‘THE INEVITABLE CONFLICT’

ESSAYS ON THE CIVIL WAR IN COUNTY LIMERICK

Limerick City and County Council

Edited by Seán William Gannon

Comhairle Cathrach & Contae Luimnigh
Limerick City & County Council

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

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Foreword

In this, the penultimate year of the Decade of Centenaries, we find ourselves reflecting on what was perhaps the most challenging episode of the entire revolutionary period – the Irish Civil War.

The central objective of Limerick City and County Council's Decade of Centenaries programme has been the remembrance of local historical events in a factually accurate, inclusive, and accessible way; and this is a particular priority in the present case of the Civil War, during which Limerick's strategic importance saw it cast as a principal theatre. This commemorative volume achieves this objective.

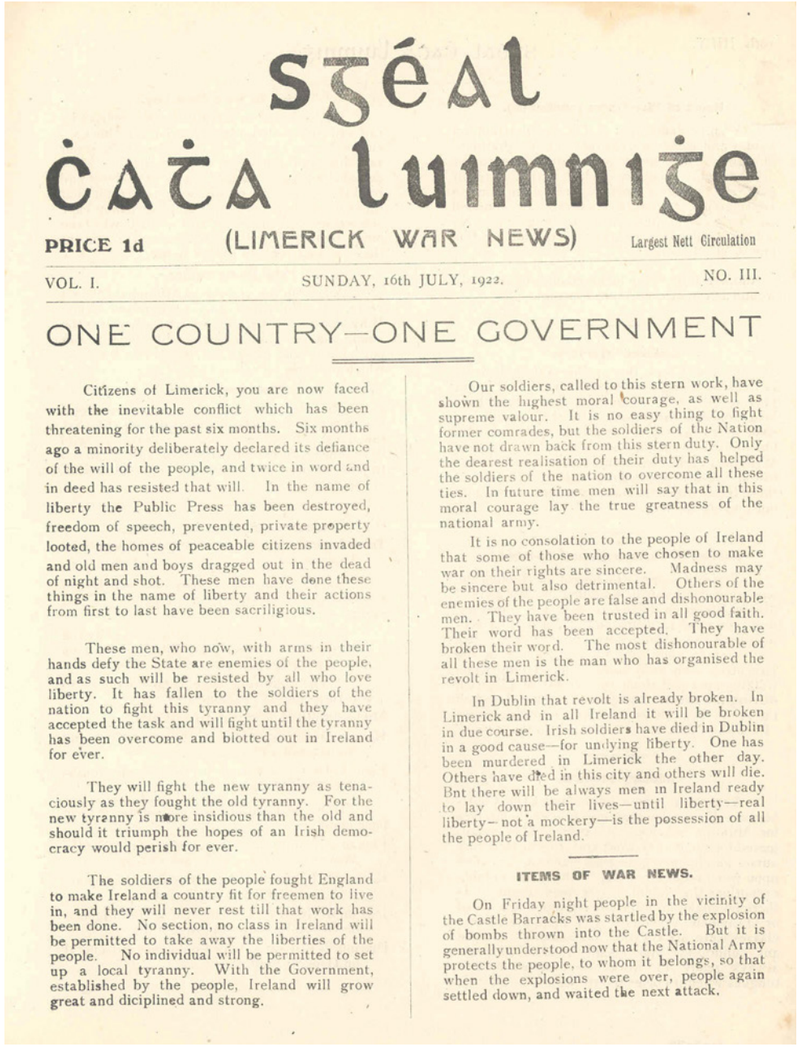
The thirteen original essays that it comprises examine certain aspects of the course and consequences of the conflict in Limerick in an objective and dispassionate way, which implicitly acknowledges differing historical perspectives. They are authored by professional and local historians, and Ph.D. students from Mary Immaculate College, Limerick, who employ a wide range of traditional and newly available archival resources to shed new light on the experience of civil war across Limerick city and county. Under this aspect, they uncover long-forgotten local stories which demonstrate the human costs that the conflict extracted from combatants and civilians alike.

The volume also provides a remarkable photographic record of the Civil War in Limerick, drawing on the extensive contemporary visual reportage by Pathé News and photographer William D. Hogan that made the Civil War the most visually documented event in Limerick's revolutionary history.

We are proud to present *The Inevitable Conflict* as part of Limerick City and County Council's Decade of Centenaries programme for 2022, and as our principal contribution to the local commemoration of the Irish Civil War. The volume forms an important contribution to the literature, which we hope will promote a deeper engagement with, and understanding of, the history of the conflict in county Limerick and provide a catalyst for respectful debate.

Councillor Francis Foley - Mayor of the City and County of Limerick.

Damien Brady, Coordinator - Decade of Centenaries, Limerick City and County Council.



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ONE COUNTRY—ONE GOVERNMENT

Citizens of Limerick, you are now faced with the inevitable conflict which has been threatening for the past six months. Six months ago a minority deliberately declared its defiance of the will of the people, and twice in word and in deed has resisted that will. In the name of liberty the Public Press has been destroyed, freedom of speech, prevented, private property looted, the homes of peaceable citizens invaded and old men and boys dragged out in the dead of night and shot. These men have done these things in the name of liberty and their actions from first to last have been sacriligious.

These men, who now, with arms in their hands defy the State are enemies of the people, and as such will be resisted by all who love liberty. It has fallen to the soldiers of the nation to fight this tyranny and they have accepted the task and will fight until the tyranny has been overcome and blotted out in Ireland for ever.

They will fight the new tyranny as tenaciously as they fought the old tyranny. For the new tyranny is more insidious than the old and should it triumph the hopes of an Irish democracy would perish for ever.

The soldiers of the people fought England to make Ireland a country fit for freemen to live in, and they will never rest till that work has been done. No section, no class in Ireland will be permitted to take away the liberties of the people. No individual will be permitted to set up a local tyranny. With the Government, established by the people, Ireland will grow great and diciplined and strong.

Our soldiers, called to this stern work, have shown the highest moral courage, as well as supreme valour. It is no easy thing to fight former comrades, but the soldiers of the Nation have not drawn back from this stern duty. Only the dearest realisation of their duty has helped the soldiers of the nation to overcome all these ties. In future time men will say that in this moral courage lay the true greatness of the national army.

It is no consolation to the people of Ireland that some of those who have chosen to make war on their rights are sincere. Madness may be sincere but also detrimental. Others of the enemies of the people are false and dishonourable men. They have been trusted in all good faith. Their word has been accepted. They have broken their word. The most dishonourable of all these men is the man who has organised the revolt in Limerick.

In Dublin that revolt is already broken. In Limerick and in all Ireland it will be broken in due course. Irish soldiers have died in Dublin in a good cause—for undying liberty. One has been murdered in Limerick the other day. Others have died in this city and others will die. Bnt there will be always men in Ireland ready to lay down their lives—until liberty—real liberty—not a mockery—is the possession of all the people of Ireland.

ITEMS OF WAR NEWS.

On Friday night people in the vicinity of the Castle Barracks was startled by the explosion of bombs thrown into the Castle. But it is generally understood now that the National Army protects the people, to whom it belongs, so that when the explosions were over, people again settled down, and waited the next attack.

Introduction

> The fight of seven and a half centuries has ended in triumph ... Ireland should not only thank, but honour the men responsible for such a consummation of our National hopes. Ireland had notably great leaders negotiating for her in London, and she can rest assured that what has been agreed to by them can be accepted with honour by the whole Irish nation.

Thus editorialised Limerick's most influential nationalist newspaper, the *Limerick Leader*, on 7 December 1921, as the terms of the previous day's Anglo-Irish Treaty became widely known. Its optimism was, however, misplaced. For while Dáil Éireann narrowly ratified the Treaty one month later, the vote sundered the Sinn Féin party and the military resoundingly rejected its terms - Cumann na mBan by 86 percent at its February 1922 annual convention, the Irish Republican Army (IRA) by a ratio of around 3:1. To their minds, they had established the 'Irish Republic' by force of their arms and they alone could, in consequence, dissolve it. Tense confrontation between the new Provisional Government's National Army and anti-Treaty IRA units over the possession of barracks and depots vacated by the Royal Irish Constabulary (RIC) and the British Army in spring 1922 led to an intensification of efforts on each side of Ireland's new political and military divide to preserve the unity of the national movement. These efforts ultimately ended in failure and the National Army's assault on the anti-Treaty IRA Executive in Dublin's Four Courts on 28 June formally inaugurated an almost year-long civil war. After asserting control over the capital, the National Army took the fight to the provinces where, fortified by British military and financial assistance, and facilitated by rapid recruitment and broad public support, it comprehensively defeated its opponent in the war's conventional phase. The guerrilla phase which followed was a vicious, vindictive affair which saw criminal conduct on both sides, including the destruction of public infrastructure, arson, assassinations, extra-judicial executions, and cold-blooded murder. By the time the anti-Treaty IRA dumped arms in May 1923, some 1,600 people were dead. The bitterness engendered by what Máire Mhac an tSaoi termed this 'Cogadh na gCarad' ('War of Friends') oftentimes endured long after the fighting had ceased.[1] Together with the 'spiritual wounds' borne by both combatants and the families of victims, it formed the basis for a transgenerational trauma which is still incompletely understood.[2]

This volume is not a narrative history of the Civil

War in Limerick. Rather, it brings together established and emerging scholars to explore certain aspects of the experience of the conflict across the county, the strategic importance of which cast it as one of the principal theatres of its conventional phase. Matthew Potter examines the war through the prism of politics in county Limerick, where the divide on the Treaty was essentially even. Two of the four TDs representing the Dáil's Limerick City-Limerick East constituency voted to accept its provisions, while two voted against, and similarly on Limerick City Council, where the pro and anti-Treaty factions were fairly evenly matched. Potter's primary focus is on Limerick Corporation (which the Council ran) and its efforts to navigate hardening attitudes on both sides of the Treaty divide. He also assesses the Civil War's legacies in respect of local politics in Limerick. The IRA's split over the Treaty was also substantially even in county Limerick. The East Limerick Brigade took the pro-Treaty side while the West Limerick Brigade lined out predominantly against it. And although Commandant Liam Forde publicly repudiated the Treaty on behalf of the Mid Limerick Brigade (which covered Limerick city), a significant minority of its members supported it, nominal rolls in the Military Service Pensions Collection (MSPC) suggesting a figure of around 30 percent. Meanwhile, Cumann na mBan's rejection of the Treaty was less emphatic in Limerick than elsewhere: MSPC nominal rolls indicate that the figures for its Mid and East Limerick branches were in the region of 75 and 60 percent respectively.[2] In their essays, Stephen Kelly and John O'Callaghan explore what the pro-Treaty propaganda sheet *Limerick War News* termed 'the inevitable conflict' in county Limerick to which these local divisions contributed.[3] Kelly provides an overview of the months long struggle for control of the city, which began in March 1922 when a showdown between pro and anti-Treaty factions over the occupation of the city's vacated barracks almost precipitated an armed confrontation, and ended with what Pathé News termed the 'Fall of Limerick' to the National Army on 20 July. O'Callaghan analyses the battle for Limerick county which followed immediately thereafter, a grim engagement of gains and reverses centred around the Bruff-Bruree-Kilmallock triangle. This battle saw the only line fighting of the entire Civil War and, as its 'last large-scale, deliberately planned field action', marked the transition to its more protracted guerrilla phase.[4]

John Dorney draws on his extensive research on Civil War deaths to analyse the casualty figures for Limerick, an important metric which reveals much about the course and character of the war in the county, particularly during the guerrilla phase. Although less intense in Limerick than elsewhere, this phase saw sporadic attacks on government forces and public infrastructure, and the

sometimes violent harassment of civilians. Dorney also places the war in Limerick in its wider context, describing a conflict which, like that in Dublin, was 'intensely local and at the same time national'.[5] Linda Connolly focusses on female casualties of the Civil War in Limerick. Then, as during the War of Independence, women and girls from all backgrounds were unprotected from fearing, witnessing, or directly suffering the violence that the conflict entailed. Drawing on a wide range of national and local press reports, together with material from the MSPC, she uncovers many long-forgotten tragic cases of injury and death throughout the city and county which extracted high social and economic costs from the victims and/or their families. The stresses and strains of life in a country effectively at war since August 1914 took a clear psychological toll, particularly on combatants, and personal paranormal experiences were commonplace throughout the 1919/23 period. In his essay, Benjamin Ragan explores the place of the supernatural in Civil War-era Limerick, presenting a variety of stories of paranormal activity that have been overlooked or ignored in a historiography traditionally centred on the war's political and military dimensions. For Ragan, these stories speak to a primal fear of injury and death amongst Irish revolutionaries that this historiography has failed to convey.

Yet, against this backdrop of military conflict, everyday life in Limerick city and county proceeded with a certain degree of normality and the 'history of the everyday' (Alltagsgeschichte) of Civil War Limerick merits attention. Last year's *Studying Revolution: Accounts of Mary Immaculate College, 1918–1923* illustrated the extent to which the routines of life in Limerick's teacher training college continued largely uninterrupted during the turmoil of the Civil War, and the same applied in other spheres as well.[6] As Matthew Potter observes in his essay, Limerick Corporation continued to discharge its municipal duties throughout even the worst of the local conflict, and Sharon Slater examines public entertainments in this context in hers. Through an examination of press reports and advertisements, she demonstrates that, aside from the period of high intensity urban warfare in mid-July, Limerick city's theatres, cinemas, and sports' venues operated as normal during 1922, as citizens sought out ways to distract themselves in tense times. This said, the war's impact on day-to-day life in Limerick could be deep and wide-ranging. John Dorney's essay on the broader civilian experience of civil war across the city and county explores the difficulties faced in areas such as food supply, public transport, and the extraction of 'war' revenues, and assesses their effects on public sympathies towards the belligerent parties.

Fig 1: Barricade at Begley's Corner, William Street, July 1922

Dorney also examines sectarianism in Civil War Limerick, where 'political and communal divisions were often blurred'. The Protestant experience of 1922/23 in the Irish Free State remains a contentious subject. The penetration of the historiographical silence in which it was hitherto largely surrounded began in earnest with Peter Hart in the late 1990s, who rejected as inadequate the 'martial paradigm' through which the events of the Civil War were traditionally described.[7] And it has been almost entirely dispelled in recent years by the work of Brian Hughes and Gemma Clark, which locates the (overwhelmingly unionist) Protestant experience within that of a wider southern Irish loyalist estate, including Catholic unionists, British ex-servicemen, and ex-RIC. Here, they turn a spotlight on Limerick where, as John O'Callaghan has noted, 'neither truce nor Treaty offered respite' to those loyalist outgroups perceived as having been 'cogs in the British system of rule'.[8] Drawing on her in-depth research on the archive of the Irish Grants Committee (IGC) - a British government body which adjudicated on southern Irish loyalist compensation claims for losses incurred on account of Crown loyalty from the July 1921 Anglo-Irish Truce to the 'official' end of the Civil War - Clark explores what she terms the 'everyday violence' prosecuted against them in 1922/23. This violence, which included arson, intimidation, and physical aggressions, was often informed by factors other than strict ideological politics, as the chaos of the period was used to settle local agrarian disputes and personal scores. In his essay, Hughes examines the attempts of Limerick Protestants to navigate the uncertainty of the revolutionary period and the difficulties they (and Catholic loyalists) endured during its endgame of civil war. He reminds us that the threats, damage to property, attacks, and expulsions recorded in IGC testimonies do not represent the totality of the Limerick loyalist experience of 1922/23. Many former unionists lived through the period unmolested or weathered their personal storm (a majority of Protestant IGC claimants were still resident in county Limerick in the late 1920s), and accepted Ireland's new dispensation which afforded them space to express their old loyalties. My own essay explores the victimisation of ex-RIC in county Limerick in the spring and summer of 1922, an overwhelmingly Catholic social outgroup which had loyalist identity thrust upon it largely by circumstance. This victimisation, largely conducted by elements of the anti-Treaty IRA, often culminated in attempted or actual expulsion, around the enduring legacies of which local cultures of silence have grown.

The traditional narrative regarding the supposed irreconcilable enmity of Civil War opponents both during the war and long afterwards has been problematised, most recently by correspondence in the MSPC

demonstrating that what Noel Browne termed 'white hot hate' amongst veterans was by no means universal.[9] Drawing on his vast collection of oral histories, Thomas Toomey explores this issue in East Limerick, focussing on the period of the conflict itself. He details a number of intriguing examples of friendships 'unsundered' by the Civil War split, where individuals from both sides put personal relations before political loyalty when dealing with erstwhile IRA comrades. Finally, Siobhán English explores the afterlives of Limerick's Civil War generation through the lens of the MSPC. As Diarmaid Ferriter has observed, 'for those from both sides of the Civil War divide without a meaningful stake in the new state', these could be 'brutally disordered and fractured'.[10] The applications for compensation under the terms of the Army Pensions Acts of 1923/53 that English examines uncover several such cases in Limerick.

Terminology

The late David Fitzpatrick cautioned against 'the use of simplistic and exclusive dichotomies, or facile attributions of motive' when discussing those who took part in the Civil War, arguing that most, at least, sincerely believed in the justness of their national cause.[11] This volume therefore eschews terms such as 'Irregulars' or 'Free Staters' which may be interpreted as implicitly endorsing or condemning the positions of the warring sides, applying 'pro-Treaty' and 'anti-Treaty' where appropriate instead. Their respective militaries are generally referred to as the National Army and the anti-Treaty IRA as, in the case of the latter, the terms 'IRA' and 'republicans' are potentially contested.

Notes

1. *Irish Times*, 15 November 2003.

2. Figures are unavailable for West Limerick.

3. *Limerick War News,* 16 July 1922.

4. John O'Callaghan, *Limerick: The Irish Revolution, 1912-23* (Dublin, 2018), p. 112.

5. John Dorney, T*he Civil War in Dublin: The fight for the Irish capital, 1922-1924* (Dublin, 2017), p. 2.

6. Brian Hughes, Úna Ní Bhroiméil, Benjamin Ragan (eds), *Studying revolution: Accounts of Mary Immaculate College, 1918-1923* (Limerick, 2021).

7. Peter Hart, *The IRA at war, 1916-1923* (Oxford, 2003), p. 82.

8. O'Callaghan, *Limerick*, p. 116.

9. Noel Browne, *Against the tide* (Dublin, 1986), p. 228.

10. Diarmaid Ferriter, 'Despair, defiance and democracy', *Irish Times*, 10 May 1922.

11. David Fitzpatrick, 'Historians and the commemoration of Irish conflicts, 1912–23' in John Horne and Edward Madigan (eds), *Towards commemoration: Ireland in war and revolution 1912-1923* (Dublin, 2013), p. 129.

The Civil War Politics of Limerick Corporation, 1922-23

Fig. 2

Matthew Potter

Throughout the Civil War, it is unclear what level of support the pro and anti-Treaty sides could command on Limerick City Council. The overall picture would suggest that neither gained a lasting supremacy, while other councillors remained neutral throughout the conflict. This chapter examines a series of episodes which give some insights into the state of the parties.

In 1922, Limerick City had a local government system known as Limerick Corporation, which dated back 725 years to the first charter of 1197. The city was governed by a council of 40 members, directly returned by a fairly inclusive electorate consisting of all male and female householders and occupants of a portion of a house. The eight members who polled the highest number of votes were called aldermen. The Council was headed by a mayor elected annually by the councillors for a one-year term, although they could serve more than one term. The Corporation, which the Council ran, provided a full range of services, including the building and maintaining of roads; water supply and sewerage; gasworks; public health; and social housing.

Avoiding a crisis

Since the local elections of 1920, the Sinn Féin party had controlled Limerick City Council. The state of the parties was Sinn Féin 26, their Labour allies 5, and a strong local Ratepayers' party had 9 seats. Following the murders of former Mayor Michael O'Callaghan and sitting Mayor George Clancy by Crown forces on 7 March 1921, Stephen O'Mara, whose family owned one of Limerick's four bacon factories, was elected mayor on 22 March 1921. Twice re-elected, he served until 17 October 1923. His father, also Stephen, and brother Alphonsus had both been previously mayor (in 1885/86 and 1918/20 respectively) while another brother, James, spent most of 1919/21 in the USA as Dáil Éireann's principal fundraiser. When Stephen O'Mara succeeded James in this role, he was obliged to spend a lot of time in the USA, and Alderman Máire O'Donovan, sister-in-law of the murdered Mayor O'Callaghan, served as acting mayor from 21 May 1921 to 30 January 1922, the first woman to be Limerick's first citizen.

Éamon de Valera and Kathleen Clarke (widow of Thomas Clarke, executed for his part in the 1916 Rising) received the Freedom of the City at a ceremony held by acting Mayor O'Donovan in the Theatre Royal, Henry Street, on 5 December 1921. That night, de Valera stayed in Strand House with his friends the O'Maras, and it was there that he heard news of the signing of the controversial Anglo-Irish Treaty for the first time.

At the end of 1921 and the beginning of 1922, a number of local authorities voted in favour of the

Fig 3: Éamon de Valera and the O'Maras, Strand House, 6 December 1921

Fig. 4, Postcards

Treaty, but Limerick City Council did not do so. On 7 January 1922, the Dáil ratified the Treaty by 64 votes to 57. The four TDs in the Limerick City-Limerick East constituency split evenly, with Liam Hayes and Richard Hayes voting in favour of the Treaty, and Michael Colivet and Kate O'Callaghan (widow of Michael O'Callaghan) voting against. On 9 January, Councillor Thomas Donnellan's attempt to introduce a resolution on the Treaty before Limerick City Council was ruled out of order by acting Mayor O'Donovan. Although Donnellan was a supporter and O'Donovan an opponent of the Treaty, it appears that the Council wanted to avoid exacerbating what was rapidly becoming a serious crisis.

As 1922 progressed, the division over the Treaty led to a split in Dáil Éireann, Sinn Féin, and the IRA. In these circumstances, Limerick city became a potential battleground due to its strategic and military importance. As Crown forces withdrew from their barracks and

other positions, they were replaced by pro and anti-Treaty factions of the IRA (the former now known as the National Army), both of which attempted to occupy as many strongholds as possible, in anticipation of civil conflict. In Limerick, the Mid Limerick Brigade of the IRA (the area of operations of which included the city) declared for the anti-Treaty side and occupied a number of buildings in the city. In response, National Army forces from Clare and South Galway under General Michael Brennan (commanding the 1st Western Division) entered the city and occupied a number of barracks that had been evacuated by the RIC and British Army in late February. Further reinforcements for both sides came in later so that, within a few weeks, there were about 1,000 pro-Treaty and 400 anti-Treaty soldiers in Limerick, along with some British soldiers who had not yet withdrawn. It seemed to be only a matter of time before fighting broke out in the city.

Although personally anti-Treaty, Mayor O'Mara worked tirelessly to prevent armed conflict in Limerick.[1] In Dublin, he met representatives of the pro-Treaty Provisional Government and eventually brokered an agreement. Under its terms, National Army and anti-Treaty IRA troops brought in as reinforcements from non-Limerick brigade areas would withdraw from the city, while vacated barracks would be turned over to either Mid Limerick Brigade IRA members or Limerick Corporation, which provided skeleton civilian maintenance crews. The city was effectively demilitarised and the prospect of fighting there postponed. Limerick's respite from civil war was to be a brief one. When both pro and anti-Treaty forces returned to the city in the summer, Mayor O'Mara again brokered a peace deal, but it was repudiated by the Provisional Government. Between 11 and 20 July 1922, considerable fighting left the National Army in possession of Limerick city. The city saw no further fighting. However, county Limerick remained a centre of conflict until mid-August, as the National Army drove out the anti-Treaty IRA and asserted its control, and it suffered sporadic violence throughout the remaining months of the war.

'A growing mutual antipathy'

At this point, it would seem that Limerick City Council wished to avoid taking sides in the Civil War. Thus, at a meeting chaired by Mayor O'Mara on 3 August 1922, a resolution of sympathy and condolence for the fallen on both sides was carried unanimously, as was a vote of sympathy on the death of the Chairman of the Provisional Government, Michael Collins, at another meeting on 26 August. Nevertheless, what John O'Callaghan terms 'a growing mutual antipathy' became apparent in the Council.[2] In September, Councillor Dan Bourke was one of 17 anti-Treaty IRA soldiers captured by National Army forces.[3] Then, on 5 October, the Council took up an anti-Treaty stance at a meeting attended by 13 out of 40 members. It unanimously adopted a resolution asking for an investigation into allegations that anti-Treaty prisoners detained in local prisons and barracks were being ill-treated and kept in deplorable conditions and suggesting that a delegation from its own ranks should be allowed to visit them. These resolutions produced what was described as a 'sharp' and 'stinging rebuke' from Michael Brennan, which he published in the national newspapers. Therein Brennan dismissed these allegations as being likely to be spurious and motivated by propaganda purposes as he himself could testify from his three years' experience of British prisons during the War of Independence.[4]

In turn, the Council published its reply to Brennan in the national newspapers, repeating its original demands.

Brennan responded that if the Corporation could submit the names of an impartial committee to him, he would allow them to visit any barracks and jail under his command to investigate the matter. Subsequently, Mayor O'Mara forwarded to General Richard Mulcahy, Minister of Defence in the Provisional Government, a letter that he had received from the officer commanding the anti-Treaty prisoners in Limerick Prison, in which he detailed the poor conditions that they were enduring. There the matter rested but these exchanges suggest that at this time, Brennan regarded Limerick Corporation as being under the control of the anti-Treaty party.

By contrast, at a Council meeting of 7 December, a motion expressing sympathy with the relatives of recently executed anti-Treaty prisoners and disapproving of the government's policy was withdrawn after a brief discussion. This would suggest that the pro and anti-Treaty sides were evenly balanced at this time, as did the appointment of Alderman James Casey of Labour as acting mayor after Mayor O'Mara was arrested on 8 December for refusing to hand over the funds collected in the USA to the government - now the Executive Council of the Irish Free State.[5] (This was the first time that a serving mayor had suffered imprisonment for over 300 years). Casey continued to serve as acting mayor for six months until O'Mara's release on 4 July 1923. When Pope Pius XI sent Monsignor Salvatore Luzio on a fact-finding mission to Ireland, Limerick City Council adopted a resolution on 12 April 1923 asking Luzio to intervene on behalf of anti-Treaty prisoners on hunger strike, including Limerick TD Kate O'Callaghan who was being held in Kilmainham jail. The Executive Council interpreted this and similar resolutions adopted by other local authorities as being anti-Treaty in their inspiration.

This tilt towards the anti-Treaty side was followed by an apparent volte face on 7 June 1923 when the City Council voted by nine votes to three with two abstentions to meet W. T. Cosgrave, President of the Executive Council, on his forthcoming first official visit to Limerick. In response, Alderman Máire O'Donovan wrote a public letter to the newspapers claiming that this vote did not accurately represent the opinion of Limerick City Council. She wanted to state that, of the 40 members of the Council, there were currently 5 vacancies due to deaths or other causes; Mayor O'Mara and 4 others were interned; 2 aldermen were 'wanted men' and 13 others had not attended the meeting. Although O'Donovan's letter was informative as to the current composition of the Council, she must surely have known that the meeting in question had been a valid one as the attendance had reached the quorum of fourteen.

