraí agus beartai cumasach é Wall, seachas rannpháirtí gníomhach sa troid. D'fhóin Seán Wall mar chathaoirleach Chomhairle Contae Luimnigh ó 1920 go 1921 agus bhí sé gníomhach i gcúirteanna na Dála. Bhí sé i gceannas freisin ar lasacht na Dála (bannaí a chuir Dáil Éireann ar fáil lena ngníomhaíochtaí a mhaoiniú) i dtoghcheantar Luimnigh Thoir. Bhailigh Wall thart ar £32,000, an méid ab airde a bailíodh in aon toghcheantar in Éirinn. Tiomsaíodh £18,000 i Luimneach Thiar ina dhiaidh sin. Os a choinne sin, níor tiomsaíodh ach £12,000 i gCathair Chorcaí agus £636 i gCathair Phort Láirge.*

*Rinne Fórsaí na Corónach Wall a lámhachadh marbh an 6 Bealtaine 1921 sa Bhaile Nua, Áth na Cairte, Contae Thiobraid Árann.*

## DONNCHADH O' HANNIGAN (1887-1962)

O'Hannigan served in the East Limerick Brigade during the War of Independence. Only a year prior to the Dromkeen ambush, both he and the equally popular Liam Manahan had sought election as commandant of the Brigade, but their rivalry produced a bitter split, resulting in the aforementioned Seán Wall being chosen as a compromise. Despite this, both Manahan and O'Hannigan united their respective supporters in the attack on Ballylanders RIC Barracks, an operation instigated by IRA GHQ to reunite the battalion and heal the split. Subsequently, O'Hannigan led most of the Brigade's military operations, and along with Seán Wall has been credited with originating the idea of the 'flying column.'



Donnchadh O'Hannigan

## DONNCHADH O'HANNIGAN (1887-1962)

*D'fhóin O'Hannigan i mBriogáid Luimnigh Thoir i rith Chogadh na Saoirse. Díreach bliain roimh luíochán Dhrom Caoin, lorg é féin agus Liam Manahan, a raibh an gean mór céanna ag daoine air, go dtoghfaí iad mar cheannfort na Briogáide, ach chruthaigh a n-iomaíocht deighilt ghéar agus roghnaíodh Seán Wall dá bharr mar chomhréiteach. Ina ainneoin seo, thug Manahan agus O'Hannigan a lucht tacaíochta féin le chéile san ionsaí ar Bheairic RIC Bhaile an Londraigh, oibríocht a spreag Ceanncheathrú Ghinearálta an IRA (GHQ) chun an cathlán a athaontú agus an deighilt a dhúnadh. Ghlac O'Hannigan ceannas ina dhiaidh sin ar fhorhór oibríochtaí míleata na Briogáide, agus deirtear gurbh é féin agus Seán Wall ar rith smaoinemh an 'colún reatha' leo i dtosach.*

## RICHARD O'CONNELL (1892-1964)

Richard (Dick) O'Connell was the main instigator of the Dromkeen ambush. He had a long history of service with the Irish Volunteers and IRA. In 1911, he helped form a branch of the Irish Volunteers at Caherconlish. He was also politically active, and helped republican candidates in both the general election of 1918 and the local elections of 1920. Indeed, on the night of the 1918 General Election, he narrowly escaped arrest after being charged in relation to 'incidents' in Caherconlish. On the same occasion many of his friends were later arrested for unlawful assembly. O'Connell was seen as a reliable member of the IRA, and had been trusted to search and capture rogue IRA members who had either disobeyed orders or committed crimes. .