However, the Council meeting to elect a new mayor held

on 17 October 1923 and attended by 22 councillors would suggest that the anti-Treaty side was now in the ascendant. Although his term of office was not due to expire until January 1924, an exhausted and disillusioned Mayor O'Mara resigned prematurely and was succeeded by Robert (Bob) de Courcy, an opponent of the Treaty. At the same meeting, the Council approved a motion calling for the release of Éamon de Valera and the other anti-Treaty prisoners (de Valera had been arrested at an election rally in Ennis in mid-August) and the elimination of the Oath of Allegiance to the British monarch included in the Constitution of the Irish Free State, which had been adopted by the Dáil in October 1922.

Limerick's version of 'Civil War Politics'

The unanimous election of de Courcy was an emphatic gesture of opposition to the Executive Council. Even in the extraordinary conditions created by the Civil War, his election was most unusual, as he was in prison and on hunger strike in Dublin at the time, having been jailed earlier in the year for possession of arms. After 44 days, Mayor de Courcy ended his hunger strike, and having spent the first 10 months of his mayoralty in detention, he was released on 26 June 1924 as part of the amnesty for anti-Treaty prisoners. In contrast to these dramatic events, the local elections of 1925 returned a decisive majority to Limerick City Council in favour of the Treaty. Only 8 anti-Treaty republicans were returned, compared to 14 Independents, 9 Progressives, and 9 Labour. Most of the Independents and Progressives were supporters of Cumann na nGaedheal, while by this time the Labour Party had also accepted the Treaty.

In conclusion, the most enduring legacy of the Civil War for Limerick Corporation was the creation of a lasting political system. True, the Corporation had suffered grievous assaults in 1922 and 1923, with two mayors spending long terms in prison (one of whom also endured six weeks on hunger strike) and four additional Council members interned. Nevertheless, it had not succumbed to the storm, but managed to remain active as the governing body of the city. Council meetings had been held regularly, services provided to the people, and rates gathered in, albeit at a reduced level. When the conflict ended, the Corporation had survived.

What had changed permanently was the political complexion of the Corporation. During the Civil War, the pro and anti-Treaty factions on the Council were fairly evenly matched with one or other gaining only a temporary ascendancy. At the same time, both the Labour and Ratepayer/Independent groups remained significant and occupied a pivotal position vis-à-vis the

Fig. 5, Stephen O'Mara, Mayor of Limerick 1921-23

other two. This pattern was to be replicated for decades to come, with Fianna Fáil, Fine Gael, Labour, and a number of Independents or (generally short-lived) small parties dividing the seats between them, while no single party ever obtained an overall majority. In contrast to the 'two and a half party system' at national level, Limerick Corporation had a multi-party system. This was to be Limerick's version of 'Civil War politics'.

Notes

1. His father Stephen and brothers Alphonsus and James favoured the Treaty.

2. John O'Callaghan, *Limerick: The Irish Revolution, 1912-23* (Dublin, 2018), p. 110.

3. Bourke was later Mayor of Limerick (1936/41) and a member of the Dáil (1927/52), representing Fianna Fáil.

4. *Freeman's Journal,* 18 October 1922; *Irish Independent*, 18 October 1922.

5. The Provisional Government was replaced by the Executive Council when the Irish Free State was formally inaugurated on 6 December 1922.

'The Inevitable Conflict'

The Civil War in Limerick City

Fig. 6

Stephen Kelly

Following Dáil Éireann's approval of the Anglo-Irish Treaty on 7 January 1922, the British Army's 18th Infantry Brigade, commanded by Brigadier General Louis S. Wyatt, made immediate plans for its departure from Limerick. By the middle of February, troops had been almost entirely withdrawn from counties Limerick, Clare, and Tipperary, leaving only the barracks in Limerick city in British military hands. By now, the IRA was in the process of dividing over the Treaty and, on 18 February 1922, the officer commanding the Mid Limerick Brigade IRA, Commandant Liam Forde, declared its support for the anti-Treaty position. In response, the Provisional Government's minister for defence, Richard Mulcahy - who recognised Limerick as a critically important strategic location - ordered Commandant General Michael Brennan (1st Western Division, East Clare and South Galway), together with Commandant General Donnchadh O'Hannigan of the East Limerick Brigade, to enter Limerick city (which formed part of Ernie O'Malley's 2nd Southern Division area) and take possession of the police and military barracks due to be vacated by the Crown forces there.

The British Evacuation

On 23 February, the National Army took control of the city's RIC barracks and Captain F. J. O'Shaughnessy, Liaison Officer of the Provisional Government, hoisted a tricolour from the front of the former county headquarters on William Street. On the same day, a small number of British army officers handed over control of Castle Barracks to Brennan's forces in a low-key affair. Limerick city's three other military barracks, Strand Barracks, Ordnance Barracks, and New (today Sarsfield) Barracks, remained for the moment in British hands.

Local Mid Limerick Brigade IRA units were not happy with the deployment of Brennan's forces (the first time troops from one divisional area had been ordered into another) and they summoned Ernie O'Malley, who had also taken the anti-Treaty side, to take command of the situation. On 27 February, Brennan posted notices informing the people of Limerick that the presence of his troops was a temporary measure to ensure the smooth evacuation of the Crown forces, but tensions continued to rise with the build-up of anti-Treaty forces within the city, who billeted themselves in hotels and public buildings such as Limerick Asylum and the Technical School. On 1 March, the Oxford and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry Regiment (O.B.L.I) handed over Strand Barracks to Captain O'Shaughnessy, leaving the National Army in control of Strand and Castle Barracks. Brennan reported to National Army GHQ that, although reinforced by troops from Clare and East Limerick, his men were by now outnumbered by a much larger, well-

Fig. 7, The Irish flag flies over King John's Castle following the withdrawal of its British Army garrison on 23 February 1922

Fig. 8, Anti-Treaty IRA outside the George Hotel, Limerick city, March 1922

armed anti-Treaty force, itself backed up by units from 1st Southern Division (Cork), Kilkenny, and Galway. Attempts to barter a peaceful solution were made by supporters of the Treaty amongst the Mid and East Limerick Brigades of the IRA but failed.

On 7 March, the mayor of Limerick, Stephen O'Mara, arranged a meeting between the commanders of the opposing forces in an effort to avoid an outbreak of fighting. He travelled to Dublin two days later to brief Michael Collins, who then held a meeting with Ernie O'Malley, Liam Lynch (Commander 1st Southern Division), and Oscar Traynor (Commander Dublin Brigade IRA) in an effort to calm things down. A deal was agreed. Under its terms, pro and anti-Treaty forces from outside county Limerick would withdraw from the city. Brennan would turn Strand and Castle Barracks over to small detachments of Mid Limerick Brigade IRA members hitherto uninvolved in the conflict, while Ordnance and New Barracks would be handed to Limerick Corporation following the British withdrawal. The city's RIC stations would also be handed to Limerick Corporation and maintained by small civilian crews, with the exception of William Street where a token National Army contingent would remain under the command of Commandant General William R. E. Murphy. Although neither side on ground was happy with the compromise (Brennan tendered Collins his resignation but was persuaded to withdraw it), they began withdrawing from the city on 11 March 1922.

Collins, wanting to wait until the National Army was in a better position, asked British Secretary of State for the Colonies, Winston Churchill, to delay the military evacuation but he refused. So on 21 March, the British Army departed Limerick for the last time. The first to leave was the Royal Army Service Corps, 1166 Mechanical Transport Company. This was followed by a parade from New Barracks by the 2nd Battalion Royal Welch Fusiliers who were led by their regimental band to Limerick railway station for departure to the Curragh. At the same time, a similar parade of 1st Battalion O.B.L.I. took place from Ordnance Barracks. The troops numbered 400 of all ranks and were seen off at the railway station by local loyalists.

Preparing for battle

The Mid Limerick Brigade IRA did not move to take control of Ordnance and New Barracks for a few days, and moveable objects were plundered while they lay empty. Over the coming weeks, pro and anti-Treaty forces continued to grow in strength. Both sides appreciated Limerick's strategic significance (in Brennan's words, 'the Shannon was the barricade and whoever held Limerick held the south and the west'[1])

Fig. 9, National Army troops outside Hanratty's Hotel, Limerick City, March 1922

and local anti-Treaty IRA quickly moved to take full control of the city, occupying all four military barracks. A retrospective account by a soldier in the National Army, P. J. (Cushy) Ryan, describes how these 'die-hards', as he termed them, commandeered lorry loads of provisions from local bacon factories, bakeries, and shops in preparation for a long siege. In addition, their paymaster made a withdrawal under arms from the Munster and Leinster Bank on O'Connell Street (said to have been to pay troops), for which the bank manager was provided a receipt.[2] According to Ryan, the anti-Treaty forces believed that they could hold the city and, by extension Limerick county, by controlling the military barracks, rather than the city bridges which the British had always recognised were the gateway to the Mid-West. While all except Athlunkard Bridge were manned by anti-Treaty forces, they were not heavily protected, and Ryan saw this as a weakness in their defence of Limerick. On 26

Fig. 10, Anti-Treaty IRA march through Limerick city, March 1922

May, 150 National Army troops arrived in Limerick city and were placed under the command of General Murphy in William Street. He redeployed a third of them to the Munster Tavern on Mulgrave Street and another third to the nearby Limerick Prison to establish a garrison at both locations. This was the first breach by the National Army of the arrangement concluded in March.

On 28 June, the National Army's assault on the Four Courts inaugurated the conventional phase of the Irish Civil War. Liam Lynch, now anti-Treaty IRA chief-of-staff, arrived in Limerick the following day and set up headquarters at New Barracks.[3] He had ordered all commanders to retreat south and take up positions on the newly formed defensive line stretching eastwards from Limerick to Waterford. Anti-Treaty IRA forces in Limerick city were placed under the command of Liam Deasy (officer commanding 1st Southern Division) and Seán Moylan (officer commanding North Cork Brigade).

Michael Brennan and Donnchadh O'Hannigan also began preparing for battle, consolidating their forces at Coolbawn House in Castleconnell, six miles outside Limerick city – between 700 and 800 troops in total, many newly trained recruits with only about 360 rifles between them. Michael Collins is reported to have visited the troops at Coolbawn and told them to go into Limerick and take the city. Brennan did so by first securing Athlunkard Bridge. He placed pickets at strategic locations along the route into the city and established his headquarters at Cruise's Royal Hotel. O'Hannigan's troops occupied the Custom House, St Mary's Cathedral, and a number of other important buildings overlooking the River Shannon.

Brennan knew Lynch was in a stronger position; he had at his disposal a force of 800 men armed with rifles, machine-guns, grenades, and other explosives. To buy himself time until the arrival of weapons and reinforcements from Dublin, he deceived Lynch into believing that he faced an armed force of comparable size. He did this by transporting his troops into Limerick city by rail from Ennis in detachments of 50, arming them with rifles at the Long Pavement station, and marching them into the city. When the first 50 troops arrived at barracks, their rifles were sent back to the Long Pavement for reissue to subsequent 50-strong groups. The National Army secured its position and dug trenches across a number of roads and erected barricades to halt a counterattack by their opponents.

In an attempt to avoid further escalation Frank Aiken (Commander 4th Northern Division and a friend of both Lynch and Brennan) arranged meetings between both parties, assisted by Mayor O'Mara and an Augustinian priest. After considering their respective positions, both sides agreed not to attack each other and inaugurated a truce on 4 July. Mindful of Limerick's strategic importance, and suspicious of the friendship of O'Hannigan and Lynch, General Eoin O'Duffy at National Army GHQ despatched Commandant General Dermot McManus to Limerick the following day where he immediately cancelled the truce, telling O'Hannigan and Brennan that they had no authority to agree one. However, having assessed the National Army's situation in Limerick, he quickly came to the same conclusions as Brennan and O'Hannigan and told Dublin on 6 July that if they did not receive armoured cars and rifles within 24 hours they would be in grave danger of disaster. Brennan called a meeting of his senior officers to discuss the situation and agreed another truce with Lynch the following day; he knew that his situation was very weak and that if Lynch attacked, he would not be able to hold out. The truce called for a meeting of the Divisional Commandant Generals on both sides, with Seán McEoin, general officer commanding the National

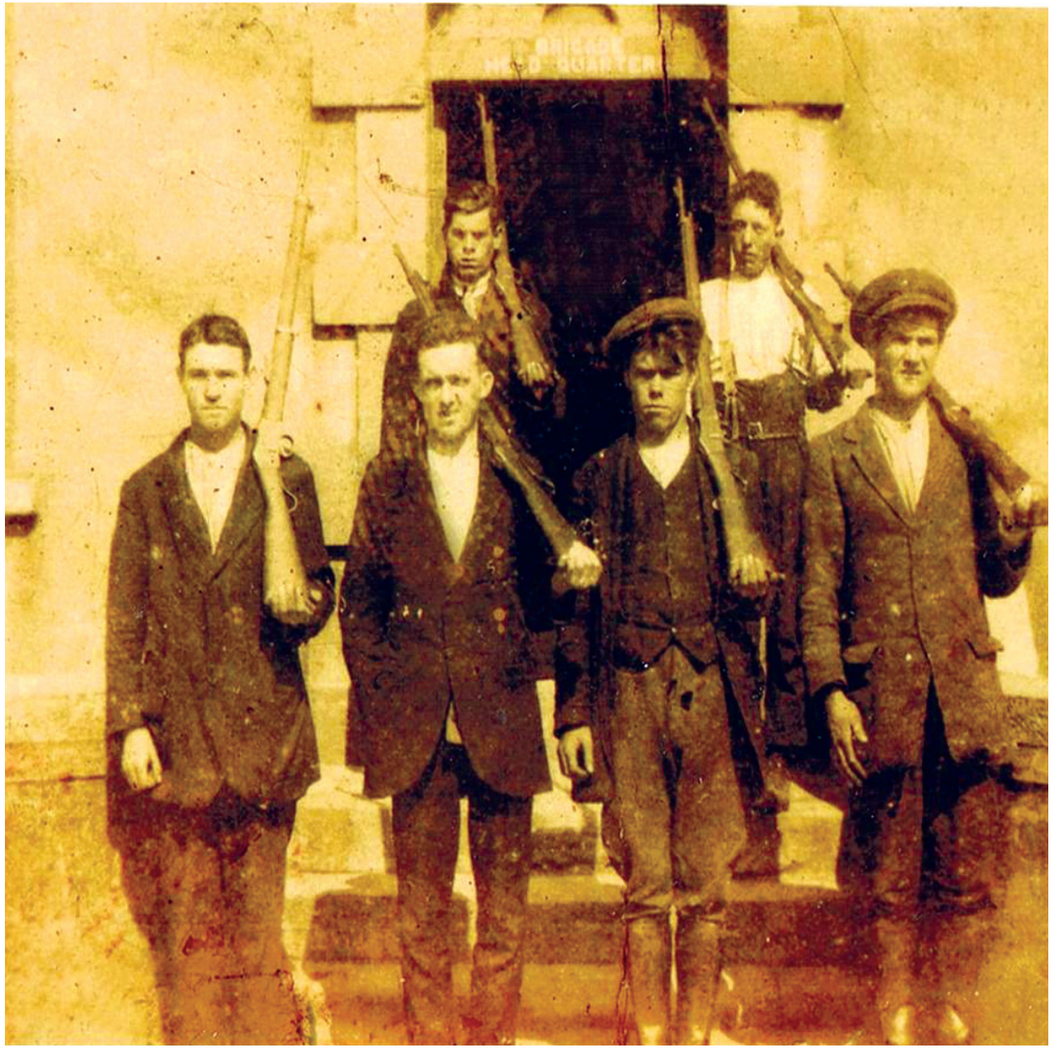


Fig. 11, Anti-Treaty IRA march through Limerick city, March 1922

Fig. 12, National Army troops outside the Stables, New Barracks, following its evacuation by anti-Treaty IRA, July 1922

Army's Western Command, to attend as soon as he could be made available. All troops were to withdraw to agreed positions by 6pm that evening. McManus allowed the agreement to go ahead, stating that no positions would be given up by National Army forces. He then returned to GHQ where he was informed that Commandant Seamus Hogan had left for Limerick with a supply of 150 troops, armoured cars, lorries, and weapons for Brennan. GHQ decided to send General O'Duffy to take command of the situation in Limerick as McManus had expressed concern that Brennan might resign, and with him a number of his supporters.

'The inevitable conflict'

On 11 July, what the pro-Treaty *Limerick War News* described as 'the inevitable conflict which has been threatening for the past six months' finally broke out. Brennan met with Hogan at Scariff that day and took possession of the supplies. On his return to Limerick, he was informed that a National Army soldier, Private

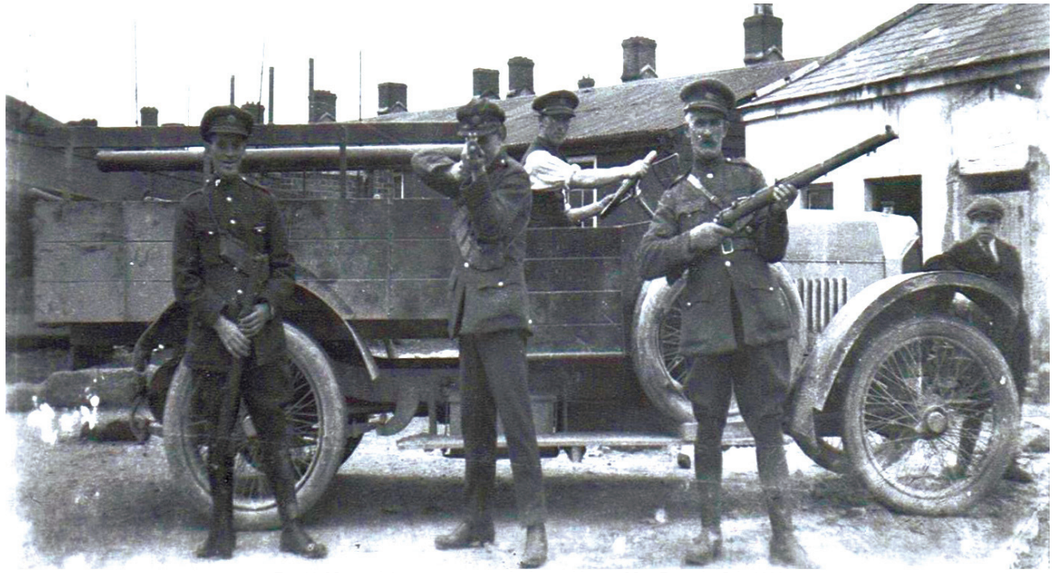


Fig. 13, National Army troops outside the cookhouse, New Barracks, July 1922

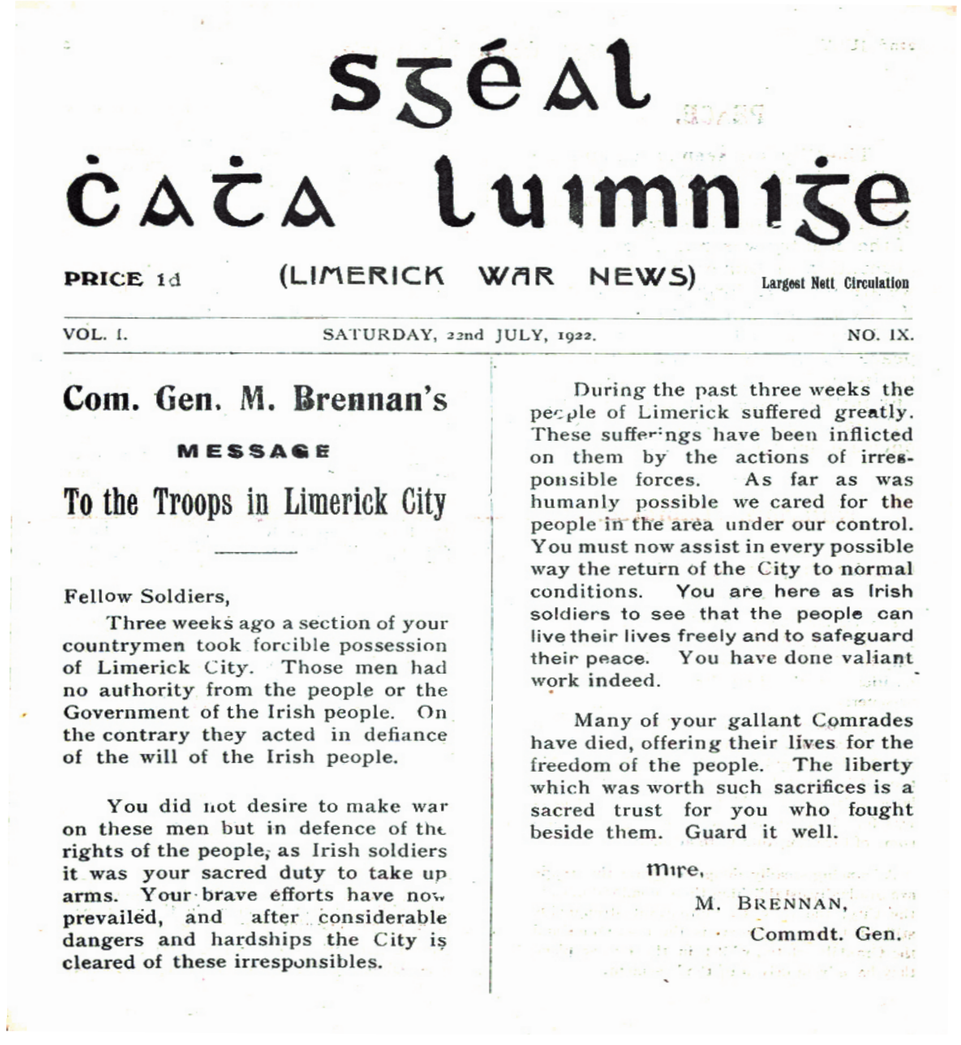
Thomas O'Brien, had been shot dead by anti-Treaty forces while commandeering cars to build barricades on Roche's Street. Now in a stronger position, Brennan immediately sent word to Lynch that the truce was over and his troops opened fire on anti-Treaty forces in Ordnance Barracks that evening. Fighting soon spread to other parts of the city. Lynch immediately moved his headquarters to Clonmel, Tipperary where he was joined by Éamon de Valera. All industry and movement of the civilian population in the city came to a practical standstill as sniper fire from both sides was continuously exchanged. On 12 July, the anti-Treaty IRA scored a victory by taking Caherconlish police station. National Army forces isolated anti-Treaty troops in Daly's bakery in the city, preventing them from supplying New Barracks with bread. As the fighting became more intense, many civilians left the city, some taking refuge in Mungret College. All train services were suspended and newspapers ceased publication. There was no delivery of post and food became scarce.

Fig. 14, National Army soldier examining a booby-trap left by Anti-Treaty troops vacating New Barracks, c. 21 July 1922

On 13 July, the anti-Treaty forces seized the Munster Tavern. This success was short lived as they lost possession when National Army troops quickly rebuffed the attack with the assistance of one of the armoured cars supplied by Hogan. The anti-Treaty IRA also saw the advantages of armoured vehicles and constructed their own called the Hooded Terrier, an armour-plated truck with double turret and fitted with a machine gun which they used throughout the fighting. Early on the morning of 14 July, the National Army took Daly's bakery and, with the assistance of a Lewis gun mounted in a third storey window on Henry Street, also Russell's Mill near the docks. National Army infantry continued to advance along Henry Street and, after a difficult engagement in which the building changed hands three times, they eventually drove anti-Treaty forces from the G.P.O. and telephone exchange. This cut off telephone communications with Lynch in Clonmel.

On the evening of 14 July, National Army forces made two attempts to take Castle Barracks with armoured cars and machine guns, but were forced back by heavy resistance. Buoyed by the arrival of reinforcements and equipment on the *SS Arvonia*, they resumed their attack the following day and launched a simultaneous assault on nearby Strand Barracks as well, using armoured cars, explosives, machine-guns, and mortars. Further fighting continued in the city near Roche's Street. Concerned for residents' safety, Mayor O'Mara asked citizens in the Carey's Road, Edward Street, and Wolfe Tone Street areas to evacuate. Anti-Treaty forces blew up Annacotty Bridge which stopped access to the city from the Dublin Road and prevented more National Army reinforcements arriving from Dublin. The National Army controlled the bridges at Athlunkard and at Killaloe, where O'Duffy set up his headquarters on 17 July. His convoy included a Whippet armoured car, two Lancia A.P.C.s, four trucks carrying troops, 400 rifles, ten Lewis guns, 400 grenades and, most importantly, an 18-pounder field gun named after 'Seán MacEoin'. When news of this reached the anti-Treaty IRA, it launched an all-out attack on National Army troops in an effort to drive them from Limerick but, despite suffering substantial casualties, these troops held their ground.

On 19 July, the National Army took control of O'Connell Street, driving anti-Treaty forces from their base there at Kidd's Café by tunnelling through the basements of adjacent buildings. This cleared the way for the 18-pounder artillery gun to enter the city. It was positioned on Arthur's Quay, directly across the river from Strand Barracks, where the anti-Treatyite garrison was putting up significant resistance, including the destruction of an armoured car. On refusing his call to surrender, O'Duffy gave the order to use the artillery gun. The gun crew were four Limerick men, Colonel



Sgéal Cata Luimnige

PRICE 1d (LIMERICK WAR NEWS) Largest Nett Circulation

VOL. I. SATURDAY, 22nd JULY, 1922. NO. IX.

Com. Gen. M. Brennan's

MESSAGE

To the Troops in Limerick City

Fellow Soldiers,

Three weeks ago a section of your countrymen took forcible possession of Limerick City. Those men had no authority from the people or the Government of the Irish people. On the contrary they acted in defiance of the will of the Irish people.

You did not desire to make war on these men but in defence of the rights of the people, as Irish soldiers it was your sacred duty to take up arms. Your brave efforts have now prevailed, and after considerable dangers and hardships the City is cleared of these irresponsibles.

During the past three weeks the people of Limerick suffered greatly. These sufferings have been inflicted on them by the actions of irresponsible forces. As far as was humanly possible we cared for the people in the area under our control. You must now assist in every possible way the return of the City to normal conditions. You are here as Irish soldiers to see that the people can live their lives freely and to safeguard their peace. You have done valiant work indeed.

Many of your gallant Comrades have died, offering their lives for the freedom of the people. The liberty which was worth such sacrifices is a sacred trust for you who fought beside them. Guard it well.

Mire,

M. BRENNAN,
Commdt. Gen.

Fraher, Jim Leddin, and John and Jim McNamara, all ex-Royal Artillery with service in the Great War. It took 19 shells to breach the walls, but the garrison remained defiant. The gun was moved across the Shannon where, after firing 14 more shells, a breach was made in the rear of the building. At 8pm, O'Duffy ordered a 12-strong party armed with grenades and machine guns under Colonel David Reynolds to storm the building, which forced the garrison's surrender, but not before several casualties were inflicted on both sides.

O'Duffy then turned his artillery on Castle Barracks. By late evening on 20 July, it was ablaze, damaging blocks built in 1751 to accommodate troops. Surrounded by National Army troops, the garrison's commander, Stephen Kennedy, gave the order to retreat and his men escaped across the river under the cover of darkness with the help of local fishermen. Whether the fire was due to National Army shelling or arson by the retreating anti-Treatyite garrison is unknown. The other buildings, although damaged, survived. With the anti-Treaty IRA's position in Limerick city now untenable, Lynch ordered a withdrawal. Just before midnight, a large convoy departed though Ballinacurra in the direction of Kilmallock. Those remaining doused the buildings of Ordnance and New Barracks with petrol and set them on fire. Shortly afterwards, a large explosion was heard throughout the city which damaged the Military Road gate of New Barracks. (This was probably caused either by set explosives or damage to a gas main, rather than by stored ammunition, which the retreating anti-Treaty troops would have been unlikely to leave behind). Most of the blocks on three sides of the square were destroyed, as were the officers' mess, the church, the gymnasium, and the hospital. As the fire brigade attempted to deal with the fires, a large crowd gathered, some of whom attempted to plunder food, furniture, and anything they could carry away. The fire at Ordnance Barracks caused extensive damage, with all the building burnt to a shell and locals looting all moveable objects.

On 21 July, the National Army entered New Barracks, Castle Barracks, and Ordnance Barracks, where they discovered a number of booby traps left by the retreating forces. This was effectively the end of the battle for Limerick city, a battle which had surprisingly light casualties. Nine National Army soldiers were killed and some 20 wounded. And while contemporary press reports claimed that between 20 and 30 anti-Treaty IRA had been killed, the actual figure may have been as low as five, with another 120 taken prisoner. Twelve civilians also lost their lives. In military terms, 1922 in Limerick would become known as 'the year of the three armies'.

Notes

1. Calton Younger, *Ireland's Civil War* (London, 1985) p. 370.

2. P. J. (Cushy) Ryan, 'The Fourth Siege of Limerick: Civil War, July 1922', *Old Limerick Journal*, 38 (2002),

3. Lynch had been officially appointed anti-Treaty IRA chief-of-staff on 9 April 1922, but was briefly replaced by Joseph McKelvey, following a dispute with the Four Courts Executive. Lynch essentially re-appointed himself to the position on 28 June.

The War for Limerick County

Fig. 15

John O'Callaghan

The mainstay of anti-Treaty IRA resistance to the pro-Treaty Free State National Army during the Civil War was the so-called 'Munster Republic' of Cork and Kerry. At the start of the war, Liam Lynch, anti-Treaty IRA chief-of-staff, put in place what proved to be a very porous defensive line, notionally protecting this Munster Republic, running from Limerick city in the west, bordered on the north by the River Shannon, through the towns of Tipperary to Waterford city in the east, flanked by the River Suir. This Lynch line quickly disintegrated once it came under heavy pressure, including artillery fire. The anti-Treaty IRA was dislodged in Tipperary, before the National Army seized both Limerick and Waterford cities on 21 July 1922. The majority of the IRA in the East Limerick Brigade supported the Treaty and the majority in the West Limerick Brigade opposed it. Once firmly in control of the city, however, the National Army had the ideal base from which to consolidate, and then extend, its influence around the county.

The only line fighting of the Civil War

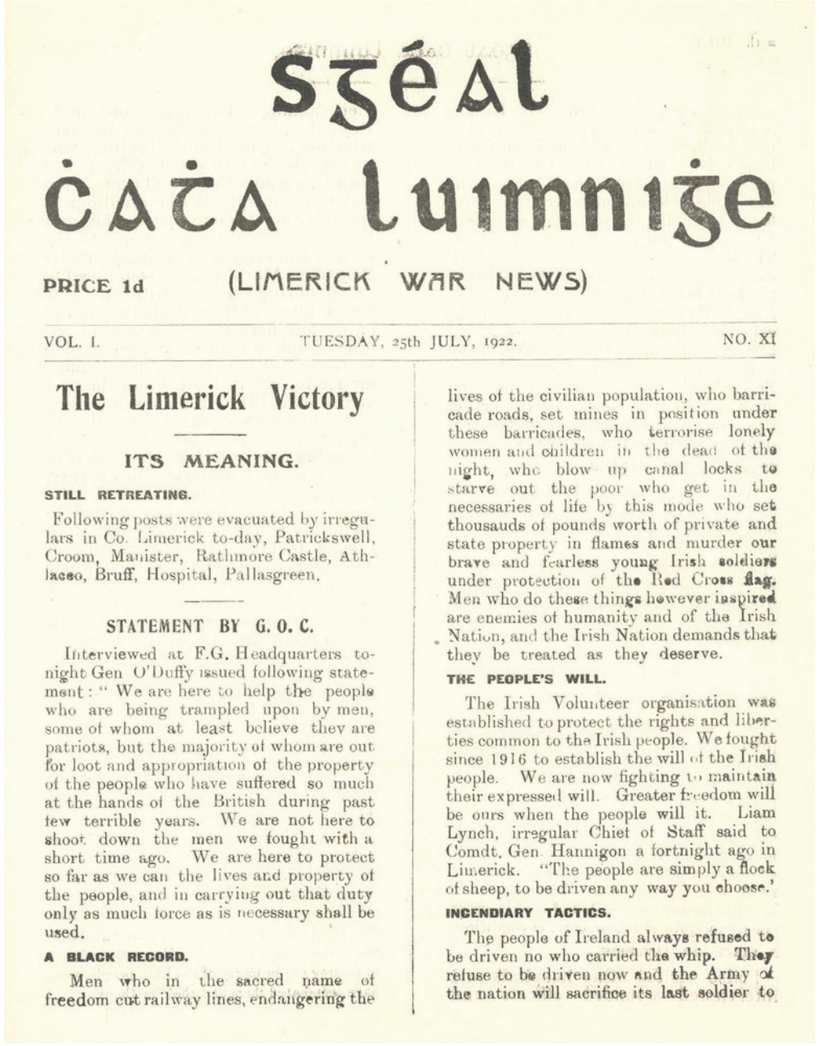
After losing the battle for Limerick city, the anti-Treaty IRA retreated south. The south Limerick market town of Kilmallock and its hinterland now became the location for a large-scale, lengthy military engagement. Kilmallock was the first big town between Limerick city and the Cork border. Along with the villages of Bruff and Bruree, it formed a rough triangle, with Bruff at the apex, about fifteen miles south of Limerick: Bruff is about six miles north-east of Kilmallock and Bruree is about four miles north-west. The proximity of Charleville, a major town in north Cork, only a few miles south of Bruree and Kilmallock, raised the stakes. Domination of the territory would be an immediate prize in itself, as much as any specific strategic or economic concern. The anti-Treaty IRA selected this Bruff-Bruree-Kilmallock triangle as the location for their next stubborn stand because it offered a strong buffer against a National Army advance from Limerick city on Cork and the Munster Republic. It would also allow them to intercept the flank of a National Army advance westwards from Limerick city to the Kerry border. Furthermore, the geography of Kilmallock lent itself to a dogged defence. The town rests in a hollow on the banks of the River Loobagh, and the main routes in and out are overlooked by a series of small hills. As long as the anti-Treaty forces held those heights, they would be very difficult to oust from Kilmallock.

However, anti-Treaty IRA combatants in south county Limerick also faced a number of disadvantages at this point. Because towns and villages were the most likely sources of food and shelter, most of the clashes in the opening phase of the war occurred near built-

Fig. 16, Children talking to National Army troops on their way to attack an anti-Treaty position, Bruff, 27 July 1922

up areas. As a consequence, the National Army could capitalise on its superiority in heavy equipment, and range its artillery against the fixed positions occupied by the enemy. The anti-Treaty IRA had no artillery of its own and no effective counter-measures to deploy. They were proficient in the hit-and-run ambush tactics of guerrilla warfare, based on stealth, and ill-suited to more traditional types of fighting. The same level of public backing that had allowed the IRA to surmount its shortcomings in technology and resources during the 1919/21 War of Independence against Crown forces was not present for those who took the anti-Treaty side in 1922/23. They often did not have access to sufficient food and money, or a ready source of credit. When they commandeered supplies or imposed levies on civilians, it caused antagonism. Their supporters were strained. The fact that the National Army was funded by the Provisional Government (thanks to credit from the Bank of Ireland) and could purchase supplies gave it a clear advantage over the anti-Treaty IRA, especially when it came to dealing with civilians. The National Army record was not without blemish, however. When Michael Collins inspected accounts in Limerick in August 1922, he discovered several hundred outstanding bills. In terms of manpower and experience, the anti-Treaty IRA around the country had the upper hand before the war. The National Army steadily compensated for its weaknesses in this regard through the enrolment of 30,000 paid soldiers and the regular availability of British guns.

Liam Deasy (Officer Commanding 1st Southern Division) and Seán Moylan (Officer Commanding North Cork Brigade) were in charge of the anti-Treaty IRA during the battle for county Limerick. In late July, they could call on 1,500 well-armed, high calibre volunteers within a few miles of the Limerick-Cork border, many of whom had proven their mettle during the War of Independence. Deasy and Moylan's counterparts in the National Army were their old comrades from the War of Independence, General Eoin O'Duffy, and his second-in-command, Major-General W. R. E. Murphy, a highly-decorated former British officer and veteran of the 1914/18 Great War. This combination of O'Duffy and Murphy represented a blend of IRA guerrilla and conventional military force command experience that was ideal for the demands of the Civil War. Steady reinforcements provided Murphy with a total of 2,000 troops by early August, although many were raw and turned out to be unreliable. O'Duffy was himself scathing in his assessment of the quality of both officers and rank-and-file at his disposal, judging many of the recent recruits to be lacking in discipline and character. Deasy and Moylan too had their problems. The loss of Limerick city had severely dented morale. Logistically, it was difficult to manage the mass of anti-



Sgéal Cata Luimnige

PRICE 1d (LIMERICK WAR NEWS)

VOL. I. TUESDAY, 25th JULY, 1922. NO. XI

The Limerick Victory

ITS MEANING.

STILL RETREATING.

Following posts were evacuated by irregulars in Co. Limerick to-day, Patrickswell, Croom, Manister, Rathmore Castle, Athlacco, Bruff, Hospital, Pallasgreen.

STATEMENT BY G. O. C.

Interviewed at F.G. Headquarters to-night Gen O'Duffy issued following statement: "We are here to help the people who are being trampled upon by men, some of whom at least believe they are patriots, but the majority of whom are out for loot and appropriation of the property of the people who have suffered so much at the hands of the British during past few terrible years. We are not here to shoot down the men we fought with a short time ago. We are here to protect so far as we can the lives and property of the people, and in carrying out that duty only as much force as is necessary shall be used.

A BLACK RECORD.

Men who in the sacred name of freedom cut railway lines, endangering the lives of the civilian population, who barricade roads, set mines in position under these barricades, who terrorise lonely women and children in the dead of the night, who blow up canal locks to starve out the poor who get in the necessaries of life by this mode who set thousands of pounds worth of private and state property in flames and murder our brave and fearless young Irish soldiers under protection of the Red Cross flag. Men who do these things however inspired are enemies of humanity and of the Irish Nation, and the Irish Nation demands that they be treated as they deserve.

THE PEOPLE'S WILL.

The Irish Volunteer organisation was established to protect the rights and liberties common to the Irish people. We fought since 1916 to establish the will of the Irish people. We are now fighting to maintain their expressed will. Greater freedom will be ours when the people will it. Liam Lynch, irregular Chief of Staff said to Comdt. Gen. Hannigon a fortnight ago in Limerick. "The people are simply a flock of sheep, to be driven any way you choose.'

INCENDIARY TACTICS.

The people of Ireland always refused to be driven no who carried the whip. They refuse to be driven now and the Army of the nation will sacrifice its last soldier to

8th AUGUST Sgéal Cata Luimnige. 2

Victorious Week-End

KILMALLOCK FALLS

The following official Bulletin was issued from the Publicity Department, Field G H. Q. at 6 p.m. to-day—

Kilmallock was entered at 8-30 a.m. to-day. The irregulars retreated on the advance of the Troops. When the Troops arrived in the Town they received a tumultuous reception by the inhabitants, who expressed their sincere delight to be rid of the irregulars, whom the described as "worse than the black and tans." The Town —including Railway Station and all Bridges— is practically intact—the mines having been removed by the Troops. Ashill Towers is also occupied.

During the fight for the Town the irregulars seized eight civilians and forced them to build barracades under the fire of the Troops. The civilians strongly protested and the irregulars threatened to blow their brains out if they did not do the work. Eight prisoners were taken with a quantity of rifles and ammunition. The casualties amongst the troops were slight. The Officer in charge of the Town has issued an order 1—To close all public houses. 2—To restore all looted property to Ashill Towers. 3—To open all shops.

Our Troops Welcomed

When the National forces landed in Ballylongford on Friday last, they were accorded a tremendous welcome by the inhabitants of the place. Bonfires blazed in the streets, and a deputation, headed by the local clergy, on behalf of the people, welcomed the soldiers who brought them liberation.

THE LIST GROWS.

The occupation of the following places by the National Troops is announced in Official Bulletins issued during the weekend—

KILMALLOCK
LISTOWEL
ADARE
RATHKEALE
BROADFORD
ASKEATON
BALLINGARRY
KILFINNY
KILMACOW

STOP PRESS.

Newcastle West Taken

The following official bulletin was issued by the Publicity Department, Field G.H.Q., South Western Command at 11-15 p.m. last night.

"Newcastle West was captured by the troops this evening. Several prisoners were taken, together with a large quantity of rifles and ammunition. There were heavy casualties on the irregular side, 9 or 10 being killed and a large number wounded.

There were no casualties amongst the troops."

Treaty troops around Bruff-Bruree-Kilmallock and their communications system did not function well at times. Perhaps more importantly, their sense of purpose was undermined by inter-county friction, with limited cooperation between rival anti-Treaty factions. On both sides, provisions were paltry: Deasy had to demobilise men who could not be fed, while O'Duffy grumbled that the government-backed National Army did not have enough to eat either. Furthermore, desertion was fairly frequent in both camps and men occasionally even swapped sides. Coordinated action on any large scale occasionally proved beyond the capabilities of the belligerents, particularly the anti-Treaty IRA. However, the final National Army approach to Kilmallock was smoothly synchronised.

In the only line fighting of the Civil War, the adversaries grappled in a kind of cross-country warfare featuring a well-defined front line, each side defending a collection of outposts at crossroads and along hilltops, separated by a 'No-Man's Land' of between 100 yards and a mile. This orthodox style of warfare, broadly comparable to the type common on the Western Front during the 1914/18 war, favoured the better-equipped National Army, and although Bruff and Bruree changed hands speedily and repeatedly, the National Army finally secured them in the last days of July. The landing of National Army troops from the sea near Tralee on 2 August opened up a second front to the rear of the Munster Republic. This tested loyalties to home place and the Kerry anti-Treaty contingent in county Limerick chose the 'Kingdom' over the Munster Republic. The Cork anti-Treaty IRA also slipped away in anticipation of the southern coastal attack that would materialise the week after. When the National Army rained artillery fire on Kilmallock and its surrounds, the last anti-Treaty forces evacuated. The National Army marched into the town unopposed on 5 August. There was a simultaneous thrust westwards and the towns of Adare, Rathkeale, and Newcastle West were all taken in the next few days. By the end of 1922, nearly all of anti-Treaty West Limerick was in National Army hands.

A vindictive affair

The battle for Kilmallock punctuated the war, signifying a transition from the pivotal set-piece encounters of late June, July, and early August, to the protracted guerrilla phase. An initial widespread reluctance to fight a civil war was replaced in many quarters by growing mutual antipathy as the conflict wore on. This manifested itself in ever-more vicious blows and counter-blows. As the Munster Republic shrank, and the anti-Treaty IRA reverted to exclusively guerrilla tactics, the war began to degenerate into a wholesale pattern of vindictive

Fig. 17, Red Cross medics attending to a wounded soldier near Kilmallock, 25 July 1922

reprisals and tit-for-tat killings, escalating in the winter of 1922 and peaking in the spring of 1923. The Irish Free State government, relying heavily on its capacity for violence to assert its authority, embarked on a concerted policy of executing prisoners. There were at least 77 such official executions under a variety of emergency powers legislation, and many more unofficial, extrajudicial killings as well. On the other side, anti-Treaty IRA engaged in a series of assassinations.

The majority of atrocities occurred in areas where the anti-Treaty guerrilla campaign was most determined. So while Tipperary, Cork, and Kerry saw sharply rising death tolls, there were few deaths in combat in county Limerick after early August 1922, and fewer cold-blooded killings, be they extrajudicial shootings or judicial executions. Civil War deaths in Limerick in 1923 were in single figures, and most of those were accidentally self-inflicted by National Army soldiers. Most of the anti-Treaty IRA killed in action in Limerick died in combat in July and August of 1922. There was no sustained guerrilla activity in Limerick for a number of reasons. Firstly, the Cork and Kerry anti-Treaty IRA, who had done much of the fighting in the county, returned to their own localities. Secondly, there was a large National Army garrison in Limerick city for the rest of the war under Donnchadh O'Hannigan, one of the most successful Flying Column commanders of the War of Independence, and strong forces around the county towns. Thirdly, anti-Treaty IRA units from Limerick tended to drift into other counties after their defeats in the city and south and west Limerick.

None of this is to suggest that the Civil War in Limerick was a genteel affair. Four anti-Treaty IRA prisoners of the National Army were killed in dubious circumstances. Two Clare republicans were formally executed by firing squad in Limerick Prison in January 1923, the only two official executions in Limerick. Donnchadh O'Hannigan's opposition to the policy of executions was a redeeming feature when there was so little glory to be found anywhere in the Civil War. One National Army soldier, unarmed and off-duty, was assassinated in October 1922 and another died after being beaten while a prisoner of the anti-Treaty side.

Tensions remained high after the war ended when the anti-Treaty IRA dumped arms in May 1923. The general election on 27 August was the most normal since 1910, but the mood in the county before the vote was subdued. When a fundraising event for a War of Independence memorial attracted 4,000 people to Ballylanders on 15 August, there was clear potential for significant unrest and candidates, out of an abundance of caution, agreed not to electioneer. Violence and the threat of violence were at last easing, and political stability was being

restored, but the new order was far from universally welcome. Victors and vanquished commonly looked at each other as enemies whose politics or past deeds meant that they deserved whatever treatment was meted out to them. Reconciliation was not always a priority for those who had lost loved ones in Limerick. Whereas the War of Independence had at least given some Limerick people cause for celebration, the Civil War was wholly divisive and degenerated into considerable vindictiveness, reflecting little credit on either side. Most Limerick people were war-weary, but the settling of old scores would continue in the years ahead.

Limerick Civil War Casualties in Context

Fig. 18

John Dorney

The IRA in County Limerick was split down the middle over the Anglo-Irish Treaty, with East Limerick under Donnchadh O'Hannigan pro-Treaty, West Limerick under Gearóid McAuliffe anti-Treaty, and the city area Mid Limerick Brigade under Liam Forde around 70 percent against. In the women's organisation Cumman na mBan, the Limerick branch's first president, Madge Daly, recalled that while many members left due to the Treaty split, 'the majority remained loyal to the Republic' or took the anti-Treaty side.[1] County Limerick played a pivotal part in the lead up to, and in the opening months of, the Civil War. Limerick city, the western 'hinge' of a line held by the anti-Treaty IRA across the southern province of Munster, became a flashpoint as early as March 1922 when an armed stand-off developed there over which faction, pro or anti-Treaty, would take over the garrisons abandoned by the departing RIC and British military. Anti-Treaty elements from Cork and Kerry arrived in the city and fighting was narrowly averted when it was agreed to divide the city's police and military barracks between pro and anti-Treaty forces. While open fighting was then narrowly avoided, there were at least six deaths in Limerick up to June 1922. Two of the killings were effectively holdovers from the conflict against the British – a loyalist named Peter Switzer, who was shot dead in January in an apparent revenge killing, and a 'Black and Tan' RIC constable named Lauchlan McEdward who was killed in an attack on the soon-to-be-disbanded police in February.

The conventional phase

However, these were soon overtaken by violence caused by the Treaty split. An anti-Treaty Volunteer was killed in an exchange of fire with National Army troops at Broadford on 9 April and three more anti-Treaty IRA members were killed in accidental shootings and explosions while garrisoning positions in Limerick city. Although the formal beginning of the Civil War is considered to have begun with shelling of the IRA Executive at the Four Courts on 28 June 1922, there was something of false start in Limerick as anti-Treaty leader Liam Lynch attempted to negotiate a local truce with pro-Treaty commander Donnchadh O'Hannigan, which held for nearly two weeks. However, once hostilities did break out in Limerick on 11 July, the city saw fierce fighting for nine days before Liam Lynch ordered the anti-Treaty IRA to abandon the barracks they were holding and evacuate the city after pro-Treaty reinforcements, including artillery and armoured vehicles, had arrived from Dublin. The anti-Treaty forces burned some of the barracks they had been holding and retreated south into the countryside. Though fighting had been extensive, loss of life and damage to property

Fig. 19, Anti-Treaty IRA outside the Glentworth Hotel, Limerick city, March 1922

Fig. 20, Anti-Treaty IRA at Limerick railway depot, July 1922

was generally limited to the sites around the barracks where most combat had occurred.

The anti-Treaty IRA's performance in urban combat in Limerick was similar to that in Dublin and Waterford cities in July 1922; the occupation of static positions, where they were isolated by pro-Treaty troops and forced into either surrender or a rapid retreat when heavy weapons such as artillery were brought into action against them. Many on their own side were very critical of their performance, with one Kerry Volunteer asking 'what's the use of carrying on a fight when we ran away in Limerick?'[2] Nevertheless, the battle in Limerick city, which involved up to 700 anti-Treaty fighters and, ultimately, nearly 2,000 pro-Treaty troops, produced at least 26 dead: 9 National Army soldiers, 5 anti-Treaty IRA Volunteers, and at least 12 civilians caught in the crossfire.

It appears that Lynch, after his retreat from Limerick

Fig. 21, National Army troops arriving to inspect the ruins of New Barracks, c. 22 July 1922

city, hoped to hold a line in the south of the county to prevent Provisional Government forces from advancing south into the anti-Treatyite 'Munster Republic'. There followed another two weeks of sustained fighting in the south and west of the county, most notably around the towns of Bruff, Bruree, and Kilmallock, which sat astride the main road towards Cork, as the National Army, commanded by W. R. E. Murphy and Eoin O'Duffy, attempted to push south. However, they were blocked by anti-Treaty IRA units from counties Cork and Kerry, as well as Limerick itself, commanded by Liam Deasy. There was also hard fighting to the southwest, as local Limerick anti-Treaty IRA units attempted to impede the passage of National Army troops along the road leading out of Limerick city towards Kerry, around the towns of Patrickswell, Adare, Rathkeale, and Newcastle West. Most unusually for the Irish Civil War, a conflict characterised by small scale guerrilla actions, the fighting

in county Limerick in July 1922 involved large numbers of combatants and saw widespread use of artillery by the National Army, and of armoured vehicles by both sides. At some points trench lines and fortified houses formed a kind of front line, a feature not seen elsewhere in the conflict. The fighting in south and west Limerick was not one-sided, costing at least 29 deaths, all but one of whom were combatants, and many more wounded in late July and early August 1922.

The anti-Treatyites on several occasions launched successful counter-attacks and took several hundred National Army troops prisoner. Eoin O'Duffy was very critical of his troops, writing; 'We had to get work out of a disgruntled, undisciplined and cowardly crowd. Arms were handed over wholesale to the enemy, sentries were drunk at their posts and … a whole garrison had to be put in the clink for insubordination'.[3] However, superior weight of numbers and equipment on the part of the National Army was eventually decisive and, under O'Duffy's leadership, it finally took Kilmallock on 5 August. Two days later, following some sharp fighting, Newcastle West was also taken, marking the end of the war's conventional phase in county Limerick. There might have been further anti-Treaty resistance in Limerick to the National Army's advance south, but seaborne landings by National Army troops on the south coast at Fenit, county Kerry on 2 August, and near Cork city on 8 August, caused the anti-Treaty units from those counties to make a hurried retreat from Limerick to their home counties.

The guerrilla phase

While the neighbouring counties of Tipperary, Cork, and Kerry saw the death toll spiral in the following months as the anti-Treaty IRA embarked on a determined guerrilla campaign, this did not occur in county Limerick. There were very few deaths there in combat after mid-August 1922, and only a small number from assassinations, executions, and accidents. About 60 percent of the roughly 100 Civil War deaths in county Limerick, and the vast majority of deaths in combat, occurred in a three-and-a-half week period from 11 July, when fighting broke out in Limerick city, to 7 August and the fall of Newcastle West. Only five people died violently in the county in September 1922, followed by nine in October, one in November, and five in December. A mere nine people were killed in county Limerick due to Civil War-related violence in all of 1923, and five of these were firearms accidents among National Army soldiers.

Limerick was unusual in Civil War terms in that many of the combatants killed on both sides were not native to the county. Typically, in Cork, Kerry, and Tipperary for instance, almost all the anti-Treaty soldiers killed were

active in their own counties, whereas National Army troops were typically from elsewhere, especially from Dublin. This was down to the anti-Treaty forces usually being local IRA units whereas the National Army, a force centrally recruited by the Provisional Government, was sent wherever it was needed. In Limerick a plurality of the dead on both sides were from the county: 15 pro-Treaty and 15 anti-Treaty fighters. However about 60 percent of the pro-Treaty dead were from elsewhere, five each from Cork, Kerry, and Clare, three each from Dublin and Galway, and the remainder from other counties and one from England. The anti-Treaty dead included four men from Cork, two from Kerry, and two from Clare.