| A. COMPANY - CAHERCONLISH.                                |              | B. COMPANY - BALLYBRICKEN.                                  |            |
|---|--------------|---|------------|
| Richard O'Connell, Camron, Raheny, Co. Dublin -1917-1921  | Commandant   | John Lynch, Caherconlish, Pallasgreen -1917-1922            | Captain    |
| Thomas O'Brien, Skule Hill, Grange, Kilmallock -1917-1920 | Vice         | Patrick Hickey, Bottomstown, Knocklong, -1917-1921          | Lieutenant |
| Morgan Portley, Kiskirk, Caherconlish, -1917-1921         | Adjutant     | Stephen Lynch, Ballylanders, Co. Limerick -1917-1921        | 2nd Lieut. |
| Patrick Casey, (R.I.F.) -1917-1921                        | O'Master     | John Hartigan, Caherconlish, Pallasgreen -1914-1917         | Captain.   |
| John Purcell, Pair Green Terrace, Link City -1917-1922    | Int. Officer | Edward O'Grady, Bruffee, Caherconlish -1915-1920            | Lieutenant |
|   |              | Thomas Power, Bruffee, Caherconlish -1920-1922              | 2nd Lieut. |
| C. COMPANY - PEDAMORE.                                    |              | D. COMPANY - BALLYKEETY.                                    |            |
| Sean Clifford, Pedamore, Kilmallock, -1917-1920           | Captain.     | Michael Ryan, National Army -1919-1922                      | Captain.   |
| John Feely, Carnane, Pedamore, -1917-1920                 | Lieutenant   | Thomas Griffin, Ballinagarde, Ballyneety, -1917-1921        | Lieutenant |
| Thomas Conway, Carnane, Pedamore, -1917-1920              | 2nd Lieut.   | Edmond Power, Knockes, Ballyneety, Co. Limerick, -1921-1922 | 2nd Lieut. |
|   |              |   |            |
| E. COMPANY - KILLONAN.                                    |              |   |            |
| David Hennessy, Killoonan, Caherconlish -1914-1921        | Captain      | Patrick McDonnell, Post Office, Caherconlish -1921-1922     |            |
| Joe McDonnell, Kiskirk, -1921-1922                        | Lieutenant   | Joe McDonnell, Killoonan, Caherconlish -1921-1922           |            |
| John Liddy, Kiskirk, -1921-1922                           | 2nd Lieut.   | John Liddy, Kiskirk, -1921-1922                             |            |

Membership list of the 4th Battalion, Mid-Limerick Brigade



RIC pistol from Dromkeen Ambush

## RICHARD O'CONNELL (1892-1964)

Ba é Richard (Dick) O'Connell an duine ba mhó a spreag Luíochán Dhrom Caoin. D'fhóin sé le fada le hÓglaigh na hÉireann agus an IRA. In 1911, chabhraigh sé le brainse d'Óglaigh na hÉireann a bhunú ag Cathair Chinn Lis. Bhí sé gníomhach i gcúrsaí polaitíochta freisin, agus chabhraigh sé le hiarrthóirí poblachtacha in olltoghchán 1918 agus i dtoghcháin áitiúla 1920. Go deimhin, ar éigean a thug sé na cosa leis oíche Olltoghchán 1918 tar éis gur gabhadh é maidir le 'eachtraí' i gCathair Chinn Lis. Gabhadh go leor dá chairde an oíche chéanna mar gheall ar thionól neamhdhleathach. Ceapadh gur bhall iontaofa den IRA é O'Connell, agus bhí iontaoibh as baill bhradacha den IRA a chuardach agus a ghabháil nár chloigh le horduithe nó a rinne coireanna.



## MAURICE MEADE (1893-1968)

Maurice Meade had been captured by the Germans while serving in the British Army during the First World War. Subsequently, he became a member of Roger Casement's Irish Brigade made up of Irish prisoners-of-war from the British Army. Having served for a time in the German army, Meade was arrested by British forces in Gdansk. In 1919, he was returned to Britain and sentenced to death after being convicted of high treason. However, the executions of the 1916 Rising leaders had made the British wary of creating more martyrs, and Meade's death sentence was commuted to imprisonment in Ireland. However, he escaped and joined the Mid-Limerick Brigade of the IRA.

Meade was one of the men tasked by O'Hannigan to execute the two prisoners captured in the Dromkeen Ambush. Both were sentenced by court-martial, following a vote of 3-2 among the officers present. Meade stated later:

O'Hannigan called me and said "Hey Maurice will you shoot one of them?" I agreed to do so. He gave Stapleton the job of executing the other. I took my man down the road and shot him. Then I went down to see how Stapleton was getting on and found that he



Maurice Meade

disliked the job and did not want to do it, so I took the fellow over and executed him.

This was a controversial action, but Meade asserted that

The reason for shooting these Tans after they had surrendered was that O'Hannigan had an order from G.H.Q. in Dublin that we were to shoot all Tans and peelers who fell into our hands. I think this order may have been issued as a counterblast to a similar order that had been issued by the British regarding I.R.A. men who fell into their hands, but I do know that Donnchadh O'Hannigan definitely produced this order at the trial of these Tans and that we knew of the existence of such an order before that. Probably Donnchadh told us about it whenever he got it.