There were a number of reasons for the rapid decline in violence after August 1922. One was the withdrawal of the anti-Treaty IRA units from elsewhere (who had done much of the fighting in the county) back to their own home areas in mid-August. A second was the large National Army garrison in Limerick city for the remainder of the war, centred around former Limerick IRA commander Donnchadh O'Hannigan. And a third factor was that, following their defeat in July and August 1922, anti-Treaty IRA columns from Limerick tended to drift away from the county into other localities – usually remote and hilly areas where their columns could seek refuge. For instance, Liam Forde and men of the Mid Limerick Brigade retreated into counties Cork and Tipperary after the fall of Newcastle West, where they 'wandered around' and finally linked up with an anti-Treaty IRA column in South Tipperary at Fethard.[4] National Army Intelligence reported that 'the most important East Limerick Irregulars have joined the South Tipperary and North Cork Columns.'[5]

Apart from some sporadic attacks on National Army troops in Limerick city, the only really active unit of anti-Treaty IRA in Limerick was a column, first under Dick Coleman and, following his arrest, Seán O'Carroll, which was based in the Silvermines Mountains, around the Castleconnell area. This 'Mid Limerick Flying Column' was composed of 56 men, of whom 30 lived on the run in hillside dugouts and safe houses. They concentrated on destroying road and rail bridges to block communications and on attempting to levy a tax on the local people to support the anti-Treaty cause. Only rarely did they make a direct attack on National Army troops. National Army Intelligence reported on 9 February 1923 that there were about 10 guerrillas or 'Irregulars' in the Kilmallock district, 'but not so active'. And on 23 February they reported that in Limerick 'Seán Carroll's Irregular column has been demobilised'. [6] Liam Forde recalled that he gave up fighting on 10 February 1923 following a pastoral released by the Catholic Bishops condemning the anti-Treaty IRA and its activities, but

Fig. 22, National Army troops taking up positions in Cruise's Royal Hotel, Limerick city, July 1922

remained on the run in county Clare until 1924. 'The whole thing fizzled through immediately. We were broken up and that. Most of the men were captured. There was no further activity'.[7]

Cumman na mBan played a major part in the anti-Treaty guerrilla campaign across the country. In Limerick, National Army Intelligence reported that they did the dispatch, propaganda, and communications work for the 'Irregulars'. In her statement to the Bureau of Military History, Madge Daly recorded that they also organised the funerals and burials of anti-Treatyites killed in the fighting. Several of these women were arrested and later transported to Dublin where they participated in a hunger strike in Kilmainham Gaol. Margaret Ada Hartney, a Cumann na mBan member and wife of IRA officer Michael Hartney, was killed by an artillery shell in Newcastle West in August 1922, the only female combatant fatality in the county. However, four female civilians were killed in Limerick during the conflict, three caught in the crossfire of the fighting in Limerick city and another, 17-year-old Kathleen Hehir, was shot dead in Limerick city by unknown assailants on Christmas Eve 1922.

There were some killings of prisoners in Limerick and two men, Cornelius McMahon and Patrick Hennessy, both from Clare, were executed by firing squad in Limerick Prison on 20 January 1923. However these events, tragic though they were, paled in comparison with the cycle of revenge killings that developed in other counties, especially in neighbouring Kerry, where 26 anti-Treaty prisoners were summarily executed by vengeful National Army troops in March 1923 alone, in reprisal for a mine attack that killed four of their soldiers. The final death in county Limerick due to combat occurred on 14 April 1923 when a National Army soldier, Timothy McCarthy of Newcastle West, was killed in what the military reported as a 'fight at Collin's house Meencheala, between Brosna and Newcastle West, [in which] one private Tim McCarthy was shot dead and an irregular, Jeremiah Foley, was shot and badly wounded'.[8] Thus, despite quite fierce fighting at the outset, the Civil War in county Limerick had, in terms of lethal violence, fizzled out well before Frank Aiken formally called it to a halt with the IRA Dump Arms order in May 1923.

However, many anti-Treatyites remained imprisoned long after this point. Limerick city's prison was so overcrowded that 550 anti-Treaty prisoners had to be transferred by sea to Dublin to alleviate conditions there in 1922. Nevertheless, the institution still held over 600 prisoners in February 1923, indicating that well over 1,000 anti-Treatyites were imprisoned in county Limerick. Although some 'signed the form' pledging not bear arms against the Government and were released,

most were not freed until late 1923.

In all slightly under 100 people died in the Civil War in Limerick compared to 121 in the county during the preceding War of Independence. Nevertheless, the internecine violence of 1922/23 left a lasting bitterness that took many years to heal.

Notes

1. Military Archives (MA), Bureau of Military History witness statements: 855 Madge Daly, 6 June 1953, p. 11.

2. Michael Hopkinson, *Green Against green: The Irish Civil War* (Dublin, 1988), p.165

3. Ibid., p.152

4. MA, Military Service Pension Collection (MSPC), MSP34REF43635 Liam Forde: Summary [of activities], 7 June 1939.

5. MA, IE/MA-MIPR-02-42: Military Statistics summary, Nov. 1922-Apr. 1923: 9 February 1923.

6. Ibid.

7. MA, MPSC, Liam Forde: 'Sworn statement made before Advisory Committee by Liam Forde on 7th June 1939'.

8. MA, IE/MA-CREC-03, Chief of Staff reports to the Executive Council of Dáil Éireann, Confidential military reports, April 1923: 14 April 1923.

Women and the Civil War in Limerick

Trauma, Injury, and Loss

Fig. 23

Linda Connolly

Numerous archival sources that permit a deeper understanding of women's role in the Irish Revolution, including Military Service Pensions applications and Bureau of Military History witness statements held in the Irish Military Archives, and regional and national newspapers, are now widely accessible. Many of these sources document different aspects of the lived experience of women in Limerick city and county during the Irish Civil War. Well known attacks on civilian and republican women during the War of Independence by the IRA and Crown forces had already generated fear and knowledge of gender-based violence when the Civil War started. James Maloney from Bruff, county Limerick, for instance, stated in his witness statement: 'IRA men's sisters and other girls had to go "on the run" fearing rape. The IRA gritted its teeth and showed little mercy to the tans after such outrages'.[1] The fear Protestant or loyalist women from different class backgrounds also must have felt (either as members of the landed gentry or as servants in Protestant households, for instance) also arises. Two prominent cases of rape and attempted sexual assault in Protestant households in north Tipperary during the Civil War were widely reported. Women from all backgrounds were not immune to or protected from fearing, witnessing, or directly experiencing violence in this period. Nerves and bodies were already frayed as a civil war commenced.

Since 2016, I have researched and published many examples of the widespread implementation of hair taking in the War of Independence to target, humiliate, control, injure, and police women primarily.[2] This method of terrorising and intimidating women was extensively deployed by both the IRA and the Crown forces. The only surviving newsreel of hair cutting in Ireland in this period is in fact from Limerick in 1920, a 16-second silent clip with English intertitles produced by British Pathé. The full title filmed, reads: 'Side Lights on Sinn Fein. May Connelly was kicked and has her hair shorn for crime of speaking to Black and Tans'. The camera shows the face and upper body of a young woman in an old, brown trench coat buttoned up to the neck. She is standing at a doorway and turns her head to show her hair - it has been cut very short and unevenly. She smiles at the camera, a man with a heavy moustache lurks about the doorway in the shadows behind her, and his face is momentarily seen. The IRA extensively cut or sheared hair, especially if a woman was considered too close to, or intimate with, members of the British forces and the RIC.

Crown forces also conducted hair cutting, typically during frightening night raids on houses in this period. One instance, reported on 6 November 1920 by the *Weekly Freeman's Journal,* concerned Miss Agnes Daly, Ennis Road, Limerick, whose hair was cut by masked

Fig. 24, May Connelly punished': Still from Pathé news report, Limerick 1920

Fig. 25, Transporting milk through a barricade in Limerick city, July 1922

and armed men the Saturday night before. She stated that one of them knocked her down when she was in her night attire, and cut off a plait of her hair. The men then deliberately caught hold of her left hand and gashed it clean cut between the third and fourth finger, severing the artery. She was attended by Dr Kennedy, who put stitches in the wound. Agnes was said to be 'suffering from shock and loss of blood'. She was the sister of Edward Daly, executed after the Easter Rising, and also a sister of Kathleen Clarke, who had been married to Thomas Clarke. The memory of such attacks on women was still recent and raw when the internecine Civil War commenced in 1922.

The impact of the Civil War on women: Mental health, trauma, loss of income

Newspaper reports provide a record of the women killed in the Civil War in Limerick, as well as the social and economic consequences of their deaths. Some were killed as a result of crossfire or 'keeping company' with Crown forces and police.[3] For example, the *Belfast Newsletter* reported on 28 December 1920 that a girl was killed in Limerick while she tried to save a policeman's life: 'Dublin Castle reports that on Saturday night four men accosted Constable Richardson in the street in Limerick and took his revolver by force'. One of the men fired at him, but Isabella Elizabeth Scales, a Protestant from Foynes aged 22, with whom the constable was walking, rushed between him and the man with the revolver, and received a bullet through the breast. She died instantly. The *Irish Independent* reported on 20 July 1922 on 'Two Women Killed' during the Civil War battle for Limerick city. A 'Limerick lady' who arrived in Nenagh with her children for safety told the newspaper's local representative that sniping was general, and that a woman was killed by a stray bullet while washing in her back yard on Tuesday, 18 July. The 'irregulars', she said, were breaking passages through the walls from one house to another. A young woman named Bridget O'Brien, aged 18, was also shot dead while looking through her window that night. The Civil War created other hardships in what the *Freeman's Journal* termed 'the stricken city', reporting on 20 July that 'food is scarcely procurable and the poor are in a bad way'. Other shootings occurred during the guerrilla phase of the war. The *Irish Examiner* reported on Saturday, 4 November 1922, on a 'Limerick Girl Shot': A girl named O'Halloran was detained in St John's Hospital in the city the previous Thursday night, suffering from a bullet wound in the right leg. The first Cumann na mBan member killed in the Civil War was from Limerick. Mary Hartney had been working as part of a first aid unit when killed instantly by shelling at the Dunraven Arms Hotel in Adare on 4 August 1922, where

Fig. 26, Women and children removing items from the burnt out remains of Ordnance Barracks, c. 21 July 1922

the anti-Treaty republicans had set up their military headquarters. Other incidents impacting women from Limerick were reported, including some which occurred in other counties. In Dublin, Angela Bridgeman of Foynes, a waitress in the Mont Clare Hotel, Dublin was shot dead on Harcourt Street by National Army fire on Thursday 5 December 1922 at about 7.30 pm. The *Irish Times* reported on 8 December that the coroner, Dr Louis A. Byrne, and a jury at the Dublin morgue, exonerated the military (represented by Chief State Solicitor J. A. Costello) from all blame and highlighted the dangers of the streets.

The fatal shooting of Kathleen Hehir, age 17, and wounding of Margaret Purtill, age 16, occurred in Limerick on Christmas Eve night, 1922. The two girls were standing on Edward Street, near to the railway station, when a shot was fired. Hehir, from 7 Dixon's Lane, was killed instantly. On 27 December 1922, the *Irish Examiner* reported on evidence presented at an inquiry conducted in private by the National Army in New Barracks. It concluded that Kathleen Hehir was shot in the base of the skull where it embedded and

Fig. 27, Children amongst looters at Ordnance Barracks, c. 21 July 1922 (Courtesy of Limerick Museum)

caused instantaneous death. The same bullet had grazed Margaret Purtill's face. It was not known where the bullet came from or by whom it was fired. On 3 January 1923, the *Irish Times* reported that Coroner McNiece and a jury had resumed the inquest on this case in the Town Hall, Limerick the previous evening. Lieutenant-Commandant Conner represented the National Army and Charles Ebrill, solicitor, appeared for the next-of-kin. Lieutenant William Squires of the National Army testified that on the night in question he was accompanied by three men in mufti. He went to Davis Street where he saw two men, identified as National Army Volunteers O'Dwyer and Benson, 'holding up' people without authority. He said they were 'a disgrace to the Army'. Squires subsequently went in the direction of Edward Street, when he heard a shot and was told it had been 'fired in the air'. Civic Guard Lloyd who was on duty deposed that the shot came from the direction of Davis Street corner. He knew Volunteers O'Dwyer and Benson but they were not at the corner when searches were made. Dr McDonnell stated that death was due to laceration of the brain. The jury found that Kathleen

Hehir died from a bullet wound, inflicted by a person or persons unknown and they expressed sympathy with the members of the family.

The *Evening Echo* reported another incident on 14 October 1922: 'Girls Wounded: In County Limerick'. Two young women, domestic servants Annie O'Connor and Norah Riordan, returning from Abbeyfeale to a farmhouse in Ballaugh where they were employed, were fired at from behind a fence a mile outside the town and one of them was seriously wounded. Both had to undergo medical treatment for gunshot wounds. Earlier in the evening the women, one of whom had a brother in the National Army, were walking with two soldiers stationed at Abbeyfeale. The *Irish Times* reported on 12 October 1922 that considerable sniping in the town of Abbeyfeale was occurring in recent nights and many residents had left the town.

Children were also caught up in the conflict surrounding them. The *Irish Times* reported on 16 August 1922 that a girl named Lena Roche of 15 Mary Street, aged 12, was accidentally shot dead at the rear of Mary Street barracks in Limerick the previous morning. A number of children were injured in a bomb explosion in September 1922. On 27 September, the *Evening Echo* reported 'Limerick Bomb Havoc. Many Persons Injured'. A number of people were wounded, some seriously, as a result of a Mills grenade explosion on Parnell Street. The circumstances were not fully explained in the report. 'Inquiries on the spot' ascertained that military police were requesting a soldier near the goods entrance to the railway station to produce his pass when, it was alleged, he suddenly produced a bomb and extracted the pin. Faced with the prospect of the bomb going off in seconds, a soldier 'with commendable presence of mind' snatched the device out of his comrade's hand. Other soldiers called on the crowds in the vicinity to clear away, and many rushed to shelter. Children were not, however, so quick to take the warning or discern the danger. The soldier who had seized the missile rolled it along the street in the direction where the least number of people were and it exploded with great violence. Nearly all the victims, unfortunately, were children. The following were treated at Barrington's Hospital: Bridie Hannon (13), Parnell Street, both legs; Patrick Quirke (5), Keating's Lane, leg and head (serious); Mary Connolly (10), Keating's Lane, leg; John O'Leary (35), Keating's Lane, both legs; Mrs. Lillis, 5 Duggan's Row, right thigh; Bridie Whelan, Parnell Street; Daniel Griffin, 4 Newenham Street, left hip; Ellen Hynes, 4 Upper Mallow Street, both legs, neck (serious); James Smith, 4 Kite's Lane, arm.

The *Irish Examiner* reported another tragedy on 11 October 1922: 'Sniping on Shannon. Girl's Dreadful Wound'. National Army troops operating from Tarbert visited Glin on the night of Friday 6 October, where a band of anti-Treaty IRA had been located for some time, and whose principal occupation appears to have been confined to sniping at vessels passing up and down the Shannon. When the troops reached Glin, the anti-Treaty IRA, evidently well informed, had fled. For an hour, the National Army soldiers conducted searches in the village but did not succeed in making any arrest. On their departure, it was reported that the anti-Treaty forces emerged from their 'fastnesses' in the hills surrounding Glin and began firing in its direction. A girl named Catherine Hogan (13), while standing at her own doorway, was shot in the upper portion of her head, the bullet passing out the back. She was seen by Dr McDonnell who pronounced her case 'hopeless', and although still alive but unconscious that morning, she died later that day. Seven children were also injured in Limerick city, four seriously, on the night of 15 September by a bomb thrown at a National Army lorry on Edward Street. The vehicle, which contained only the driver, who escaped, was proceeding to New Barracks when the missile was flung. Shortly after admission to Barrington's Hospital one, Christopher Noonan, died. The others, including Crissie Galvin and Julia Eily O'Donnell, were injured. Noonan's father and the brothers of the two injured girls were anti-Treaty IRA prisoners. The attackers escaped. Other 'outrages' where women and children were present were reported. The *Evening Herald* reported on 29 March 1922 on an attempt to burn Kilpeacon Rectory, five miles from Limerick city. A party of armed and disguised men visited the house and ordered the precentor, Reverend Charles Vereker Atkinson, his wife, and daughter to the gate lodge. The raiders stole silver and set the house on fire, but the Atkinson managed to contain it.

Women witnessed and experienced both National Army and anti-Treaty IRA violence in the Civil War in Limerick city and county. The human cost of this became further evident in the decades after the conflict ended. The Military Services Pension applications made by activist women reveal something of the trauma and emotional cost of the Irish Civil War, including as a consequence of the loss of loved ones and in relation to mental health. Teresa Hogan's application under the Army Pensions Acts, for instance, was in respect of the death of her son, James Hogan, who was accidentally shot and killed at the Telephone Exchange, Cecil Street, Limerick city on 25 or 26 April 1923 by Corporal Condon. A letter from Hogan's sister, Maggie Hanley, states that Condon was tried and sentenced to twelve months in connection with the shooting. Teresa Hogan, however, became a ward of court and was a patient in the Limerick Asylum.[4]

Fig. 28, Children playing alongside National Army troops in Limerick county, July 1922

The file of Ellen Walsh includes material relating to the application made under the Army Pensions Acts by her mother, Hannah Walsh, Clashnagough, Knocknagoshel, Abbeyfeale, on behalf of her deceased daughter Ellen, including medical reports.[5] Hannah Walsh died some time in 1940 before the application could be fully processed. It is stated that Ellen Walsh was a member of Cumann na mBan from 1921 until 1923. She was involved in drilling, cooking, first aid, and carrying dispatches. Her commanding officer is listed as Nora Hickey. It is claimed by Dr Prenderville that Ellen Walsh had applied for entrance to the Munster Dairy Institute for training in 1920 and was given a clean bill of health by him for this purpose. Hannah also states that Ellen was in perfect health while employed as a dairy maid from April 1922 until her arrest by the National Army in April 1923. She claimed her daughter Ellen was held in Tralee Gaol and the North Dublin Union where she was ill-treated. Ellen was reportedly taken by the legs and pulled down a flight of stone stairs, hitting her head on the steps, and she also went on hunger strike in prison. Tom McEllistrim TD stated that he believed Ellen 'suffered untold hardships at the hands of the Free State Troops as it was thought by them that she had knowledge of a mine which exploded and killed some of their men near [her] house' [Knocknagoshel, 6 March 1923]. Five National Army soldiers died after being led to the site of a landmine on a hillside, near Talbot's Bridge, in the townland of Ballyduff. The atrocity is considered to have led, a day later, to the Ballyseedy massacre – one of the bloodiest events and chapters of the Irish Civil War. Ellen Walsh's health subsequently deteriorated and she was apparently unable to get a medical certificate following her release, for her visa to the United States. She died in July 1927.

Women were also implicated in some of the worst atrocities of the Civil War as activists and protagonists. A divisive civil war stained the formation of the new Irish state and caused human suffering to all those directly impacted by its violence, men, women, and children. In the process of commemorating such a bitter and fractious conflict a century ago, we must also remember and acknowledge the women who died and were wounded including those who lived on with loss, hardship, bad health, or trauma, in the years that followed.

Notes

1. Military Archives (MA), Bureau of Military History witness statements: 1525 James Maloney, 5 November 1956, p. 21.

2. For example, Linda Connolly, 'Towards a further understanding of the sexual and gender-based violence women experienced in the Irish Revolution' in Linda Connolly (ed.), *Women and the Irish Revolution: Feminism, activism, violence* (Newbridge, 2020), pp 103-28.

3. For an analysis of 13 female fatalities in county Cork, for instance, see Andy Bielenberg, 'Female fatalities in county Cork during the Irish War of Independence and the case of Mrs Lindsay', in Connolly, *Women and the Irish Revolution,* pp 148-163.

4. MA, Military Service Pensions Collection (MSPC), REF 3D28 James Hogan. MA, MSPC, REF 3D28 Teresa Hogan.

5. MA, MSPC, REF DP9584 Ellen Walsh.

The Supernatural and the Civil War in County Limerick

Fig. 29

Benjamin Ragan

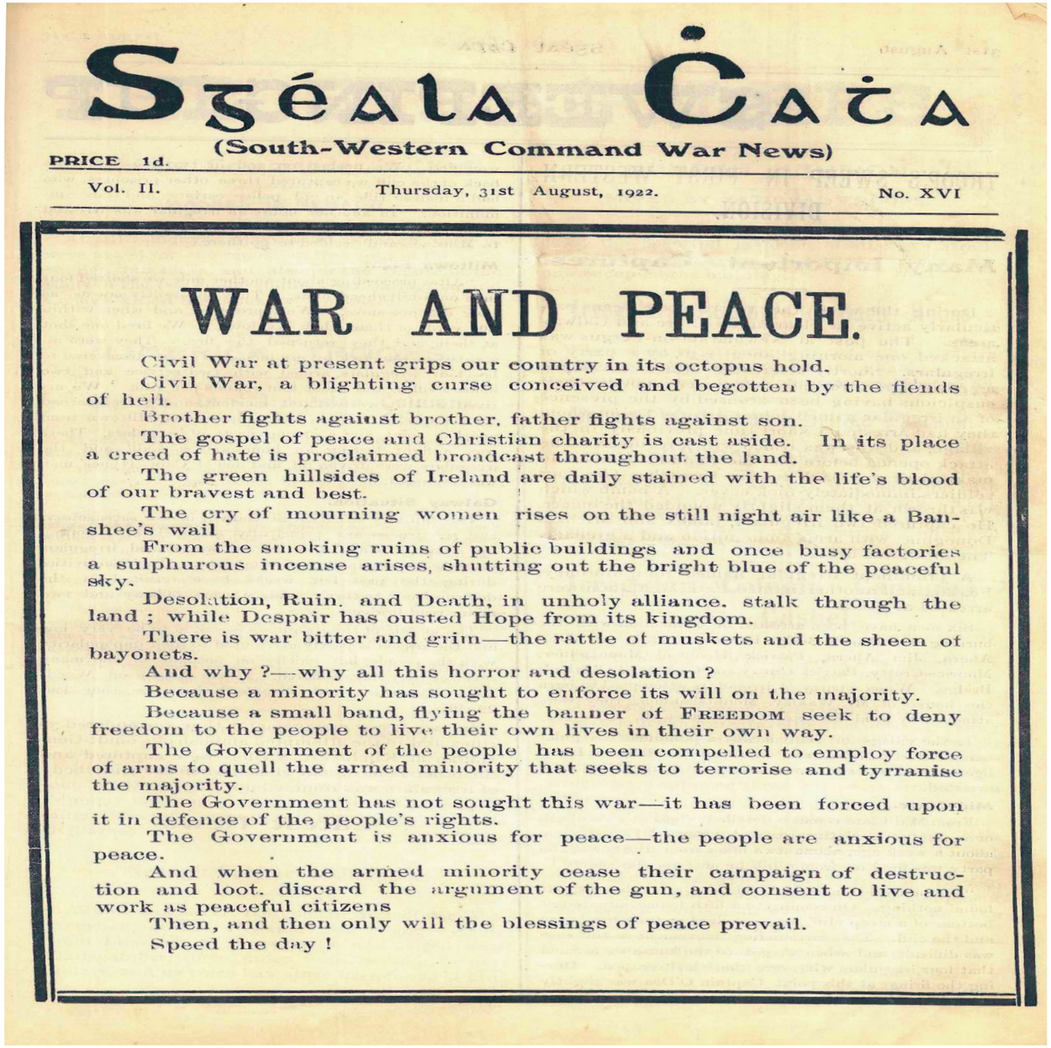
Shortly after the Truce ending the Irish War of Independence was declared, Brigade Commandant Paddy O'Brien gave a prophecy to his men on a hillside near Templeglantine. According to Limerick native Mossie Harnett, O'Brien forecast that 'their services might once more be called upon to defend the rights of the republic'.[1] Twenty-five miles to the west, the buried bells of Ardpatrick were heard chiming through the sodden Irish soil; according to informants to the Irish Folklore Commission, the sound of these bells, buried long ago by Franciscan monks, signified a grim omen of coming events, events with great and terrible significance. Eleven months later, the outbreak of the Irish Civil War would vindicate these foreboding portents.

While historical discussion of the Irish Revolution has traditionally centred around its political and military dimensions, historians have in recent years been uncovering a variety of supernatural stories which had previously been overlooked. Memoirs and witness statements of Irish revolutionaries contain hundreds of accounts describing paranormal activity such as ghosts, haunted houses, prophecies, precognition, and psychic powers. Such supernatural beliefs, practices, and experiences were commonplace among those who lived through the Irish Civil War and Limerick was no exception. Portentous accounts of the above kind evidence the increasing disquiet felt by revolutionaries following the July 1921 Truce.

'The irregulars drove patriotism and honesty and morality out of Ireland'

In his witness statement to the Bureau of Military History, Seán Prendergast wrote of how a 'serpent of disunity' was wrapping its coils around the nation.[2] Journalists and memoirists alike took note of the sinister forces beginning to grip the spirits of the once triumphant revolutionaries. Drunk with both victory and Guinness, Irish volunteers celebrated while propagandists of all persuasions cast maledictions; there was a turn in attitudes concerning the spiritual character of the revolutionaries during the transition from War of Independence to Civil War, a turn from regarding the republican movement as a holy crusade to regarding it as a diabolical debauch. As the revolutionary and writer (and then minister for posts and telegraphs), P. S. O'Hegarty, put it in 1924:

> We derided Moral Law, and said there was no law but the law of force. And the Moral Law answered us. Every devilish thing we did against the British ... boomeranged and smote us tenfold ... the irregulars drove patriotism and honesty and morality out of Ireland ... we have degenerated morally and



Sgéala Cata

(South-Western Command War News)

PRICE 1d. Vol. II. Thursday, 31st August, 1922. No. XVI

WAR AND PEACE.

Civil War at present grips our country in its octopus hold.

Civil War, a blighting curse conceived and begotten by the fiends of hell.

Brother fights against brother, father fights against son.

The gospel of peace and Christian charity is cast aside. In its place a creed of hate is proclaimed broadcast throughout the land.

The green hillsides of Ireland are daily stained with the life's blood of our bravest and best.

The cry of mourning women rises on the still night air like a Banshee's wail

From the smoking ruins of public buildings and once busy factories a sulphurous incense arises, shutting out the bright blue of the peaceful sky.

Desolation, Ruin, and Death, in unholy alliance, stalk through the land; while Despair has ousted Hope from its kingdom.

There is war bitter and grim—the rattle of muskets and the sheen of bayonets.

And why?—why all this horror and desolation?

Because a minority has sought to enforce its will on the majority.

Because a small band, flying the banner of FREEDOM seek to deny freedom to the people to live their own lives in their own way.

The Government of the people has been compelled to employ force of arms to quell the armed minority that seeks to terrorise and tyrranise the majority.

The Government has not sought this war—it has been forced upon it in defence of the people's rights.

The Government is anxious for peace—the people are anxious for peace.

And when the armed minority cease their campaign of destruction and loot, discard the argument of the gun, and consent to live and work as peaceful citizens

Then, and then only will the blessings of peace prevail.

Speed the day!

Fig. 30, Burnt out accommodation blocks at New Barracks, c. 22 July 1922

> spiritually … waves of loot and materialism were the result … a grave increase in sexual immorality … Jazz dancing … has swept Ireland like a prairie fire.[3]

Propaganda and newsprint in Limerick reflected this trend towards seeing young Irish revolutionaries as spiritually degraded. This can be seen in 'Wireless Signals', a column written for the *Limerick Leader* by J. J. Hobbins, a middle-aged Morse code instructor who contributed both psychical and scriptural opinion pieces which blended musings on telegraphy and telepathy. While other contributors to the newspaper looked toward the prophecies of St. Malachy to ease their anxiety about the burgeoning spectre of civil war, Hobbins came to his catharsis through castigating the godlessness of the revolutionaries he saw around him. From Hobbins' point of view, the forces of Labour were running amok, heedless of God's law, much to the

Fig. 31, Burnt out accommodation blocks at New Barracks, c. 22 July 1922

spiritual degradation of the Irish people. Dr William Turner, the Irish-born bishop of the diocese of Buffalo, New York, would speak in Limerick excoriating the anti-Treaty republicans specifically. Referring to the looting of a workhouse and convent in Kilmallock in early August 1922, following the Civil War battle for the town, he said 'neither the sacred character of the Nuns nor their work was considered … nor were the Nuns protected by the so-called Irish Republicans'.[4] Echoing some of the sentiment expressed by writers like Hobbins, Turner subsequently attributed the desecration to 'the forces of Bolshevism'.[5]

Recent research by historians such as Roger Waters has shown that invoking the spirits of the dead and the unborn to curse one's enemies or rivals was a magical practice which persisted in Ireland well into the twentieth century and, certainly, it featured in Limerick's experience of civil war.[6] Though what the residents of

Fig. 32, The ruins of Ardpatrick

Mary Immaculate College light-heartedly termed the 'Third Siege of Limerick' ended in victory for Provisional Government forces on 20 July, the assassination of Michael Collins a few weeks later presented them a troubling setback.[7] Following his death, a great funerary procession wound its way through Limerick city. Following a requiem mass in St. John's Cathedral, the parade made its way to the People's Park, where National Army general Eoin O'Duffy gave a speech to the crowd. This speech was quoted in the *Limerick War News*, a local pro-Treaty propaganda sheet published in the summer and autumn of 1922. In his speech to the crowd of mourners, O'Duffy laid a curse upon the man who killed Michael Collins; in words later reprinted in bold letters by the *Limerick War News*, O'Duffy declared; 'The dead that died for Ireland will hold him responsible; the living will hold him responsible, and the generations yet unborn will hold him responsible'.[8]

Strange apparitions and restless spirits

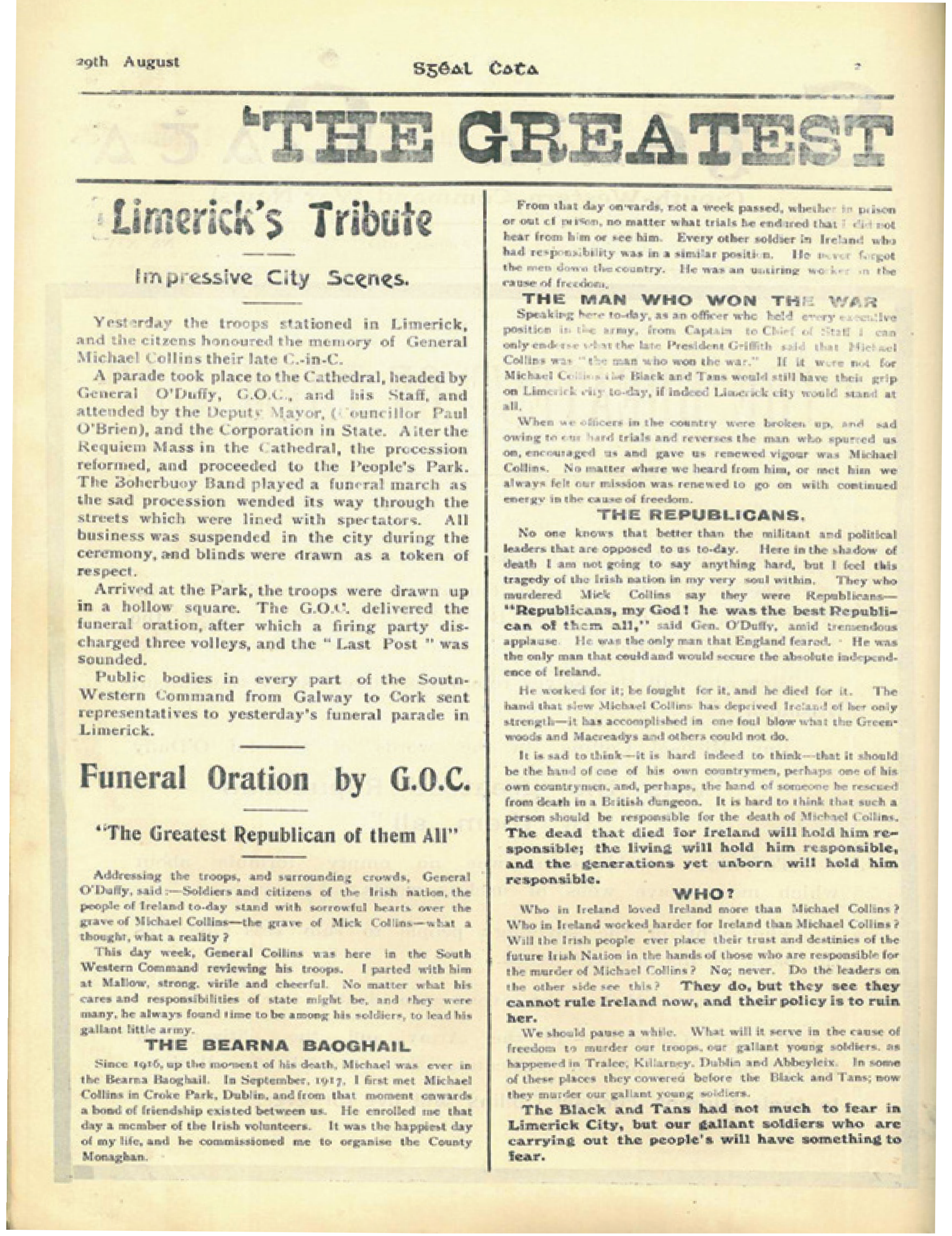
During the siege of Limerick in July 1922, students and nuns in Mary Immaculate College barricaded themselves inside. On 12 July, just as the Benedictus was being recited during Holy Office, an errant bullet flew into one of the corridors and struck Sister Margaret Mary Mitchell. She fell to her knees, 'blood flowing freely', and commended her soul to the lord.[9] Her fellow sisters rushed to find a priest and doctor; fortunately, Sister Mitchell would survive her injuries. Numerous other bullets would find their way through the walls of the school during the siege. In response, students and staff created 'dug-outs' for themselves, though this did little to help them sleep. During the last week of the siege, Sister Frances McGrath wrote in her diary, reporting 'strange apparitions at bedtime, restless spirits wandering about with pillow round head by way of protection from stray bullets!!'[10]

Others in Limerick reported what they believed to be actual apparitions connected to the Civil War. In the south-eastern corner of county Limerick, the town of Anglesborough sits near to the borders of both Cork and Tipperary. In 1937, a local informant to the Irish Folklore Commission, William Howard, described how, when he and his comrades were on the run from the National Army, they took shelter in a house somewhere between Anglesborough and Mitchelstown. Their rest was eerily interrupted:

> There were two others with me in the bed. During the night I heard a lot of commotion out in the yard. After a time a tall woman entered the room and laid a baby down on the bed. She went out again and the baby began to cry. In the morning when I woke again the baby had vanished and the curious thing was that the door had been locked from the inside and the key was still to be seen in the lock inside in the morning.[11]

On the following page is a story related by another local informant, Hannah Cleary, describing a strange apparition seen by IRA chief-of-staff Liam Lynch and his men, which she claimed to have heard directly from Lynch's mother:

> One night during the Civil-War Liam and a company of the boys were travelling ... They reached a cross-roads when suddenly a priest appeared as if out of nowhere. "Turn back", said he, "turn back". They



29th August Sgéal Cata

'THE GREATEST

Limerick's Tribute

Impressive City Scenes.

Yesterday the troops stationed in Limerick, and the citzens honoured the memory of General Michael Collins their late C.-in-C.

A parade took place to the Cathedral, headed by General O'Duffy, G.O.C., and his Staff, and attended by the Deputy Mayor, (Councillor Paul O'Brien), and the Corporation in State. After the Requiem Mass in the Cathedral, the procession reformed, and proceeded to the People's Park. The Boherbuoy Band played a funeral march as the sad procession wended its way through the streets which were lined with spectators. All business was suspended in the city during the ceremony, and blinds were drawn as a token of respect.

Arrived at the Park, the troops were drawn up in a hollow square. The G.O.C. delivered the funeral oration, after which a firing party discharged three volleys, and the "Last Post" was sounded.

Public bodies in every part of the Soutn-Western Command from Galway to Cork sent representatives to yesterday's funeral parade in Limerick.

Funeral Oration by G.O.C.

"The Greatest Republican of them All"

Addressing the troops, and surrounding crowds, General O'Duffy, said:—Soldiers and citizens of the Irish nation, the people of Ireland to-day stand with sorrowful hearts over the grave of Michael Collins—the grave of Mick Collins—what a thought, what a reality?

This day week, General Collins was here in the South Western Command reviewing his troops. I parted with him at Mallow, strong, virile and cheerful. No matter what his cares and responsibilities of state might be, and they were many, he always found time to be among his soldiers, to lead his gallant little army.

THE BEARNA BAOGHAIL

Since 1916, up the moment of his death, Michael was ever in the Bearna Baoghail. In September, 1917, I first met Michael Collins in Croke Park, Dublin, and from that moment onwards a bond of friendship existed between us. He enrolled me that day a member of the Irish volunteers. It was the happiest day of my life, and he commissioned me to organise the County Monaghan.

From that day onwards, not a week passed, whether in prison or out of prison, no matter what trials he endured that I did not hear from him or see him. Every other soldier in Ireland who had responsibility was in a similar position. He never forgot the men down the country. He was an untiring worker in the cause of freedom.

THE MAN WHO WON THE WAR

Speaking here to-day, as an officer who held every executive position in the army, from Captain to Chief of Staff I can only endorse what the late President Griffith said that Michael Collins was "the man who won the war." If it were not for Michael Collins the Black and Tans would still have their grip on Limerick city to-day, if indeed Limerick city would stand at all.

When we officers in the country were broken up, and sad owing to our hard trials and reverses the man who spurred us on, encouraged us and gave us renewed vigour was Michael Collins. No matter where we heard from him, or met him we always felt our mission was renewed to go on with continued energy in the cause of freedom.

THE REPUBLICANS.

No one knows that better than the militant and political leaders that are opposed to us to-day. Here in the shadow of death I am not going to say anything hard, but I feel this tragedy of the Irish nation in my very soul within. They who murdered Mick Collins say they were Republicans—**"Republicans, my God! he was the best Republican of them all,"** said Gen. O'Duffy, amid tremendous applause. He was the only man that England feared. He was the only man that could and would secure the absolute independence of Ireland.

He worked for it; he fought for it, and he died for it. The hand that slew Michael Collins has deprived Ireland of her only strength—it has accomplished in one foul blow what the Greenwoods and Macreadys and others could not do.

It is sad to think—it is hard indeed to think—that it should be the hand of one of his own countrymen, perhaps one of his own countrymen, and, perhaps, the hand of someone he rescued from death in a British dungeon. It is hard to think that such a person should be responsible for the death of Michael Collins. **The dead that died for Ireland will hold him responsible; the living will hold him responsible, and the generations yet unborn will hold him responsible.**

WHO?

Who in Ireland loved Ireland more than Michael Collins? Who in Ireland worked harder for Ireland than Michael Collins? Will the Irish people ever place their trust and destinies of the future Irish Nation in the hands of those who are responsible for the murder of Michael Collins? No; never. Do the leaders on the other side see this? **They do, but they see they cannot rule Ireland now, and their policy is to ruin her.**

We should pause a while. What will it serve in the cause of freedom to murder our troops, our gallant young soldiers, as happened in Tralee, Killarney, Dublin and Abbeyleix. In some of these places they cowered before the Black and Tans; now they murder our gallant young soldiers.

The Black and Tans had not much to fear in Limerick City, but our gallant soldiers who are carrying out the people's will have something to fear.

> considered among themselves and decided to take him at his word. They had only gone back a short distance when three lorries of military passed by the cross. They were thankful to God who had sent this priest either living or dead to protect them.[12]

These stories illustrate how sleepless nights, and an overpowering atmosphere of terror, could induce experiences of strange paranormal anomalies. Though these examples drawn from the folklore collection alone would not be convincing, their striking resemblance to a wide array of hauntings described in memoirs and witness statements to the Bureau of Military History suggests that they are part of a broader pattern of similar experiences recorded by revolutionaries across the country.[13]

A powerful element

In October 1922, the Irish hierarchy released a pastoral letter barring anti-Treaty republicans from receiving the sacraments, effectively excommunicating them. Despite this, and other accusations of spiritual degradation levied against them, they firmly believed in the power of their prayers, as did pro-Treaty forces in theirs. In his memoir, Mossie Harnett described how he was captured after the war and brought to Limerick prison along with other anti-Treaty IRA suspects in the aftermath of the Civil War. There, their frustrated captors struggled to identify the captured men, who stubbornly maintained their silence. To break them, the commanding National Army officer lined Harnett and his fellow prisoners along a wall. A row of soldiers fixed their bayonets and pointed their rifles at the hapless captives, issuing an ultimatum to either give up their names or be summarily executed. Just before the soldiers were given the command to fire, one of the prisoners stepped forward and, according to Harnett, 'requested that we be allowed to recite a decade of the Rosary. Before any move was made or time given to the military, we all fell on our knees, and Sean Hynes led us to say this prayer'.[14] This made such a powerful impression on their captors, that they spared the men's lives, despite their excommunication.

Supernatural material from Limerick was especially religious in character, though not exclusively so. Much of the contemporary discourse attested to spiritual decay; Bolshevism and drunkenness seemed obvious culprits to contemporary observers. However, this preoccupation with spiritual corruption is evidence of the contrary. The people of Limerick had abundant religious scruples, enough to merit being scandalized by the transgression of these scruples. They resorted to prayers in extreme situations, and even more paranormal examples like the

buried bells of Ardpatrick and Mrs Cleary's priest ghost had a decidedly religious quality.

As the above examples demonstrate, the supernatural was a powerful element in the emotional lives of Irish revolutionaries that deserves to be remembered by historians. For their stories of the paranormal preserve an aspect of a primal fear that most military histories have so far failed to convey – what it felt like to have the shadow of a violent and untimely death lurking over one's shoulder. Those from the people of Limerick both illustrate and attest to this fact.

Notes

1. Mossie Harnett, *Victory and woe: The West Limerick Brigade in the War of Independence* (Dublin, 2002), p. 115.

2. Military Archives (MA), Bureau of Military History Witness Statements (BMH WS): 755 Seán Prendergast, (Section 3), 3 November 1952, pp 551, 558.

3. P. S. O'Hegarty, *The victory of Sinn Féin,* Centenary Classics Edition (Dublin, 2015), p. 128.

4. *Irish Examiner* 17 August 1922; *Dundalk Democrat*, 12 August 1922.

5. *Sligo Champion*, 12 August 1922.

6. Roger Waters, 'Irish cursing and the art of magic, 1750-2018', *Past and Present,* 247 (2020), pp 113-149, at p. 129.

7. Others, such as National Army soldier P. J. Ryan, categorized it as the 'Fourth Siege of Limerick'. 'Mary Immaculate Training College' in *Convent of Our Lady of Mercy, St Mary's Limerick, 1838-1938* (Limerick, 1938), pp 65-70, at p. 68; P. J. (Cushy) Ryan, 'The Fourth Siege of Limerick: Civil War, July 1922', *Old Limerick Journal*, 38 (2002), pp 4-35.

8. *Limerick War News*, 29 August 1922.

9. Frances McGrath, 'The 21 Days' Siege of Limerick', in Brian Hughes, Úna Ní Bhroiméil, Benjamin Ragan (eds), *Studying revolution: Accounts of Mary Immaculate College, 1918-1923* (Limerick, 2021), pp 44-7, at p. 45.

10. Ibid., p. 46.

11. National Folklore Commission (NFC), Schools Folklore Collection (SFC), MS 0514 William Howard, Anglesborough, Co. Limerick, p. 17.

12. NFC, SFC, MS 0514 Hannah Cleary, Anglesborough, Co. Limerick, p. 18.

13. See, for example, Frank Gallagher, *Days of fear,* (London, 1920), pp 92-9; Harnett, *Victory and woe*, p. 24; Ernie O'Malley, *On another man's wound* (Cork, 2013), pp 105-6; MA, BMH WS: 1182 George C. Kiely, 10 June 1955, pp 13-14; 647 Edward Boyle, 13 February 1952, p. 22; 1768 Andrew McDonnell, 25 March 1959, pp 64-6; 1694 Francis Healy, 11 November 1957, p. 7.

14. Harnett, *Victory and woe,* p. 145

Limerick Civilians and the Experience of Civil War

Fig. 33

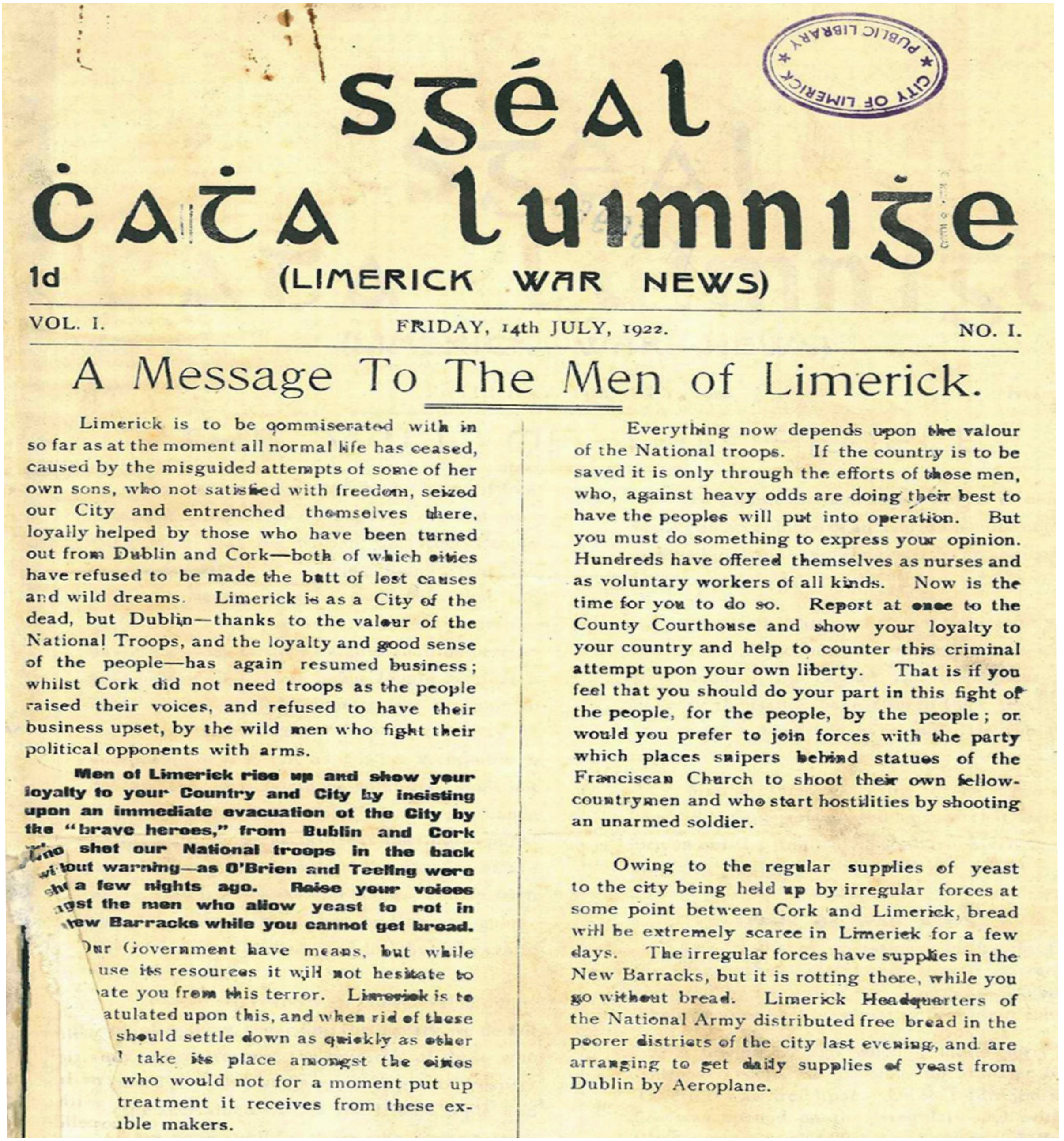
John Dorney

On 14 July 1922, as fighting raged in the streets of Limerick city, the pro-Treaty news bulletin, *Limerick War News* lamented that: 'Limerick is to be commiserated with, in so far as at the moment all normal life has ceased, caused by the misguided attempts of some of her own sons, who not satisfied with freedom, have seized our city and entrenched themselves there … Limerick is as a city of the dead'. The phase of high intensity combat in Limerick lasted only three weeks or so in July and August 1922. The city returned 'from the dead' fairly promptly once fighting there had ended on 20 July when the anti-Treaty IRA was driven from the city, as did the countryside after the fall of Kilmallock and Newcastle West to pro-Treaty forces in early August. The anti-Treaty guerrilla campaign thereafter was spasmodic and ineffective in Limerick. Nonetheless, the Civil War was a time of great turmoil and disruption for civilians throughout the county.

Caught in the crossfire: Loss of civilian life

The most obvious way in which the Civil War affected civilians was through death or injury. At least 20 civilians were killed there in 1922/23. Unlike the preceding War of Independence, this was only rarely through assassination and reprisal; no informers were killed in Limerick during the Civil War for instance, but rather mostly in the crossfire of fighting between the two sides. These casualties, unsurprisingly, were concentrated in the heavy fighting in Limerick city in mid-July 1922, in which at least 12 non-combatants were killed (3 women and 9 men) and over 80 wounded. These included many tragic stories, such as that of James O'Leary, a native of Wexford working in Todd's department store, who was shot in the back and fatally wounded by a sniper while attending to a wounded man. Bridie O'Brien of Bank Place was similarly caught up in heavy firing near her home and hit multiple times; shot in the abdomen and head and killed instantly. The fighting in the city in July 1922 saw many civilians flee to the surrounding countryside. An idea of the terror they must have experienced can be gleaned from the description of the *Limerick War News,* which stated on 21 July that 'all night the city was illuminated by the flames of burning buildings. The destruction is enormous and very serious to the citizens'. It claimed that civilians put out fires at the Henry Street police depot, saving the city's gas and electricity works from destruction. But other accounts record looting by the civilian population once the fighting had died down.

There was further intense fighting in the Bruff-Bruree-Kilmallock triangle in the county in late July and early August, but this saw only one civilian, as opposed to military fatality - William Dunworth, who was shot dead



sġéal ċaṫa luimniġe

1d (LIMERICK WAR NEWS)

VOL. I. FRIDAY, 14th JULY, 1922. NO. I.

A Message To The Men of Limerick.

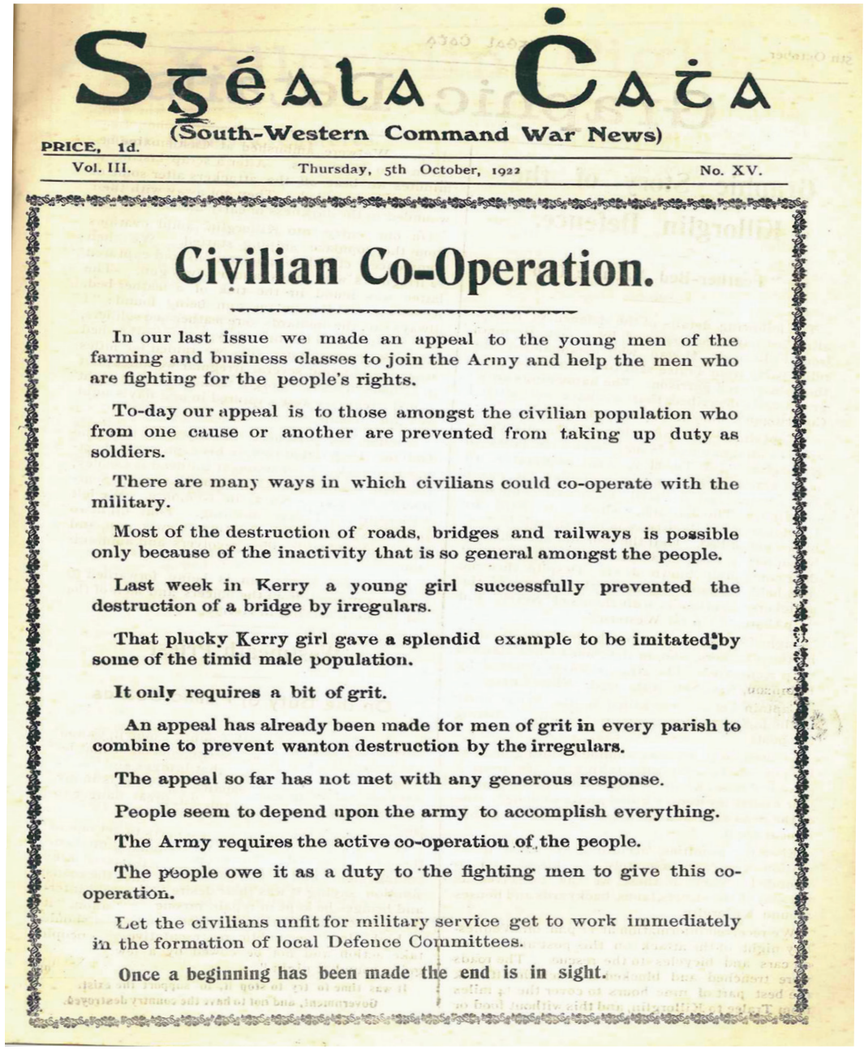
Limerick is to be commiserated with in so far as at the moment all normal life has ceased, caused by the misguided attempts of some of her own sons, who not satisfied with freedom, seized our City and entrenched themselves there, loyally helped by those who have been turned out from Dublin and Cork—both of which cities have refused to be made the butt of lost causes and wild dreams. Limerick is as a City of the dead, but Dublin—thanks to the valour of the National Troops, and the loyalty and good sense of the people—has again resumed business; whilst Cork did not need troops as the people raised their voices, and refused to have their business upset, by the wild men who fight their political opponents with arms.

Men of Limerick rise up and show your loyalty to your Country and City by insisting upon an immediate evacuation of the City by the "brave heroes," from Bublin and Cork who shot our National troops in the back without warning—as O'Brien and Teeling were shot a few nights ago. Raise your voices against the men who allow yeast to rot in New Barracks while you cannot get bread.

Our Government have means, but while use its resources it will not hesitate to ate you from this terror. Limerick is to atulated upon this, and when rid of these should settle down as quickly as other take its place amongst the cities who would not for a moment put up treatment it receives from these ex- able makers.

Everything now depends upon the valour of the National troops. If the country is to be saved it is only through the efforts of those men, who, against heavy odds are doing their best to have the peoples will put into operation. But you must do something to express your opinion. Hundreds have offered themselves as nurses and as voluntary workers of all kinds. Now is the time for you to do so. Report at once to the County Courthouse and show your loyalty to your country and help to counter this criminal attempt upon your own liberty. That is if you feel that you should do your part in this fight of the people, for the people, by the people; or would you prefer to join forces with the party which places snipers behind statues of the Franciscan Church to shoot their own fellow-countrymen and who start hostilities by shooting an unarmed soldier.