## MAURICE MEADE (1893-1968)

*Ghabh na Gearmánaigh Maurice Meade fad a bhí sé ag fónamh in Arm na Breataine i rith an Chéad Chogaidh Dhomhanda. Rinneadh ball de Bhriogáid Éireannach Roger Casement de ina dhiaidh sin, briogáid ina raibh príosúnaigh chogaidh ó Arm na Breataine. Tar éis gur fhóin sé ar feadh roinnt ama in Arm na Gearmáine, ghabh Fórsaí na Breataine é in Gdansk. Tugadh ar ais go dtí an Bhreatain i 1919 é agus tugadh breith an bháis dó tar éis gur ciontaíodh in ardréas é. Bhí drogall ar an mBreatain níos mó mairtíreach a chruthú tar éis gur cuireadh ceannairí Éirí Amach 1916 chun báis, agus laghdáíodh breith bháis Meade anuas go dtí príosúnacht in Éirinn. D'éalaigh sé, áfach, agus ghlac sé le ballraíocht de Bhriogáid Luimnigh Láir den IRA.*

*Bhí Meade ar cheann de na fir ar leag O'Hannigan an dualgas orthu an bheirt phríosúnach a gabhadh i Luíochán Dhrom Caoin a chur chun báis. Gearradh pianbhreith ar an mbeirt acu trí armchúirt, tar éis gur caitheadh 3 vóta in aghaidh 2 vóta i measc na n-oifigeach a bhí i láthair. Dúirt Meade níos déanaí:*

*Ghlaoigh O'Hannigan orm agus dúirt sé, "A Mhuiris, an lámhachfaidh tú duine diobh?" D'aontaigh mé é sin a dhéanamh. Bhronn sé an dualgas ar Stapleton an duine eile a chur chun báis. Shiúil mé m'fhear síos an bóthar agus rinne*

*mé é a lámhachadh. Ansin shiúil mé chomh fada le Stapleton féachaint conas mar a bhí ag éirí leis agus chonacthas dom nár thaitin an dualgas leis agus nár theastaigh uaidh é a dhéanamh, mar sin, thug mé an fear liom agus chuir mé chun báis é.*

*Ba ghníomh conspóideach é seo, ach chuir Meade in iúl gurbh é an chúis gur lámhachadh na Dúchrónaigh seo tar éis gur ghéill siad ná go raibh ordú faighte ag O'Hannigan ó GHQ i mBaile Átha Cliath go rabhamar le gach Dúchrónach agus póilín a ghabhamar a lámhachadh.*

*Ceapaim go mb'fhéidir gur eisíodh an t-ordú seo mar aisfhreagra d'ordú a bhí cosúil leis a thug an Bhreatain maidir le fir den IRA a ghabh siad, ach is maith is eol dom gur thug Donnchadh O'Hannigan an t-ordú seo ag triail na nDúchrónach seo agus go raibh a fhios againn gur tugadh an t-ordú sin roimhe sin. Is dócha gur inis Donnchadh dúinn faoi pé uair a fuair sé an t-ordú.*

## THE CASUALTIES OF THE AMBUSH

Eleven policemen were killed by the IRA at Dromkeen  
**Samuel Adams** From Glasgow and a former coach-builder, 21-year-old Adams had been stationed in Pallasgreen, and had only joined the RIC on 24 November 1920.

**George William Bell** Bell was a former member of the Scottish Rifles, and joined the RIC a week after Adams. He was a 21-year-old labourer, originally from Newcastle and was also stationed at Pallasgreen.

**John Joseph Bourke** Bourke was a 30-year-old former gamekeeper from Kilkenny, who joined the RIC in November 1911. His father William secured compensation of £250 after the ambush.

**Michael Doyle** From Dublin, Doyle joined the RIC in 1920, and was a former ex-serviceman. He was 31 years old, and his widow secured almost £2,000 in compensation after his death.

**Patrick Foody** From Sligo, Foody was a 45-year-old Roman Catholic and the oldest of those killed. A veteran with over twenty years' service, he had been a farmer before joining the RIC in 1899.