Owing to the regular supplies of yeast to the city being held up by irregular forces at some point between Cork and Limerick, bread will be extremely scarce in Limerick for a few days. The irregular forces have supplies in the New Barracks, but it is rotting there, while you go without bread. Limerick Headquarters of the National Army distributed free bread in the poorer districts of the city last evening, and are arranging to get daily supplies of yeast from Dublin by Aeroplane.



Sgéala Cata

(South-Western Command War News)

PRICE, 1d. Vol. III. Thursday, 5th October, 1922 No. XV.

Civilian Co-Operation.

In our last issue we made an appeal to the young men of the farming and business classes to join the Army and help the men who are fighting for the people's rights.

To-day our appeal is to those amongst the civilian population who from one cause or another are prevented from taking up duty as soldiers.

There are many ways in which civilians could co-operate with the military.

Most of the destruction of roads, bridges and railways is possible only because of the inactivity that is so general amongst the people.

Last week in Kerry a young girl successfully prevented the destruction of a bridge by irregulars.

That plucky Kerry girl gave a splendid example to be imitated by some of the timid male population.

It only requires a bit of grit.

An appeal has already been made for men of grit in every parish to combine to prevent wanton destruction by the irregulars.

The appeal so far has not met with any generous response.

People seem to depend upon the army to accomplish everything.

The Army requires the active co-operation of the people.

The people owe it as a duty to the fighting men to give this co-operation.

Let the civilians unfit for military service get to work immediately in the formation of local Defence Committees.

Once a beginning has been made the end is in sight.

during a gun battle near Bruff. However, this fighting too caused serious disruption and fear to civilians. *Limerick War News* reported on 29 July that:

> Kilmallock is in a state of siege. Very few people are allowed to leave and only when they were able to satisfy the Irregular sentries of their bona fides ... No business whatever is being transacted and people are staying indoors, not knowing the moment at which hostilities may break out.

Thereafter, civilian as well as combatant casualties fell off markedly in Limerick, but there was a steady 'drip' of civilian deaths. A teenage boy named Christopher Noonan, for instance, was the unintended fatal victim of an anti-Treaty IRA grenade attack on a National Army ration car in the city in September 1922; and another teenager, Kathleen Hehir, was shot dead in the city's streets in December by unidentified assailants. The Free State's National Army killed two civilians on 16 October 1922, James Ambrose and Patrick King, at a roadblock in Newcastle West, when they allegedly failed to halt their horse-drawn car in time after a shouted warning.

Food supplies

If violent death was the most serious consequence of the Civil War for civilians in Limerick, the next was the disruption of food supplies. During the fighting in the city, one local newspaper reported that 'rashers were as rare as rubies'.[1] The pro-Treaty side blamed the 'Irregulars' for the food shortage, *Limerick War News* reporting on 14 July 1922 that: 'Owing to the regular supplies of yeast being held up by the Irregular forces at some point between Limerick and Cork, bread will be extremely scarce in Limerick for a few days'. It claimed that the anti-Treaty side had food 'rotting in the New Barracks', whereas the National Army 'distributed bread in the poorer districts yesterday evening and are arranging to get daily supplies of yeast from Dublin by aeroplane'. On 18 July, the newssheet assured citizens that 'full arrangements have been made for feeding of the poor and destitute. Apply to your parish priest, who will give you a requisition for tea, sugar, and bread. This will be supplied at the Tivoli Cinema by Captain Keane'. And on 19 July, it reported that troops were collecting potatoes and vegetables at the city's outskirts for the 'distressed'.

While these reports were part of the National Army's 'information war', the food shortage in Limerick city must indeed have been very serious in July 1922 for the pro-Treaty authorities and the Catholic Church to devote such attention to it. Indeed, *Limerick War News* reported on 29 July that 'three priests and five lay brothers housed and fed 500 women and children in

Fig. 34, Civilians watching the burning of New Barracks, 21 July 1922

Mungret College during the disturbances in the city'. Although the city saw no further heavy combat, and food supplies gradually returned to normal, a nightly curfew was imposed there from the second week of August and petrol was also rationed by the military.

Transport

One of the key war strategies of the anti-Treaty IRA after their defeat in the conventional warfare of July-August 1922 was to paralyse the government and economy of the nascent Free State by the systematic destruction of its road and rail infrastructure. This also would impede the movements of pro-Treaty troops. As a result, civilian transport was very badly disrupted by the Civil War in county Limerick, as it was throughout the country. *Limerick War News* reported on 18 July that 'the Great Southern Railways were broken at twenty-three points. Three bridges ... have been destroyed or badly damaged. Nine road bridges have been blown up

Fig. 35, Looters at Ordnance barracks, 21 July 1922

and three buildings belonging to the company burned down'. The Limerick to Dublin railway line was put out of commission also for several months by the blowing up of bridges in August. The rail lines out of Limerick were also constantly targeted by the anti-Treaty forces. The line from Limerick to Tralee, for instance, was out of action from July to November 1922. This caused severe disruption of social and economic life for a time. For instance, on 2 September it was reported that pigs purchased at Nenagh market had to be conveyed by road to Dromineer and by boat to Limerick city due to the anti-Treaty IRA's destruction of roads and rail lines.

Even though most of the rail lines to and from Limerick city were back up and running by late 1922, travel by train remained hazardous for the civilian population. For instance, on 11 November 1922 an anti-Treaty IRA column under Sean Carroll stopped a train at Lisnagry, county Limerick and ordered off the passengers and set the carriages on fire. The engine was

driven to Castleconnell, the base of Carroll's column, but was later recovered. Such attacks continued well into the new year, when other aspects of the guerrilla campaign were waning. On 12 February 1923, for example, a train was destroyed, again burned after a hold-up by armed men at Castleconnell. There was also an attempt on the same day to destroy the rail line at Annacotty. Similarly, roads were regularly blocked. For instance in March 1923, the National Army's Limerick Command reported a road blocked at Ballinaclough by a stone wall which, they said, was 'the work of women'. Bridges were also routinely destroyed by the anti-Treaty forces, and much of the pro-Treaty forces' time, especially in the latter months of the Civil War, was spent guarding and rebuilding them.[2]

Rival taxation

Civil War may be described as a struggle by contending armed factions for the control over the civilian population, particularly to extract from them the resources needed to fund both the military and political arms of the belligerents. In county Limerick as elsewhere, civilians were subject to the exactions of both sides. In an effort to re-establish state structures and income, the Free State attempted to get rates and taxes paid in the face of anti-Treaty hostility, and often public recalcitrance too. Rate collectors needed an armed escort throughout the Civil War period. However, the anti-Treaty side itself needed funds from the civilian population and tried to collect its own taxation through a dog license tax levied by their guerrilla units and designated 'tax collectors'. For example, in April 1923 at Portroe, county Tipperary, two men were arrested with a list of people from whom they had collected 'dog tax'. Similarly, a man named John Kennedy was arrested in the Limerick Command in May 1923 collecting the dog license tax for the anti-Treaty side. To enforce collection, the anti-Treatyites threatened to shoot any dog for which it had not been paid. For instance, a notice posted in county Limerick in March 1923 read; 'For every Republican shot two [Free] Staters will fall. Any dog for which license has not been paid will be put to death'.[3]

Pro-Treaty forces put the support for the anti-Treatyites in remote rural areas, such as the hill country in the Silvermines around Castleconnell, down to the fact that, 'owing to the state of lawlessness [they] do not have to pay taxes'. They described this as a 'mercenary motive' and, by the end of May 1923, reported a change in their favour when 'it is no longer a paying proposition to support disruptionist forces'.[4]

Entertainments

As Sharon Slater notes in this volume, apart from a hiatus during the fighting in Limerick city in July, public entertainments such as theatres and cinemas in Limerick generally remained open throughout 1922. They were, however, put under threat in the spring of 1923 when the anti-Treaty IRA issued what they called the 'Amusements Order' on 13 March. This stated:

> It is ordered that a time of national mourning be proclaimed, all sport and amusements be suspended, all picture houses [cinemas] and theatres and other places of public amusement be closed, especially horse riding, hunting, coursing, dancing and outdoor sports. Anyone refusing this order will be treated as an enemy of the Republic.

The Limerick Command of the National Army began reporting threatening notices to cinemas in April 1923, but there were no attacks on cinemas in Limerick city, as there were in Dublin and Cork cities and elsewhere. By May 1923, it was reporting that there were only seven active armed 'irregulars' in the city and that 'the city is occupied by the military and their constant activities keep the Limerick people aware that there is a war on, [otherwise] they would have forgotten that fact'.[5]

Sectarianism and land

One group among the civilian population that was particularly vulnerable during the Civil War period was the Free State's Protestant population. Those amongst them who had been active loyalists prior to the Truce of 1921 sometimes paid with their lives after British protection was withdrawn in early 1922. Moreover, while the IRA publicly denounced sectarianism, in the febrile atmosphere of 1922 political and communal divisions were often blurred. In March 1922, as violence against Catholics flared in Belfast, one Limerick Corporation member, Patrick O'Flynn, said of the Protestants of Limerick that 'it was remarkable that not one had condemned the anti-Catholic violence occurring in Belfast'.[6] Once the Civil War broke out in the south, some anti-Treatyites appeared to blame local Protestants for what they saw as the dismantling of the Irish Republic by the pro-Treaty authorities. Anti-Treaty Volunteer Mossie Harnett, for example, later wrote of raiding a Protestant church in Limerick at the start of the Civil War in July 1922 and seizing six cars from the churchgoers: 'It was not a nice thing to do but at this time we thought the Protestants were our enemy and on the side of the Free State'.[7] Other Protestants, as big landowners, saw their land occupied by land hungry small farmers during the Civil War. For instance, Colonel William Yeilding of Athea lamented that, when

Fig. 36, Posing for a photograph in the ruins of Strand Barracks, 21 July 1922

his 700 acre holding was taken over, 'the Irish Free State government was repeatedly asked to restore order but were apparently unable to do so and the situation is now hopeless'. Similarly, Digby Hussey de Burgh spent most of the Civil War 'barricaded' in his house, surrounded by 230 acres at Dromkeen, subject to a boycott and occasional gun attacks. He eventually sold up his holdings in 1926.[8]

It would be mistaken to say that the anti-Treaty IRA campaign was sectarian in any concerted way, or to assume that the landless targeted only Protestant landowners during the lawless period of the Civil War. However, between 1911 and 1926, the civilian Protestant population of county Limerick fell by 27 percent, from nearly 7,000 to just under 4,000. Although there were other factors also, the role of violence and intimidation in the revolutionary period cannot be discounted in explaining this fall.

Sympathies and support

The pro-Treaty side decisively won the military conflict between 1922/23, but was their victory as clear-cut in the political sphere? Whose side, moreover, were civilians generally on during hostilities? Only 5 out of 12 Limerick-Kerry TDs voted for the Treaty in January 1922 and all were returned in the general election in June. However, due to the 'Pact' agreed between the two sides, these seats were uncontested. The postwar election of August 1923 saw pro-Treaty candidates of Cumman na nGaedheal receiving slightly more votes than anti-Treaty Sinn Féin in Limerick, but both sides won two seats each in the county, while the Farmers' Party and the Labour Party also won one each. An anti-Treaty prisoner, Bob de Courcy, was elected as Mayor of Limerick while on hunger strike in October 1923.

All of which would appear to suggest that public support in Limerick was evenly split. However, this does not necessarily translate into support for either side during the armed conflict. On 8 August 1922, the *Limerick War News* reported that the inhabitants of Kilmallock were delighted to be 'liberated from Irregulars' who they described as 'worse than the Black and Tans'. But in truth, many civilians simply wanted peace and to be left alone by both sides. The National Army's internal reports were far less bombastic than their propaganda, even towards the end of the Civil War when they were clearly in the ascendancy. They reported in March 1923 that, in Limerick city, 'the people do not help the irregulars but at the same time do not help us'. They reported that while most civilians were 'against the tactics of the irregulars', and in many cases gave information to government forces, 'they do not care what happens as long as they get peace'.[9] As elsewhere,

the overwhelming civilian reaction to the end of the Civil War in Limerick was one of exhausted relief.

Notes

1. Jim Corbett, *Not while I have ammo: The history of Connie Mackey, defender of the Strand* (Limerick, 2008), p. 99.

2. Military Archives (MA), IE/MA-CREC-02, Chief of Staff reports to the Executive Council of Dáil Éireann, Confidential military reports, February-March, 1923: 1 March 1923.

3. MA, IE/MA-CREC-03, Confidential military reports, April, 1923: 10 April 1923.

4. MA, CW/OPS/90/09 Limerick Command reports: 23 March, 31 May 1923.

5. Ibid.

6. John O'Callaghan, *Limerick: The Irish Revolution, 1912-23* (Dublin, 2018), p.122.

7. Mossie Harnett, *Victory and woe: The West Limerick Brigade in the War of Independence* (Dublin, 2002), p.131.

8. British National Archives (TNA), Colonial Office files (CO) 762 /15/9, Irish Grants Committee (IGC) application: William Yeilding, 1 October 1925; Ibid., CO 762/37/10: IGC application: Digby Hussey de Burgh, 10 January 1927.

9. MA, CW/OPS/90/09 Limerick Command reports: 23 March, 31 May 1923.

Limerick Amusements in a Time of War
1922

Fig. 37

Sharon Slater

Spring 1922 was a time of flux in Limerick as the city settled after the immediate traumas of the War of Independence came to an end the previous year. This calming of society brought entertainments back into fashion, one of the last events of 1921 highlighting this return to normality. On 5 December 1921, the conferring of the Freedom of Limerick on Kathleen Clarke and Éamon de Valera took place in the Theatre Royal, Henry Street. This honour had been allocated three years earlier, but both of the recipients were in prison at the time. Acting Mayor Máire O'Donovan oversaw the proceedings. The building was packed with those who had acquired tickets, while the street outside swelled with citizens trying to catch a glimpse of the now famous politicians. It was not realised by many during those celebrations that the entire country would soon be enduring a civil war. De Valera, who was staying at Strand House with his friends the O'Maras, received news of the signing of the Anglo-Irish Treaty later that night. One month later, on 7 January 1922, Dáil Éireann approved the Treaty by 64 votes to 57. In response, de Valera resigned as its president.

As this was all happening in Dublin, life in Limerick continued in relative normality. The Theatre Royal, one of the grandest venues in the city, continued to host events and showcase new films. The Cork and Munster trades directory of 1920 listed three venues for amusements in Limerick city; the Athenaeum on Cecil Street, the Gaiety Theatre and Picture Palace on O'Connell Street, and the Theatre Royal. Additionally, the small Garryowen Cinema, which opened in 1919, was in operation at the time on Broad Street.

The Theatre Royal was founded by Joseph Fogerty, who erected a large building on the corner of Mallow Street and Henry Street in 1841. He used the building as a circus for three years, before converting it into a theatre. In April 1861, the *Limerick Chronicle* described the theatre as being horseshoe in shape, which allowed all audience members to view the stage unhindered. The stage was 36 feet deep and 45 feet wide. There were large dressing room areas at the back of the stage and 'in order to insure proper ventilation throughout the building there were two windows in the corridor'.[1] There were twelve gasifiers, containing 42 lights with glass shades, which produced an agreeable and soft light throughout the house. This layout remained relatively unchanged for the following 60 years, except for the adaptation to cinema use.

It was a quiet afternoon in the Theatre Royal on Monday, 23 January 1922, as preparations for evening performances by Charlie Robinson ('Ireland's well-known baritone and raconteur') were underway. Suddenly at 4.45pm, a fire broke out, probably caused

Fig. 38, The ruins of the Theatre Royal, January 1922. The date noted is incorrect.

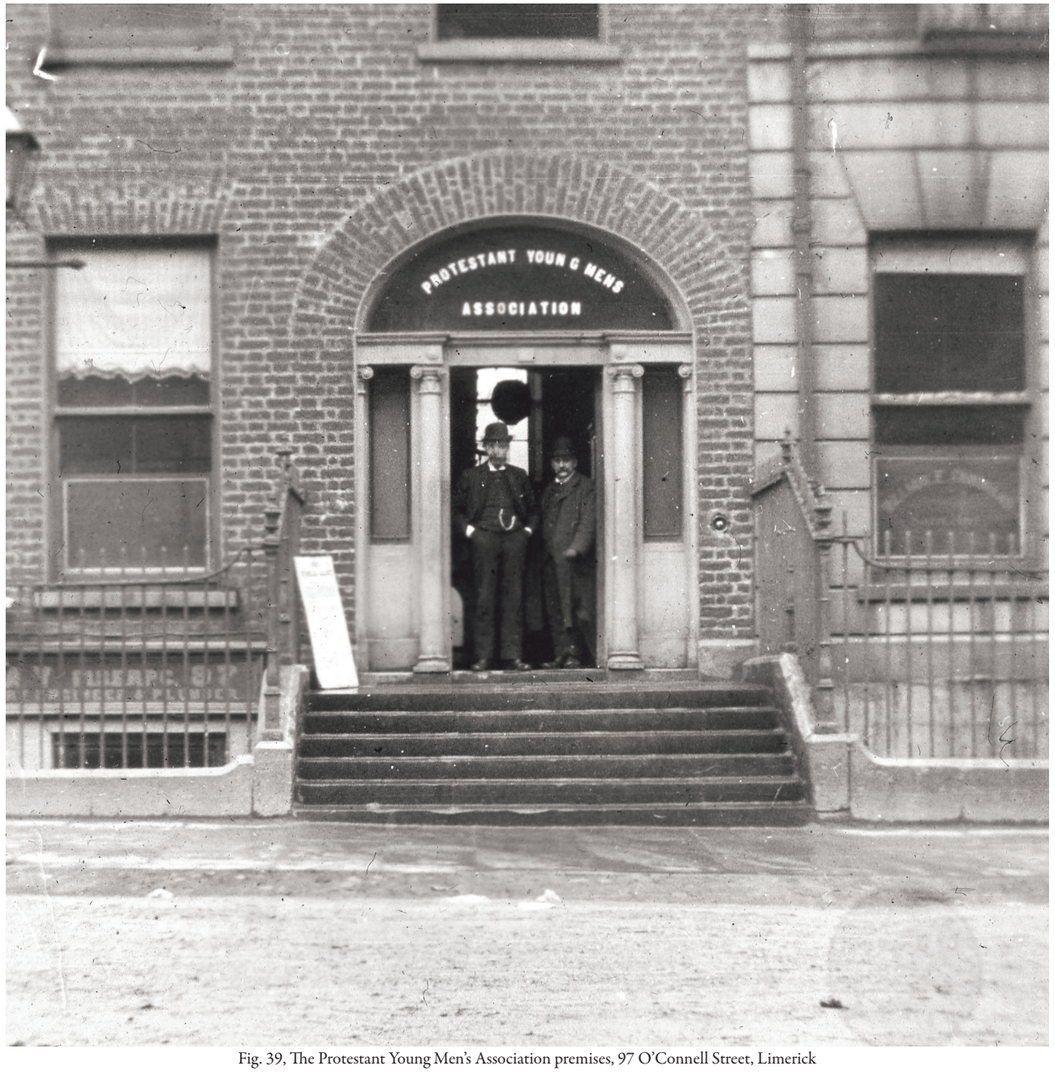


Fig. 39, The Protestant Young Men's Association premises, 97 O'Connell Street, Limerick

by the flammable nature of the film in use at the time. The flames spread rapidly to the adjoining houses. Within an hour and a half, the building was completely destroyed. The *Evening Echo* described the scene as a 'fire which threatened alarming consequences and caused great loss'. The first to arrive on the scene were Limerick Corporation and the military fire brigades, assisted by the 'Republican police [IRP] and RIC'.[2] There was a worry that the fire could spread to the nearby Glentworth Garage so, as a precautionary measure, a quantity of petrol and several motor cars were removed from the premises. The following day a letter from the manager of the garage, John F. Walsh, was published in the *Limerick Chronicle*. There he thanked the 'IRA, the IRP, the military and the [RIC] for the excellent way in which they handled the situation'.[3] Although the Theatre Royal was not the only entertainment venue in the city, it was by far the largest. The manager of the theatre, William Shanley, began looking for a new venue as early as 30 January. However, with the quick change in social activities due to the impending conflict, this was not to be, and a benefit concert was held in March for the former staff of the theatre.

The cooperation seen during the fire at the theatre very quickly turned to tension when the withdrawal of the Crown forces from the city commenced in late February 1922. This saw a tense standoff between pro-Treaty and anti-Treaty forces in the city over the possession of the barracks and depots being evacuated. Public buildings and hotels were occupied by both sides and some barricades erected on the streets, but the general population weaved their way through in an attempt to continue their business as normal. Mayor Stephen O'Mara, who was personally opposed to the Treaty, facilitated communication between the two sides, creating a temporary peace in the city in mid-March.

Limerick city was now down a theatre, but other forms of amusements continued during this time of increasing tensions. On 15 February, there were musical and dramatic entertainments in the Athenaeum on Cecil Street for the benefit of the pioneer association of the Sacred Heart Church. One of the highlights was Liam Forde, officer commanding the IRA's Mid Limerick Brigade, singing 'Bearna Baoghal'; he would denounce the Treaty and declare the Brigade for the Republic three days later. The hall was filled to capacity, with various artists performing and the Boherbuoy Band playing during the intervals. The annual bazaar for Havergal Hall and Roxborough schools took place on 29 April in the Diocesan Hall, Pery Square, while 100 boys and 150 girls, all members of the Gaelic League, were taken on an excursion by train to Adare on the same day.

Fig. 40, Protestant Young Men's Association football team at the Farranshone Pavilion

Limerick would move inexorably towards open conflict in the next few months, but there were moments of normality and calm when the citizens of the city would find refuge in amusements. The Crescent Carnival took place from 29 June until 1 July in the grounds of Boru House, in aid of the Sacred Heart Church organ fund. According to the *Limerick Leader,* it was well attended, despite poor weather conditions.[4] Limerick city saw the highest level of violence between 11-20 July when dozens of bystanders were injured in the crossfire between the pro-Treaty and anti-Treaty fighters. During this time, all amusements ceased. It took only a few weeks for life to return to normal. As John Dorney notes in this volume, Limerick's rail infrastructure was badly damaged by anti-Treaty forces during the battle for the city yet, by mid-August, the Great Southern and Western Railway was advertising excursions from Limerick to the 'Rodeo Exhibition, Dublin', the 'Lough Derg Carnival, Nenagh', and the Kerry versus Dublin football match in Tralee. By September, the Gaiety Theatre was back to business as usual, showing the new release by Charlie Chaplin. In October, Miss Phyllis Locke was advertising the Elsyee School of Dance events taking place in Cruise's Royal Hotel every Monday and Thursday evening, while the Comrades' Battalion Dance took place in the hotel on Saturday, 4 November. That same week a concert was held for the Limerick Protestant Orphan Society. Later that month, opera singer Miss Violet Pearson gave a concert in the George Hotel, accompanied by several local artists.

Sports also continued in Limerick throughout 1922. In April, St Munchin's College won the Dr Harty Cup (the Munster colleges' senior hurling championship), and the first round of the Munster Senior Cup in rugby was played in the Markets Field, Garryowen. In June, local rugby matches were played between Abbey and Presentation, also in the Markets Field. There was a lull in sporting activities during the summer months, but friendly rugby matches had resumed by the autumn, with Presentation playing against Ramblers in the Markets Field on 15 October. Indoor sports such as billiards took place throughout the year. Competitions were held at St Michael's Temperance Hall in January 1922, at the Mechanics' Institute in February, and the Shannon Rowing Club in March. April saw damage to the windows of the billiards room of the Protestant Young Men's Association on O'Connell Street after two bombs were thrown at the building. (The Association's pavilion at Farranshone had been burned down on 29 March). These attacks were condemned by the Mid Limerick Brigade IRA. Billiards competitions had resumed once again by October when matches were played at St John's Temperance Society, and at Athlunkard Boat Club in December.

In November 1922, a new Grand Central Cinema opened on Bedford Row, when the entertainment industry in Limerick was facing a different threat from that of war or fire. Then, the *Limerick Chronicle* noted the censorship of cinema films: 'At the meeting of the Limerick Vigilance Committee last night, Rev Fr. Dwane, presiding, a resolution was adopted calling upon the Government to establish a censorship over all films exhibited by Irish cinemas, and that a statute be enacted prohibiting the exhibition of any picture which has not been approved by the censor'.[5] At year-end 1922, there were four cinemas in the city; the Grand Central Cinema, the Gaiety, the Garryowen, and the newly opened Abbey Kinema on George's Quay. Only the former two would remain operational into the 1930s.

Although 1922 saw social life and amusements disrupted due to short periods of violence on the streets of Limerick, most notably in early March and mid-July, those amusements quickly returned, as citizens of the city sought out ways to distract themselves from the reality of a country in war.

Notes

1. *Limerick Chronicle,* 24 April 1861.

2. *Evening Echo*, 24 January 1922.

3. *Limerick Chronicle*, 24 January 1922.

4. *Limerick Leader*, 30 June 1922.

5. *Limerick Chronicle*, 4 November 1922.

Unionists and Loyalists in Limerick 1922-23

Fig. 41

Brian Hughes

The Irish Civil War is traditionally understood as a conflict of brother-against-brother (and sister-against-sister), fought bitterly following a split in the republican movement over the terms of the Anglo-Irish Treaty. This, however, elides the extent to which the 'enemies' of the War of Independence – principally the southern unionist minority and the Crown forces – remained entangled in the conflict. This chapter will provide a sketch of the unionist and loyalist community in Limerick, and examine some of their experiences during 1922 and 1923. Though terms often used interchangeably, unionists are understood here as those who supported the maintenance of the 1801 Act of Union between Britain and Ireland, while loyalists encompass a broader category including those who worked for, supported, or offered allegiances to Britain or the Crown.

Distinct from their Ulster brethren in many respects, southern unionists were a relatively small and scattered minority. In 1911 there were just over 311,000 Protestants in the twenty-six-county area that became the Irish Free State (IFS) (10 percent of the total population), compared to 2.8 million Catholics. Not all Protestants were unionists, however. Alexander Shaw of the famous Limerick bacon manufacturers, for instance, had been an active Protestant Home Ruler in the 1860s and 1870s. But with small sets of Protestant nationalists and republicans very roughly off-set by cohorts of Catholic loyalists (large landowners, army officers, or policemen, for example), the unionist minority was still likely to be around 10 percent.

In rural Limerick, unionist networks were particularly small, with Protestants making up about 3 percent of the county population (2,550 Church of Ireland, 136 Presbyterians, and 273 Methodists). They were proportionally larger and more concentrated in the city, where about 9 percent of the population was Protestant (2,316 Church of Ireland or Episcopalian, 847 Presbyterians, and 213 Methodists). Outside of the churches, Protestant unionists in Limerick gathered in organisations like the Protestant Young Men's Association (PYMA) or the Church Lads Brigade. They might also meet at the Masonic Hall on Castle Street. The Freemasons declared themselves non-political and non-sectarian, but they were not necessarily viewed that way by outsiders and the Union flag could be found alongside Masonic paraphernalia in the city. Sir Charles Barrington was the provincial grandmaster of the Freemasons of Munster and a prominent unionist figure in Limerick during the 1912 to 1914 Home Rule crisis. (Separately, in May 1921, his daughter Winifred was killed when the car she was travelling in with an RIC Auxiliary cadet, a British army officer, and two others was ambushed by the IRA.)

Fig. 42, Limerick Protestant Young Men's Association celebrating the accession of King Edward VII, 1901

Fig. 43, Sir Charles Barrington

In August 1920, Barrington and other prominent Limerick businessmen and county residents had publicly called for a withdrawal of the 1920 Government of Ireland Act – which brought partition and created northern and southern parliaments – to be replaced by Dominion self-government for the whole island within the British Empire. Quaker and corn merchant Gerald Goodbody declared that 'some of them who had been up to lately Unionists were prepared to overthrow their convictions in the cause of peace'. Barrington agreed that 'the majority of Unionists were with them in getting this job settled', while those still on the outside were 'few'. In part motivated by protecting their business interests in the midst of revolution, this also reflected a wider desire amongst southern unionists to avoid partition.[1]

The first editorial after the signing of the Treaty in the paper of choice for the Protestant and unionist minority, the *Limerick Chronicle,* declared that:

> Yesterday will go down to posterity as one of the most momentous and happy days in the history of Anglo-Irish relations. … The unexpected has, indeed, happened. For some weeks past the hopes or doubts of a settlement were barometric in their nature. Optimism one day gave way to pessimism the next and vice versa as the days passed. Almost up to the eleventh hour matters looked dismal enough until the sensational climax came on a surprised and highly gratified public … Even then cautious people preferred to wait for details before satisfying themselves that all was well. But all doubts have vanished.

The Chronicle's editor, Wexford-born Anglican John A. Baldwin, saw further consolation in Arthur Griffith's guarantee that he desired 'to secure the willing co-operation of Unionists in common with all other sections of the Irish nation in raising the structure and shaping the destiny of the Irish Free State'.[2] These were views repeated in the *Irish Times,* then a southern unionist organ, in the *Church of Ireland Gazette,* and in speeches and statements by Protestant hierarchy.

Unionists in Clare met in January 1922 to consider Griffith's guarantee, but their Limerick counterparts seem to have declined to do so. A sign, perhaps, of a certain confidence in its sentiments. On 4 April, however, Limerick Protestants did meet to 'reaffirm a resolution that was passed in August 1920, in which they declared that they had never suffered from intolerance of any kind' and denounced ongoing violence against Catholics in Belfast. Barrington, in the chair, 'announced that the question of religion never arose in Limerick or the South; they all, Catholic and Protestant alike, lived in the best of harmony and good fellowship'. William Waller, a deputy lieutenant for Limerick, was among the speakers to denounce the violence in Belfast, describing all 'religious tyranny' as 'abhorrent' and the murders of the Catholic McMahon family in Belfast in March 1922 as 'the worst ever heard of'. He also declared that Protestants – 'a small, a very small, minority' – had always been able to carry on in their daily lives without interference.[3]

Importantly, the immediate local context for the meeting came in the form of attacks on PYMA and Masonic property in Limerick, violence condemned by the Mid Limerick Brigade IRA, and Limerick Corporation. Historian Brian P. Murphy suggested that there was no sectarian conflict between Catholics and Protestants during the Civil War, although the broad support Protestants had offered to the Treaty had made their lives 'more difficult'.[4] As John O'Callaghan has astutely pointed out, however, the 'distinction between political and religious intolerance was a fine one and it would have meant little to those who were targeted'.[5] The Limerick Protestants present on 4 April 1922 may have been speaking genuinely, but doing so at all was to some extent motivated by a desire to keep the temperature down, to avoid accusations of condoning what Belfast Catholics defined as a 'pogrom' against them, and thus

Fig. 44, Church Lads Brigade in Limerick city.

prevent any reprisals that might follow.

By the end of the month, 13 Protestants had been killed in the Bandon Valley area of West Cork. Though the motivation for the killings remains hotly contested, there were contemporary suggestions of a link with events in Belfast. Soon after, Liam Forde, the anti-Treaty officer commanding the Mid Limerick Brigade, published a letter in the press describing threats against the Protestant community – presumed to be 'intended as a reprisal for the Belfast atrocities' – as 'cowardly and unjust' and threatening 'drastic action' against perpetrators.[6] More broadly, the violence and intimidation against the unionist and loyalist minority seems to have been the work of individuals or groups acting on their own initiative rather than with any official sanction. Whatever comfort this might have brought to the minority, there

was often little that Forde and others could do amidst the flux and chaos of 1922 and 1923, and Protestant experiences of the Civil War were ultimately personal and localised. In a sermon in Cahernarry offering comfort to his flock in the aftermath of the Bandon Valley killings, the new Church of Ireland Bishop of Limerick, Dr H. V. White (who had recently ordained one of the victims in Limerick's St Mary's Cathedral) reflected that: 'We scattered, disarmed members of the Church in the South of Ireland have had in the murders of last week a grim reminder of our helplessness'.[7]

While religion and politics were closely interwoven, there were also significant numbers of (often Catholic) serving or former members of the Crown forces in the city and county. Even if those who served in the RIC or British armed forces would not have considered themselves to be 'loyalist' or 'unionist' at all, republican suspicion often fell easily on those with links to the police and military for their assumed loyalty to the British administration. In January 1922, IRA battalions in West Limerick had been asked to submit information to 1st Southern Division Headquarters on 'all persons guilty of offences against the Nation and the army, and of all persons suspected of having assisted the enemy during the same period'. In the Newcastle West battalion area, several men and women – all of whom appear to have been Catholic – were believed to be 'friendly' with Crown forces. In one case, it was assumed that an unemployed man with one leg 'could not have any other purpose' for being in the company of Auxiliaries 'than for giving information'. A number were accused of association with Thomas Hanley, a veteran of the Great War who served in the Auxiliary Division of the RIC until February 1921 and survived an IRA attempt on his life in Newcastle West in June 1921 before going 'missing' after the July 1921 Truce.[8]

Between 1926 and 1930, southern Irish loyalists could apply for compensation from the British Treasury-funded Irish Grants Committee (IGC). While they must be used with caution as sources, their application files provide important detail on the experiences of self-proclaimed loyalists before and during the Civil War. The claims from Limerick highlight the nature of low-level threat and harm experienced by loyalists in the city and county up to March 1923, ranging from threats and damage to property, to arson, forced expulsion, and shooting (perpetrated by National Army troops, anti-Treaty IRA, and others). Complaints of boycotting and forced levies or billeting of men – often by anti-Treatyites pejoratively described as 'Irregulars' – were also common. A large proportion of the 151 claims with Limerick connections were from Catholics, usually ex-servicemen whose land was occupied by anti-Treaty republicans (or others) for periods during the Civil War,

Fig. 45, Reading room, Protestant Young Men's Association, O'Connell Street, Limerick

or recently disbanded RIC. Several of the ex-RIC and their families were visited by raiders and left Limerick either temporarily or permanently following threats of violence. A number of the Protestant applicants were retired British army officers like Major Charles Langford, who complained of regular petty violence and harassment. This suggests that among unionists and loyalists in Limerick it was those with links to past service in the Crown forces who were particularly likely to be targeted during the Civil War.[9]

Major Langford also sought compensation for 'having to send my wife out of [the] country and keeping my son in England'.[10] Over 30 other IGC applicants – a mix of Catholic and Protestant – had an address outside the Irish Free State in the later 1920s. By 1926, the Protestant Episcopalian population of Limerick city had dropped by 44.5 per cent from its 1911 figure, Methodist numbers had declined by 51 percent, and the small Presbyterian community by an alarming 82.6 percent. At the July 1922 Limerick diocesan synod, Bishop White referred to the loss of many of the Free State's 'best, most patriotic and progressive citizens ... forced from their native land by political or religious intolerance'; in 1923 he lamented the 'hundreds of industrious Protestant Irish men and women' who had left 'because they felt that they were not welcome here, and that satisfactory careers could not be secured for their boys and girls in their own country'. If this hinted at sectarian undertones, White also added that 'anything like a Protestant exodus would be deplored by our present rulers'.[11] Indeed, Langford was among the majority of Protestant IGC claimants who were still in the county in the late 1920s. Further questions thus remain about the timing, nature, and motivations behind minority population decline, and about the experiences of Protestants and unionists in Limerick during the Irish Revolution.

Those who stayed generally offered their support to the new administration, but this was not simply a case of old allegiances thrown overboard. While Sir Charles Barrington and others had decided that the Union was dead – and maybe was not even in their best interests any more – a sense of fealty to Britain and to the monarch did not disappear in 1922. At a meeting of the PYMA in October 1922, for instance, some months after their premises had been bombed, Archibald Murray told the gathering that:

> They were now living under the Free State of Ireland and, doubtless, they had carefully thought over the circumstances of the case, and what was left for them to do. He trusted that they had come to this conclusion – that the Government

> they now had in this country is constituted by Divine right ... They had to wish the State every success.

At the same time, however, 'the State had not given them up to the present any particular song or battle cry ... They knew what the King's battle cry was' and so 'they would sing, as they were wont to do at their annual meeting, "God Save the King"'.[12]

That meeting is as much the story of Limerick unionists in the Irish Revolution as any violence, intimidation, burning, or exile. Amidst a civil war over the nature of Irish independence, there remained space for the political minority to gather and express their old loyalties.

Notes

1. John O'Callaghan, *Limerick: The Irish Revolution, 1912–1923* (Dublin, 2018), p. 122; *Limerick Leader*, 25 August 1920.

2. *Limerick Chronicle*, 8 December 1921.

3. *Limerick Chronicle*, 5 April 1922; *Irish Times*, 5 April 1922.

4. Brian P. Murphy, *The life and tragic death of Winnie Barrington: The story of the Barrington family of Glenstal Castle, County Limerick c. 1800-1925* (Limerick, 2018), xiii.

5. O'Callaghan, *Limerick*, pp 122-3.

6. *Irish Examiner*, 4 May 1922.

7. *Church of Ireland Gazette*, 5 May 1922.

8. Military Archives, Michael Collins Papers, A/0897: IRA intelligence reports, 1922; O'Callaghan, *Limerick*, p. 93. Religious affiliations are determined by cross-referencing names and addresses with digitised 1911 census returns. All who could be satisfactorily traced or were close matches were Roman Catholic.

9. This is drawn from a survey of 151 claims with Limerick connections submitted to the Irish Grants Committee. British National Archives (TNA), Colonial Office files (CO), Irish Grants Committee (IGC), 762/3–202.

10. TNA, CO 762/18/5 Charles Langford: IGC application, 16 November 1926.

11. Brian M. Walker, 'Southern Protestant voices during the Irish War of Independence and Civil War: Reports from the Church of Ireland synods' in Brian Hughes and Conor Morrissey (eds), *Southern Irish loyalism, 1912–1949* (Liverpool, 2020), pp 69-94, at pp 82, 89.

12. *Irish Times*, 24 October 1922.

Everyday Violence in Civil War Limerick

Fig. 46

Gemma Clark

Brother against brother, 'green against green': There is a strong association in the popular mind between civil war and brutal, intimate violence. On the other hand, historical research has shown that the internal conflict over the Anglo-Irish Treaty (ratified in January 1922) was relatively restrained. Even in county Limerick, where clashes between National Army and anti-Treaty troops were particularly intense, there was what John Dorney terms in this volume a 'rapid decline' in lethal violence after August 1922. However, while war deaths (94 in the county, by his tally, and around 1,500 nationally) were low in comparison with contemporaneous European civil wars, counter-revolutions, and ethnic cleansings, it is important to understand that casualty figures alone do not adequately measure the impact of any war on ordinary men and women. I have examined thousands of intimidating and aggressive acts that occurred in Ireland in 1922/23, and did not kill, but resulted in mental or physical injury, damage to property, loss of livelihood, and/or forced relocation. Studying closely this 'everyday violence' reveals the agendas (military, social, cultural, etc.) at play in Limerick – and the new Irish Free State more widely – as Ireland established its independence from Britain.

Everyday violence can occur in politico-military contexts, while also signalling local and communal conflicts with much deeper roots than the fallout over the Treaty. Two burnings carried out in Limerick on 29 June 1922 (as the shelling of the anti-Treaty republican-occupied Four Courts in Dublin commenced officially the Irish Civil War's military phase) made immediate sense as anti-Treaty IRA strategy. With Limerick city and even smaller settlements across the county well connected by rail to the rest of the country, the burning of Edward Scales's station-master's cottage in Foynes can be seen as part of a wider war on infrastructure, intended to damage commerce and halt daily life. On the same day, Glanduff Castle (in the south of the county, near Broadford) was burned by 200 anti-Treaty republicans who – following an increasingly familiar pattern of Civil War arson – seized it from occupying National Army troops, and looted and burned this temporary barracks. These and hundreds more examples of the burning, grabbing, or sabotage of property or communications in Limerick challenged violently the authority of the Free State, undermining the ability of the newly independent government to protect its citizens from harm.

Yet, while questions of sectarianism and Protestant depopulation are still much debated in public and academic spheres, by digging just a little deeper we see that certain social groups were much more vulnerable to violence and intimidation than were others. Outside Limerick city, where Protestants made up around 10 percent of the population, non-Catholics comprised a

Fig. 47, Civilians examining the damage to Strand Barracks, c. 21 July 1922

small and dwindling minority of just 3 percent of the county's population. Protestant railway worker Scales was, in the words of the state solicitor investigating his compensation case, 'apparently singled out specially to be victimised' as 'one of the few [Protestants] living in the district' [Foynes]'; the Scales family were also what a neighbour termed 'Unionists in politics' and were known locally to have supplied teas and lodgings to British armed forces.[1] In this heavily dairy-producing county, Protestant 'gentleman farmer' Herbert Sullivan also claimed he was targeted – with the burning of his Curramore House, Broadford on 11 August 1922 – for having supplied, during the First World War, a small British Army detachment with lunch for the officers and 'milk for their men'.[2] These seemingly innocuous displays of allegiance to the old regime might have been cited as cover for a visceral 'taking it out on the Protestants'.[3] Or, perhaps more likely, UK connections were more harshly punished during the Civil War, compared with the earlier War of Independence, because a further decolonisation was necessary in the eyes of anti-Treaty republicans, given what they saw as the inadequate terms of the Treaty. A survey of arson in Limerick and its Munster neighbours, Tipperary and Waterford, confirms that attacks on Scales and Sullivan were part of a wider process of community regulation: 19 percent of recorded arson cases in these three counties were attributable to the claimant's allegiance to the UK, and 25 percent of buildings burned were 'big houses'. Notable in ethnic conflicts around the globe as an 'emblem of complete hostility', fire thus served well the anti-Treaty republican routing of British influence from the new state.[4]

An inherently public spectacle (burning things emits heat, light, and attracts widespread attention), arson has evolved in the modern era as a protest tool especially well-suited to insurgent groups who lack the power to enact change through more subtle (constitutional) means. While the new Free State government was at pains to appear fair in its treatment of religious and political minorities – and southern Protestants fared better than Catholics killed by loyalist mobs and state forces in newly partitioned Northern Ireland – incendiarism on the ground sent a rather different message. Arson made Scales instantly unwelcome (and destitute) in his local community; his family stayed in a disused rectory while he applied to British and Irish government schemes for the compensation he badly needed to refurbish their home. While big house dwellers, by contrast, had the resources and connections in England and elsewhere to continue to live in relative privilege, the burning of these homes signalled in a more profound sense the end of their physical and cultural dominance of the Irish countryside. The restoration of Glanduff Castle, for example, an extensive mansion with a gunroom, wine

Fig. 48, Ruins of senior officers accommodation, New Barracks, c. 21 July 1922

cellar, and tower, would have been difficult and expensive, but also – from the new administration's point of view – undesirable: Irish country house owners faced particular 'difficulties … in search of compensation … in the courts'.[5] Now a ruin, Glanduff's fate hints at the complexity of Civil War politics and Irish land issues. Its tenant Frances Ievers (the wife of a British Army major) had resided just one week a year in Ireland from 1919 until the castle was burned, despite renting it from the Staveley family for nearly 25 years. Land hunger is palpable in the burning of this big house; 'a local woman told the steward that the "Old Bitch … had the place long enough and that it was about time to get it divided up"'.[6]

The burning of crops and outhouses, which accounted for 47 percent of arson attacks in county Limerick during the Civil War, suggests further that it was not simply old enemies who were targeted with everyday violence, but also those who had recently, or (as it was perceived by the local community) unfairly, acquired land. The burning of winter fodder caused serious financial hardship even

Fig. 49, Soldiers examining the damage to Strand Barracks, c. 21 July 1922

for the relatively well-off 'grazier' (viz. middle-class farmers, typically Catholics, who had done well out of British land-purchase legislation by acquiring large ranches for grazing cattle). Agitators with political, social, and economic goals thus used not only arson, but also animal maiming and cattle driving, to reclaim land for the landless. In the rich pastures of the Golden Vale running through county Limerick, cattle were especially prized possessions. By harming animals (for example, by houghing) or otherwise harassing the owner (by chasing cattle off the land, damaging fences, etc.), some farmers were simply forced to give up their holdings – facing a double loss when the value of their land depreciated during enforced absence and subsequent attempts to re-let or sell were boycotted.

This tactic, which originated in the Irish Land War and reappeared in a particularly ugly episode of the county's history (the antisemitic Limerick Boycott of 1904/05) was also adapted easily as a tool of the Civil War. Those who undermined the anti-Treaty cause in some way were ostracised; discharged from his court clerkship in December 1922, John Holmes of Galbally failed to make his living as an auctioneer and land valuer because threatening notices, signed by the IRA, warned people not to do business with this 'ex-clerk of Petty Sessions and British Spy'.[7] Holmes also cited his religion (Church of Ireland) as reason for his rejection by the community. Placing one's trade with one's co-religionists historically was not uncommon in Ireland, and some businesses were hurt more by the loss of their customer base (the withdrawal of British soldiers, policemen, and civil servants) than by targeted campaigns of intimidation. In Limerick, a predominantly rural economy with few urban centres and a dispersed population, there were arguably fewer 'battles for communal or economic dominance of the kind that provoked large-scale conflict elsewhere in the country'.[8] The boycotting of merchant and middle classes in county Waterford, by contrast, evidences the more systematic targeting of (Protestant) communities in towns where their commercial influence was still strong in the 1920s. There are, nonetheless, many examples of (usually Catholic) Limerick grocers, publicans, agricultural labourers, and others who were ex-RIC, ex-British servicemen, or held other business or familial links to Britain, losing their livelihoods (and therefore, sometimes, their place in the county) as a result of social and economic ostracism enforced by the threat of anti-Treaty IRA violence.

It is difficult, as we have seen, to isolate the primary motivating factor behind any act of violence – especially those everyday aggressions and intimidations that leave psychological rather than physical scars. However, during this centenary year in particular, it is important to address all forms of warfare and remember suffering

on all sides. Newly opened archives are helping us understand, for example, the disproportionate impact of acts like house burning, raids, etc., on women, as the traditional guardians of the domestic spaces transgressed by Ireland's internal conflict. I hope also that I have shifted perceptions of civil war as a savage feud ('brother against brother') in which violence is motivated by revenge rather than politics or ideology. While some people used the breakdown of law and order in Ireland to settle personal scores, politics (and particularly questions of national identity and sovereignty prompted by the Treaty) were present in local violence in Limerick. The purging of the old administration included the Protestant minority, but also saw Catholic loyalists and strong farmers attacked for their land, as the dismantling of Anglo-Irish power (performed stunningly in big house burnings) came to encompass wider social and revolutionary concerns for those for whom independence, in the form of the Irish Free State, had not solved poverty or historic injustices.

Notes

1. Quoted in Gemma Clark, *Everyday violence in the Irish Civil War* (Cambridge, 2014), pp. 48-9.

2. Ibid., p. 31.

3. Peter Hart, *The IRA and its enemies: Violence and community in Cork, 1916–1923* (Oxford, 1998): Chapter 12.

4. Donald L. Horowitz, *The deadly ethnic riot* (London, 2001), p. 113.

5. Terence Dooley, *Burning the Big House: The story of the Irish country house in a time of war and revolution* (Yale, 2022), p. 209.

6. Quoted in Clark, *Everyday violence*, p. 87.

7. Ibid., p. 140.

8. John O'Callaghan, *Limerick: The Irish Revolution, 1912–23* (Dublin, 2018), p. 2.

The Limerick RIC and its Enemies
Police Victimisation in the Shadow of Civil War

Fig. 50

Seán William Gannon

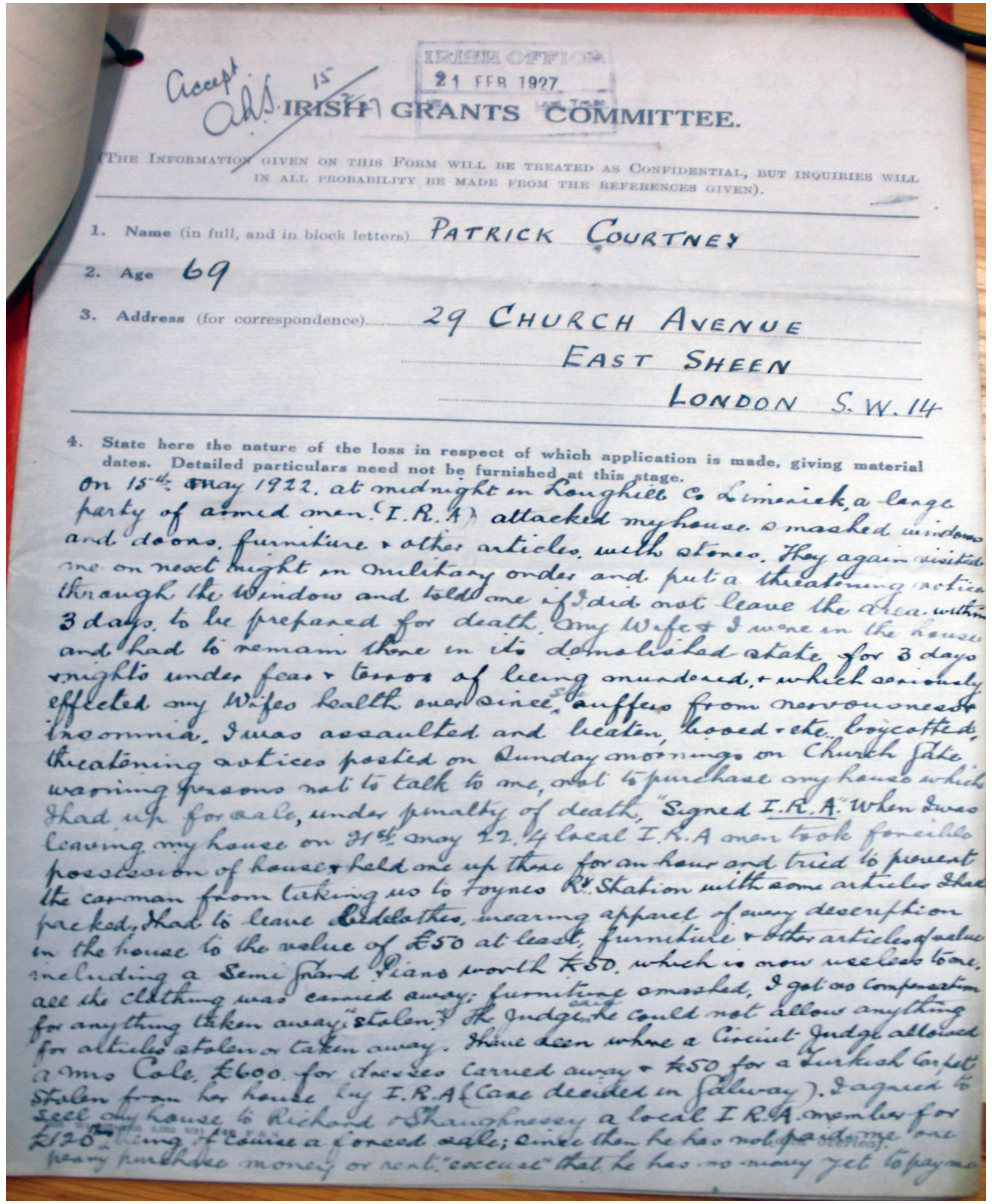
Patrick and Marion Courtney's last week in Limerick commenced with a night-time attack on their house. At 1am on 15 May 1922, they were roused from their sleep in Currabawnbeg, Loughill by a group of men who proceeded to stone the property, smashing the front door and windows, and breaking furniture and other household effects. These same men returned two nights later, and threw a letter through one of the still-broken panes. It read:

> Your acquittal has been ordered out of this area on or before Saturday 20th of May. The volunteers of this area have been ordered to guard you up to that time, but after that you suffer the consequences.

Courtney, a 65 year-old retired RIC constable 25 years resident in Limerick, put the house up for sale in the morning. Nonetheless, he was from then subjected to a violent intimidatory campaign which left him and his wife in daily fear for their lives. This culminated on Sunday 21 May with the posting of a notice on Loughill church gate warning that 'any person who would buy the ex-Policeman's mansion is warned against doing so; if he does he may be prepared for the consequences. By Order IRA'.[1] Believing their situation to be entirely hopeless, the Courtneys made immediate arrangements to flee, hiring a driver to take them to Foynes railway station that afternoon. However, while they were waiting, four local men took forcible possession of their house and drove the terrified couple down the road. The Courtneys made their way directly to London where they lived out the rest of their lives.