**William Hayton** A Roman Catholic from Yorkshire, Hayton was a 21-year-old ex-serviceman who joined the RIC in October 1920. He was stationed in Pallasgreen at the time of the ambush.

**William Kingston** A 36-year-old widower, Kingston was stationed in Pallasgreen, after enlisting with the RIC in November 1920. A former painter, his family received £2600 in compensation after his death.

**Sidney Millin** Millin was a 24-year-old former mechanic and ex-serviceman who joined the RIC in October 1920, and was originally from London.

**Bernard Mollaghan** The second-oldest casualty, Mollaghan was a 44-year-old former labourer from Longford. Another RIC veteran, he had joined in 1902, and had been transferred to Limerick in 1913.

**Arthur Pearse** Aged 24, Pearse was stationed in Pallasgreen. He was from Lancashire.

**Henry Smith** Originally from Selkirk, Smith joined the RIC in November 1920, and was a 24-year-old former mill worker and ex-serviceman.

## ÍOSPARTAIGH AN LUÍOCHÁIN

*Mharaigh an IRA aon phóilín déag ag Drom Caoin*

**Samuel Adams** Ó Ghlaschú a bhí Samuel, a bhí 21 bliain d'aois, agus ba thógálaí cóistí é roimhe sin agus bhí sé ag oibriú i stáisiún na Seanphailise, agus ní raibh sé ag oibriú leis an RIC ach ón 24 Samhain 1920.

**George William Bell** B'iarbhall de Raidhfíli na hAlban (Scottish Rifles) é Bell agus rinneadh ball den RIC de seachtain tar éis Adams. Ba shaothraí 21 bliain d'aois é arbh as Newcastle dó agus bhí sé ag oibriú i stáisiún na Seanphailise freisin.

**John Joseph Bourke** Ba mhaor géim 30 bliain d'aois é Bourke ó Chill Chainnigh, a ghlac le ballraíocht den RIC i Samhain 1911. Fuair a athair, Liam, cúiteamh £250 i ndiaidh an Luíocháin.

**Michael Doyle** Ó Bhaile Átha Cliath é Doyle agus iarshaighdiúir a bhí ann agus chuaigh sé leis an RIC i 1920. Bhí sé 31 bliain d'aois, agus bronnadh cúiteamh beagnach £2,000 ar a bhaintreach i ndiaidh a bháis.

**Patrick Foody** Ó Shligeach é Foody agus ba Caitliceach Rómhánach 45 bliain d'aois é agus an fear ba shine díobh siúd a maraíodh. B'iarshaighdiúir é a d'fhóin ar feadh breis agus fiche bliain agus b'fheirmeoir é sula ndeachaigh sé leis an RIC in 1899.

**William Hayton** Iarshaighdiúir Caitliceach

Rómhánach 21 bliain d'aois ó Yorkshire ba ea Hayton agus chuaigh sé leis an RIC i nDeireadh Fómhair 1920. Bhí sé ag oibriú i stáisiún na Seanphailise ag tráth an Luíocháin.

**William Kingston** Baintreach 36 bliain d'aois é Kingston a bhí ag oibriú sa tSeanphailis, tar éis dó liostáil leis an RIC i Samhain 1920. Ba phéintéir é roimhe sin agus bronnadh cúiteamh £2600 ar a theaghlach tar éis a bháis.

**Sidney Millin** Iarmheicneoir agus iarshaighdiúir 24 bliain d'aois é Millin a chuaigh leis an RIC i nDeireadh Fómhair 1920 agus ba as Londain ó dhúchas dó.

**Bernard Mollaghan** Iarshaothraí 44 bliain d'aois ón Longfort é Mollaghan, an dara duine ba shine a maraíodh. B'iarshaighdiúir eile an RIC é agus liostáil sé i 1902 agus aistriodh go Luimneach é i 1913.

**Arthur Pearse** Bhí Arthur 24 bliain d'aois agus bhí sé ag oibriú sa tSeanphailis. Ba as Lancashire dó.

**Henry Smith** Ba as Selkirk ó dhúchas do Smith agus iarshaighdiúir agus oibrí muilinn 24 bliain d'aois a bhí ann agus chuaigh leis an RIC i Samhain 1920.

Uniform  
button of RIC  
constable  
killed at  
Dromkeen



## IMPACT OF DROMKEEN

As stated, Dromkeen has long been regarded as one of the most successful operations of the War of Independence. Indeed, in terms of the number of casualties inflicted on the Crown forces, it was the second largest ambush of the entire War of Independence, after the Kilmichael Ambush in County Cork. Eleven of the thirteen RIC constables died at Dromkeen, while none of the forty odd IRA volunteers were killed and only one was injured.

The East and Mid Limerick Brigades had struck at the heart of the British in rural Munster, and demonstrated the effectiveness of the flying column as a means of waging war against a larger and better equipped enemy. After a difficult period, Dromkeen restored the morale of the IRA in Limerick and demonstrated that they were far from defeated. It was a propaganda coup of the highest order.

On 8 February 2009, a monument was unveiled at the site of the ambush. Fr Liam Ryan, former professor of sociology at Maynooth stated at the unveiling that:

"It was right to honour the men of Dromkeen, and right to ask God's blessing on the monument which was a monument to freedom... There is no greater value, no

greater human value, no greater Christian value than freedom. But, it is right too, at least today, that we should remember the 11 men who died here. Incidentally, three of them were Irish, four of them were Catholic. But we do not remember them for reasons of faith or fatherland, but for this reason: the men of the East and Mid Limerick Brigades knew what they were fighting for and knew what they were willing to die for. The 11 men who died here never knew what they were fighting for, and certainly never knew what they died for. That is sad, that is tragic, that is a terrible waste of human life."



Commemorative Monument to Dromkeen Ambush

## TIONCHAR DHROM CAOIN

*Faoi mar a luaitear, ceapadh le fada an lá gurbh é Luíochán Dhrom Caoin ceann de na hoibríochtaí ba rathúla i gCogadh na Saoirse. Go deimhin, i dtaobh an mhéid ball d'Fhórsaí na Corónach a maraíodh, ba é an dara luíochán ba mhó i gCogadh na Saoirse iomlán. Ba é Luíochán Chill Mhichil i gContae Corcaigh an luíochán ba mhó. Maraíodh aon duine dhéag den triúr constábla dhéag den RIC ag Drom Caoin, agus níor maraíodh duine ar bith den tuairim is daichead óglach den IRA agus níor gortaíodh ach duine amháin díobh.*

*Rinne Briogáid Luimnigh Thoir agus Luimnigh Láir ionsaí i gceartlár fhórsaí na Breataine i gceantar tuaithe na Mumhan, agus thaispeáin siad cé chomh héifeachtach a bhí an colún reatha mar bhealach le cogadh a fhógairt ar namhaid níos mó agus a raibh níos mó trealaimh acu. I ndiaidh tréimhse dhian, rinne Drom Caoin meanma an IRA i Luimneach a neartú agus thaispeáin sé nach raibh siad buailte, ná baol air. Éacht bolscaireachta den chéad scoth a bhí ann.*

*Cuireadh séadchomhartha i láthair an 8 Feabhra 2009 ag láthair an luíocháin. Dúirt an tAthair Liam Ryan, iar-Ollamh le socheolaíocht ag Ollscoil Mhá Nuad, an méid seo a leanas ag cur i láthair an tséadchomhartha:*

*Ba cheart onóir a léiriú d'fhir Dhrom Caoin, agus ba cheart beannacht Dé a iarraidh ar an séadchomhartha, ar séadchomhartha ar son na saoirse é... Nil luach ar bith eile níos mó, nil luach daonna ar bith eile níos mó, nil luach Criostaí ar bith eile níos mó ná an tsaoirse. Ach, ba cheart dúinn freisin, ar a laghad inniu, an t-aon fhear déag a fuair bás anseo a thabhairt chun cuimhne. Mar a tharla, Éireannaigh a bhí i dtriúr díobh agus Caitlicigh a bhí i gceathrar díobh. Ach ní thugaimid chun cuimhne iad de bharr creidimh ná tír dhúchais, ach ar an gcúis seo: b'eol d'fhir Bhriogáid Luimnigh Thoir agus Luimnigh Láir cúis a dtroda agus b'eol dóibh an méid a raibh siad sásta bás a fháil lena bhaint amach. Níorbh eol do na 11 fhear a fuair bás anseo riamh an méid a raibh siad ag troid dó, agus is cinnte nárbh eol dóibh riamh cad dó a bhfuair siad bás. Is brónach agus is tubaisteach an rud é sin, is cur amú uafásach saol daoine é.*

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