The judge assessing the Courtneys' claim for compensation under the terms of the Irish Free State's Damage to Property (Compensation) Act described it as 'a very cruel case'.[2] But while cruel, it was by no means unusual. It was, in fact, just one of a wave of effective expulsions of disbanded and retired RIC personnel that occurred across Ireland in the spring and summer of 1922. In late February and early March, notices warning disbanded RIC not to return to their homes began circulating in certain parts of the country and personalised expulsion orders were soon being served on individual policemen and/or their families. By mid-June, Dublin Castle's assistant under-secretary, Sir Alfred Cope, was complaining to Michael Collins of what he called 'a concerted movement for a wholesale expulsion' which had started in the south and was 'rapidly extending' to counties such as Carlow, Meath, Cavan, and Galway.[3]

The actual extent of the danger faced by former policemen in 1922 will, at this remove, remain unknown. In early April, RIC chief Henry Hugh Tudor warned the



Accept
IRISH OFFICE
21 FEB 1927

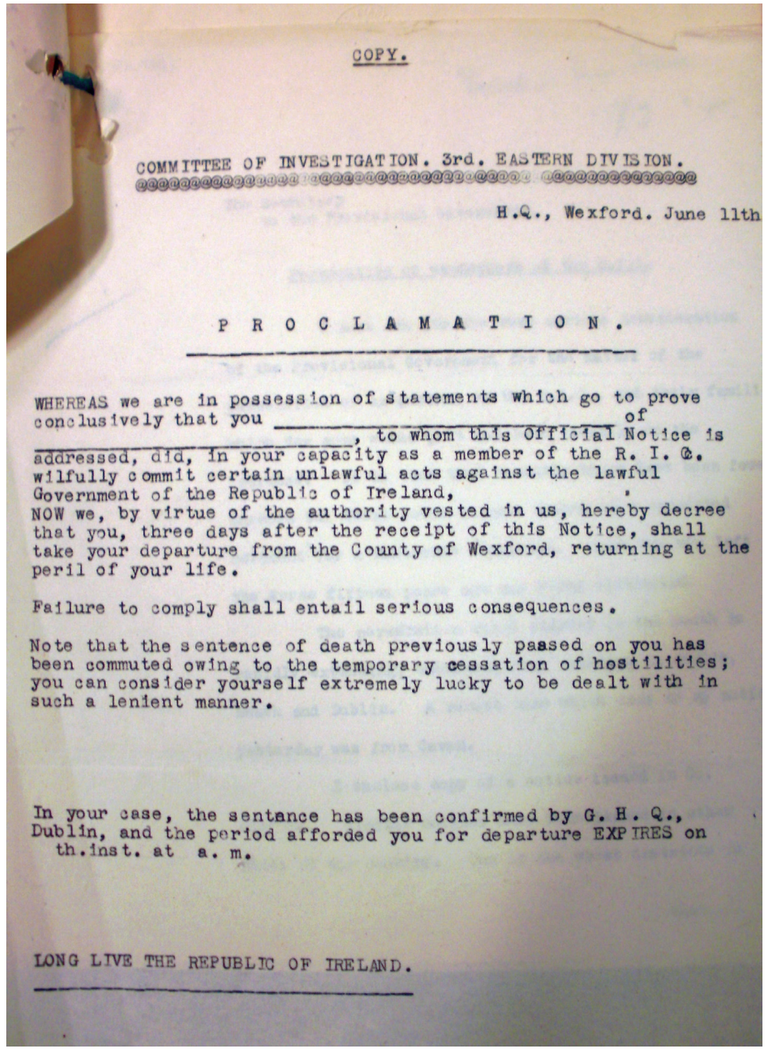
IRISH GRANTS COMMITTEE.

(The Information given on this Form will be treated as Confidential, but inquiries will in all probability be made from the references given).

1. Name (in full, and in block letters) PATRICK COURTNEY
2. Age 69
3. Address (for correspondence) 29 CHURCH AVENUE, EAST SHEEN, LONDON S.W. 14
4. State here the nature of the loss in respect of which application is made, giving material dates. Detailed particulars need not be furnished at this stage.

On 15th May 1922. at midnight in Loughill Co Limerick, a large party of armed men (I.R.A.) attacked my house, smashed windows and doors, furniture & other articles, with stones. They again visited me on next night in military order and put a threatening notice through the window and told me if I did not leave the area within 3 days, to be prepared for death. My Wife & I were in the house and had to remain there in its demolished state for 3 days & nights under fear & terror of being murdered, & which seriously effected my Wifes health ever since, she suffers from nervousness & insomnia. I was assaulted and beaten, booed & etc., boycotted, threatening notices posted on Sunday mornings on Church Gate warning persons not to talk to me, not to purchase my house which I had up for sale, under penalty of death, "Signed I.R.A." When I was leaving my house on 21st May 22, 4 local I.R.A men took forcible possession of house & held me up there for an hour and tried to prevent the carman from taking us to Foynes Rl. Station with some articles I had packed, I had to leave bedclothes, wearing apparel of every description in the house to the value of £50 at least, furniture & other articles of value including a Semi Grand Piano worth £50. which is now useless to me, all the clothing was carried away; furniture smashed, I got no compensation for anything taken away "stolen", the Judge said he could not allow anything for articles stolen or taken away. I have seen where a Circuit Judge allowed a Mrs Cole, £600. for dresses carried away & £50 for a Turkish Carpet stolen from her house by I.R.A. (Case decided in Galway). I agreed to sell my house to Richard O'Shaughnessy a local I.R.A. member for £120. being of course a forced sale; since then he has not paid me one penny purchase money or rent, "excuse" that he has no money yet to pay me [illegible]

Fig. 51, Irish Grants Committee application of Patrick and Marion Courtney, February 1927



COPY.

COMMITTEE OF INVESTIGATION. 3rd. EASTERN DIVISION.

H.Q., Wexford. June 11th

P R O C L A M A T I O N.

WHEREAS we are in possession of statements which go to prove conclusively that you _____ of _____, to whom this Official Notice is addressed, did, in your capacity as a member of the R. I. C. wilfully commit certain unlawful acts against the lawful Government of the Republic of Ireland,

NOW we, by virtue of the authority vested in us, hereby decree that you, three days after the receipt of this Notice, shall take your departure from the County of Wexford, returning at the peril of your life.

Failure to comply shall entail serious consequences.

Note that the sentence of death previously passed on you has been commuted owing to the temporary cessation of hostilities; you can consider yourself extremely lucky to be dealt with in such a lenient manner.

In your case, the sentance has been confirmed by G. H. Q., Dublin, and the period afforded you for departure EXPIRES on th.inst. at a. m.

LONG LIVE THE REPUBLIC OF IRELAND.

Irish Chief Secretary, Sir Hamar Greenwood, that any man who served in the RIC was in danger of murder. But this was demonstrably untrue. As Greenwood himself told a House of Commons committee six weeks later, ex-RIC and their families were undoubtedly suffering in 'several counties', but it was 'not quite fair to say that every disbanded member of the RIC was in danger of his life'.[4] But there was sufficient incidence of actual attacks, more than 30 of which culminated in murder, to convince ex-RIC that their lives were in peril. These killings induced a real sense of panic amongst disbanding policemen and some 2,300 left Ireland, many, indeed if not most, either in fear of their lives or despair of a future livelihood.

'Clear out of Ireland within three days'

Limerick was not amongst the counties complained of by Cope. But many ex-RIC there resident in 1922 shared in Patrick Courtney's fate. Expulsions from the city began in late March and gathered pace in mid-April after armed raids on Limerick railway station which targeted arriving and transiting disbanded policemen. On 19 April, for example, a group awaiting the afternoon train to Newcastle West had their luggage taken at gunpoint, while two days later Sergeant Patrick Sullivan was accosted on his arrival by a party of armed men who seized his luggage and gave him 24 hours to leave. The clearing of ex-RIC from Rathkeale too began in the last week of April. There, the homes of its seven resident disbanded policemen were raided and they and their families instructed to leave. Forty-three-year-old Constable Fenton Kirwan was amongst them. On the night of 26 April 1922, he was awakened by a group of armed men who warned him to leave the country within three days at peril of his life. So too was John Fahey, a 48-year-old RIC sergeant from Galway stationed in Rathkeale since 1909. On the night of 27 April his house was, as he later recounted, 'raided by six young men armed with rifles and revolvers who ordered myself, wife and family to clear out of Ireland within three days'.[5] Policemen in other areas of county Limerick told similar tales. In early May, for example, the wife of District Inspector Thomas Stapleton was delivered of a letter at their home in Adare warning that he would be shot on sight if he returned to the town. He made his way immediately to England as did, eventually, his wife. Similarly with Julia Hall. Her husband, Constable William Hall, a native of Cavan 28-years resident in Limerick, was being disbanded in Dublin when a party of armed men called to their house in Foynes and ordered her out. She immediately disposed of their assets and joined her husband in Dublin, from where they relocated to London. In nearby Ballyhahill, Sergeant Maurice Reidy received a letter on 14 May giving him three days to leave. He quickly departed for

Dublin.

The records of the RIC Tribunal, established in April 1922 to assist financially in 'individual cases of exceptional hardship' amongst disbanded policemen, provide further insights into this violent upheaval. It compensated at least 30 Limerick-stationed policemen for property losses incurred on account of their flight. In August 1922, for example, 41-year-old Sergeant Denis Keohane was awarded £175 for 'property seized' and 'losses on forced sale' arising out of his expulsion from Bruff, while Constable John Harrington was compensated £185 for losses incurred on his furniture's sale after he was ordered out of his Limerick City home by armed raiders. A survey of RIC pension registers for 1922/23 provides a sense of the scale of the exodus that police victimisation effected. In most cases, they record the locations at which pensions were paid to disbanded policemen, up to and including January 1923. Of the 163 former head constables, sergeants, and constables stationed in Limerick at the time of their disbandment, 65 percent were living outside of Ireland in January 1923; 87 in Great Britain, and the remaining 19 in further-flung places such as Australia, North America, and the colonies, mainly the Palestine Mandate.

'I have done nothing to merit this'

The great majority of RIC expulsions were the work of anti-Treaty IRA elements. Specific responsibility has been traditionally attributed to thirteenth-hour warriors and/or Trucileers, their attacks on ex-RIC facilitated by a general breakdown in IRA discipline following the March 1922 formal split and a febrile socio-political climate increasingly distinguished by a slide into civil war. Some held this view at the time. As an *Irish Independent* letter-writer colourfully put it: 'Some of the men who are [now] ordering out the RIC were under the bed when the trouble was on ... and now when Mr. Collins and his followers are for peace ... they make war on ex-police'.[6] Yet, quite unusually in the context of RIC expulsions, the identities of some of the perpetrators in Limerick are known, and they were in fact stalwarts of the 1919/21 IRA independence campaign. For example, Maurice Reidy's expulsion order was signed by John Tom O'Connor, officer comanding the 5th Battallion, West Limerick Brigade. O'Connor, described by the *Limerick Leader* as 'one of the greatest [IRA] Battalion commandants throughout the whole struggle for Independence', was also responsible for expulsions from Foynes.[7] Patrick and Marion Courtney were also ordered out by members of the so-called 'Fighting Fifth'. All four of their assailants were members of its Loughill or Ballyhahill companies with Loughill's officer

commanding, Captain Robert Jones, leading the attack. And while the personal identities of those who effected the expulsions from Limerick City are unknown, the fact that they began in the last week of March as the anti-Treaty IRA took over British-vacated barracks and asserted municipal control is doubtless significant. Indeed, Patrick Sullivan described his assailants as 'uniformed armed men who called themselves IRA'.[8]

The reasons for which such men chose to 'make war on the ex-police' are difficult definitively to know. Certainly some attacks involved the settling of wartime scores. Thomas Stapleton, for example, was ordered out as he was 'a traitor to the cause by being employed recruiting the Black and Tans' in English cities.[9] Another was William Hall, who had been a marked man since December 1920 when was centrally involved in a police raid during which Captain Tim Madigan of the Shanagolden IRA was shot dead. That a policeman's War of Independence record could determine his fate was further demonstrated by the cases of Sergeant Florence Donnelly and Constable Denis Harrington, both natives of Kerry stationed in Patrickswell. Before allowing their return to Kerry, the county's no. 2 Brigade sought information on their RIC service from the local intelligence officer in Limerick. However, most RIC expulsions from Limerick likely formed part of less discriminate campaigns of revenge in which mere RIC membership provided justification enough. This was, perhaps, unsurprising. Limerick was one of the flashpoints of the War of Independence and the counterinsurgency of the RIC and its auxiliaries was punctuated by episodes of 'Black and Tannery'. The anger and resentment such episodes engendered could not be simply turned off by a Truce. That this could be as true of pro-Treaty as anti-Treaty personnel was demonstrated in July 1922 when veterans of the East Limerick Brigade were prime movers in the 'mutiny' over the recruitment of ex-RIC into the new Civic Guard. As one veteran put it, he and his former brigade comrades were 'not going to serve under [ex-RIC] ... we could not respect them as officers, and I for one would not salute them. The hand would rot off me first'.[10]

In December 1922, Patrick Courtney complained to the Department of Finance that his life remained in danger in Limerick although 'I have done nothing to merit this', and the evidence suggests this was so.[11] His was one of a number of expulsions that appear to have been at least partly motivated by agrarian disputes or personal rivalries rather than RIC service per se. For just before being driven from Loughill, he was forced to agree the sale of the property with one of his assailants at half its market price. Yet, according to Courtney, he had not received a penny in purchase money or rent in lieu six years later and he told the Irish Grants Committee that he was returning to Loughill in June 1928 to begin

Fig. 52, National Army soldiers inspecting the ruins of Strand Barracks, c. 21 July 1922

Fig. 53, RIC constable Joseph Morton, his wife Mary Agnes, and six of their children

the process of his assailant's eviction before the seven years occupancy needed for adverse possession expired.[12] Courtney died that December, and his house remained in his assailant's hands.

'The vindictive spirit that is abroad'

It is important to note that expulsion cases did not represent the totality of the RIC experience during the Irish revolutionary endgame. The extent of police victimisation not only varied from county to county, but within individual counties themselves. This was certainly true of county Limerick. Some areas such as Foynes, Newcastle West, and Rathkeale provided very cold houses for ex-RIC and their families. Yet those living in some other areas lived on unmolested throughout even the worst of the Civil War period. Their stories are difficult to uncover as, unlike those who suffered victimisation, they had little reason to write them down. However, the experience of the Mortons of Kilmallock provides an insight into the diversity of the RIC experience in Limerick in 1922. Constable Joseph Morton, a 48-year-old father of eight, was killed in the May 1920 IRA attack on Kilmallock barracks, after which three of his sons, John, Alfred, and Joseph, enlisted in the RIC. His wife, Mary Agnes, and her other children were left unmolested throughout 1922 and Alfred returned to the family home immediately after disbandment and lived his life there undisturbed. John initially relocated to Dublin, but he too soon returned to Kilmallock. And although Joseph moved permanently to Britain he did so, not on account of IRA intimidation or attack, but for love, having met his future English wife while on RIC service in Kerry in 1921. In fact, variations in police victimisation even occurred within the same parishes, indicating the lack of a coordinated approach to such cases, even at the most local level.

Police victimisation in 1922 formed part of wider, largely (but not exclusively) anti-Treaty IRA campaigns against Irish socio-political 'outgroups' such as British ex-servicemen and (mainly Protestant) unionists, typifying what one contemporary commentator termed 'the vindictive spirit that [was] abroad' across Ireland towards perceived enemies of 'the Irish Republic' at the time.[13] Although a more definitive judgment must await the release of the 1926 census, it is believed that a majority of expelled ex-RIC returned to Ireland in the short to medium term, when they felt that they could safely do so and/or their prospects of employment were improved. Yet the stigma of their service persisted and, judged to have stood on the wrong side of Irish history, the RIC suffered comprehensive defeat in what Elizabeth Malcolm termed the 'political and propaganda wars' over the manner in which the violence of the Irish Revolution

was 'remembered, interpreted and commemorated and, ultimately, justified'.[14]

Nonetheless, for most RIC returnees, peace with their once-estranged communities came dropping relatively quickly. As early as 1924, one was claiming that 'many who are now returning ... from England and elsewhere are being received back as friends, not as former enemies'.[15] But with 'forgiveness' came the need to forget, especially amongst those many across Ireland with continuing cause to fear to speak of 'Twenty-Two' and blush at its name. For an examination of the archival record on RIC expulsions reveals unresolved crimes involving people and property around which communal cultures of silence have since grown. And, as demonstrated by the 'very cruel case' of the Courtneys, this is as true of county Limerick as elsewhere.

Notes

1. British National Archives (TNA), Colonial Office files (CO) 762/126/4: Patrick & Marion Courtney, Irish Grants Committee (IGC) application, 18 February 1927.
2. National Archives of Ireland (NAI), Department of Finance: Compensation Files (FIN/COMP) 2/13/15: Patrick & Marion Courtney, State solicitor's report, 27 January 1925.
3. NAI, Dept. Taoiseach, TSCH/3/S1842, Cope to Collins, 22 June 1922.
4. *Irish Independent*, 26 May 1922.
5. TNA, CO 762/112/11: John Fahey, IGC application, 27 November 1926.
6. *Irish Independent*, 19 June 1922.
7. *Limerick Leader*, 24 December 1955.
8. TNA, CO 762/169/3 Patrick O'Sullivan, IGC application, 13 March 1928.
9. TNA, CO/762/110/5, Stapleton to IGC, 6 September 1927.
10. Brian McCarthy, *The Civic Guard mutiny* (Cork, Mercier, 2012), p. 67.
11. NAI, FIN/COMP: Patrick & Marion Courtney, Compensation claim, 22 December 1922.
12. TNA, CO/762/126/4: Courtney to IGC, 15 November 1927, 12 June 1928.
13. *Western Times*, 25 May 1922.
14. Elizabeth Malcolm, *The Irish policeman, 1822-1922: A life* (Dublin, 2006), p. 213.
15. *Irish Independent*, 4 October 1924.

Unsundered Friendships
Relationships between Pro and Anti Treaty in East Limerick

Fig. 54

Thomas Toomey

This essay chronicles a series of incidents in the East and Mid Limerick Brigade areas during the course of the Civil War, which reflect warmly on the individuals involved. They relate to eight battalions within these areas; six in East Limerick (Doon, Kilteely, Bruff, Kilmallock, Kilfinnane, and Galbally), and the two in Mid Limerick closest to the East Limerick area - Caherconlish and Castleconnell. This essay does not set out to paint the period under review as being a bed of roses, or to argue that there was no falling out between individuals. It is probably fair to say that most of the bitterness and rancour, as such there was, involved men who were not in position at the time of the Anglo-Irish Truce of 11 July 1921. It would also be fair to say that some of this rancour arose among peripheral figures who felt that they merited higher rank and recognition.

The majority of the active IRA in these brigade areas at the time of the Truce took the pro-Treaty side, but the number who took the anti-Treaty side was significant. The division between active men in these areas is best reflected in Seamus Malone's epic work, *Blood on the Flag*, where he writes that, before going away to get married, Donnchadh O'Hannigan left him in charge of the East Limerick Brigade and it was planned that they would meet up when O'Hannigan returned. When O'Hannigan returned from his honeymoon, the two men found themselves on opposite sides. Malone writes of this parting in terms of great sorrow rather than of rancour and bitterness.[1]

A story related to this author by Joseph Graham of Annacotty in 1988 tells of the National Army garrison at Caherconlish being surprised in their quarters by a force of anti-Treaty IRA in July 1922. Having captured their arms, the IRA released the ordinary soldiers as they had nowhere to hold prisoners. The garrison's six officers - Graham, John Joe O'Brien and Sean Lynch of Galbally, Liam Hayes of Kilteely, and two unnamed men - were taken first to Pallasgrean and then to Tipperary town, its former British Army barracks being an anti-Treaty bastion at the time. While they were in Tipperary, Seán Hogan came into the room where they were being held. O'Brien greeted Hogan, who ignored him, which led O'Brien to retort; 'Hogan if I realised you were such a bo*****s I would never have risked my neck going to Knocklong to rescue you'. (He had taken part in rescue of Hogan from police custody at Knocklong railway station in May 1919).[2]

The six officers were then transferred to Cork as prisoners of war. But, in reality, it seems that they were held as hostages and, when Cork was invaded from the sea by National Army forces in August 1922, it was feared that they would be executed in reprisal. The attitude of Hogan was in complete contrast to that of his

Fig. 55, Roll call of National Army troops at Bruff, 26 July 1922

fellow anti-Treaty republican, Dan Breen. Like John Joe O'Brien, Breen had taken part in the Knocklong rescue. However, unlike Hogan, he held no rancour towards men on the opposite side in the Civil War, and he used his influence to have the six men released. He wrote out and signed safe passes for them, before releasing them at Glanmire railway station outside Cork city. In July 2005, O'Brien's son, Stan, showed a copy of his father's safe pass to this author.[3]

O'Brien and Sean Lynch later returned the favour, to an extent. In March 1923, Breen was captured in the Glen of Aherlow in a raid by National Army forces and he, together with two McDonagh sisters from Lisvernane, was taken first to Galbally, where O'Brien and Lynch insisted on treating Breen to a few pints of Guinness in a local pub. Later Breen was taken into the barracks

Fig. 56, National Army troops outside Cruise's Royal Hotel, July 1922

in Tipperary town, now in the hands of the National Army. A story, related to this author by a nephew of the McDonaghs, Pat Boyce, tells of their being placed in a bare room on the top storey of the barracks, famished and hungry, while Breen was dining on bacon and cabbage in the officers' mess.[4]

Another story told to this author by Liam Grace of Garrydoolis in 2003 further illustrates these unsundered friendships. In August 1922 his father, Dan Grace, an anti-Treaty IRA member, was on hunger strike in Limerick Prison when his younger sister, Mary Bridget, decided to cycle to Limerick to visit him there. She was stopped at a National Army roadblock at Pallasgrean under the control of Maurice Meade, a very colourful character from the War of Independence, who had been attested into the National Army as an officer in March 1922.[5] The two had a difference of opinion and Meade impounded her bicycle and left her to walk back to Garrydoolis. As she was walking, she was overtaken by a National Army staff car transporting Liam Hayes and another officer,

Fig. 57, Anti-Treaty IRA prisoner being escorted by National Army troops, Limerick county, 22 July 1922

Sean Stapleton of Oola. The two stopped and gave her a lift, and when she had calmed down sufficiently, they turned and took her back to the Pallasgrean roadblock to reclaim her bicycle and then drove her onwards to Limerick.[6] The personal relationship between Dan Grace and Liam Hayes continued to be very warm. When Grace travelled to Dublin on IRA military service pension business in the 1930s, he normally stayed with Hayes, by then a colonel in the Irish Defence Forces, which had replaced the National Army in October 1924. Letters retained by Grace's family provide proof of this relationship.

Another story from Ciss Ryan, originally from Knocknacorriga in Doon, tells of her uncle, Tom Lonergan. An active member of the anti-Treaty IRA in

Fig. 58, Donnchadh O'Hannigan

the Doon area, he was captured by National Army forces and interned in Gormanston camp in county Meath. On his arrest his younger brother (and Ciss's father), John, decided to take up the cudgels for 'the Republic'. One day he was stopped on the road by Sean Stapleton, a huge man with a great sense of humour. He asked Lonergan, 'where is your brother?', to which he replied, 'in Gormanston, where ye effers put him'. Stapleton then said, 'your father is no longer a young man, John, and when you are locked up in Gormanston with your brother, who is going to milk the cows then?' The message appears to have hit home as the younger Lonergan reined back his anti-Treaty IRA activity and concentrated on working the family farm.[7]

Ged O'Dwyer from Bruff served in the National Army in the Nenagh area during the Civil War. In April 1923, he was in charge of a round-up that captured Paddy Ryan 'Lacken' at Foiladuff in the Slieve Felim mountains near Newport. Ryan 'Lacken' had been an extremely active IRA man during the War of Independence and anti-Treatyite during the Civil War. When he was captured, he inquired of O'Dwyer if he was to be executed to which O'Dwyer replied, 'not as far as I am concerned but I will find out'. He accompanied Ryan 'Lacken' to National Army headquarters on William Street, Limerick city. O'Dwyer there met Michael Brennan, general in charge of the Limerick area command. He said

to Brennan; 'if I bring in Paddy Ryan "Lacken", do I have your word he won't be executed?' Brennan assured him that he would not and told O'Dwyer to take him up to Limerick Prison.[8] Ryan 'Lacken' was greatly respected by O'Dwyer, even though he totally disagreed with his take on the Treaty.[9]

A story related to this author by former Fine Gael Limerick TD and government minister Tom O'Donnell concerned his uncle, Dick O'Connell. He was a National Army officer who was 'courting' a girl in the Lisnagry area. A number of anti-Treaty IRA activists became aware of this situation and laid plans to shoot O'Connell. Sean Carroll, the leader of the anti-Treaty IRA in the area, learned of the plan and expressly forbade any attempt to shoot his former comrade and friend. Carroll, who was regarded as a very strict disciplinarian, was also involved in an incident in March 1923 near Castleconnell, when Maurice Meade was captured by the IRA. Earlier in the day, an IRA member named John Baggott had been killed in an exchange of fire with National Army soldiers. On this account, Carroll decided to release Meade in the belief that if Baggott's brothers became aware of Meade's presence, they might seek his death in reprisal and even he might not be able to stop them.[10]

The foregoing sample of incidents and actions reflect on friendships that were not sundered by the tragedy of the Civil War in the East Limerick area. Yet for some, these unsundered friendships had negative consequences. Donnchadh O'Hannigan was the person who probably suffered most in this regard. There was a great respect between O'Hannigan, Liam Lynch, and the Malone brothers (Seamus and Thomas), and although he was probably the most successful flying column commander to join the pro-Treaty side, the Irish Free State authorities never fully trusted him because he did not hate his anti-Treaty opponents sufficiently. In early July 1922, when there was a serious threat of fighting breaking out in Limerick city, O'Hannigan and Michael Brennan agreed a truce with Lynch to avoid this. However, National Army GHQ immediately rescinded this agreement; and while Brennan's career did not suffer, O'Hannigan's appears to have been blighted by his role in this truce.

Notes

1. Séamas O Maoileoin, *Blood on the flag: Autobiography of a freedom fighter*, trans. Patrick Twohig (Cork, 1996).
2. Joseph Graham, Conversation with author, 14 July 1988.
3. Stan O'Brien, Conversation with author, 15 July 2003.
4. Pat Boyce, Conversation with author, 10 March 2022.

5. Maurice Meade joined the British Army in 1911, and had reached the rank of corporal when the Great War broke three years later. He was captured at Le Bassée in 1915 and taken to a German prisoner-of-war camp, where he was one of a small number of Irishmen to join Roger Casement's Irish Brigade to fight in the coming insurrection against British rule in Ireland. When that project failed, Meade enlisted in the German Army and fought in the Middle East. On returning to Ireland after the war, he joined the IRA and fought in all major engagements with the East Limerick Flying Column, and he took the Free State side in the Civil War. He resigned his National Army commission in 1926. Prior to joining the British Army, Meade was employed taking milk to the creamery for Reales of Coolalough near Hospital on an ass and cart. When he resigned from the National Army, he returned to life as a farm labourer, only now he was taking milk to the creamery in a horse and cart. He died at his home near Emly on 24 April 1972, aged 81.

6. Liam Grace, Conversation with author, 23 August 2003.

7. Ciss Ryan, Conversation with author, 21 February 2022. Story initially recounted to author in August 2010.

8. Five anti-Treaty IRA prisoners were executed in the Limerick Area Command by the Free State during the Civil War, two in Limerick Prison and three in Home Barracks, Ennis. They were all from the Mid Clare area as there had been a longstanding bitterness between the Brennans of East Clare and the Barretts of Mid Clare.

9. Thomas Toomey, *Forgotten dreams: The life and times of Major J. G. 'Ged' O'Dwyer* (Limerick, 1995), p. 80.

10. Tom O'Donnell, Conversation with author, 10 September 2011.

Limerick's Civil War Dead And Their Dependents

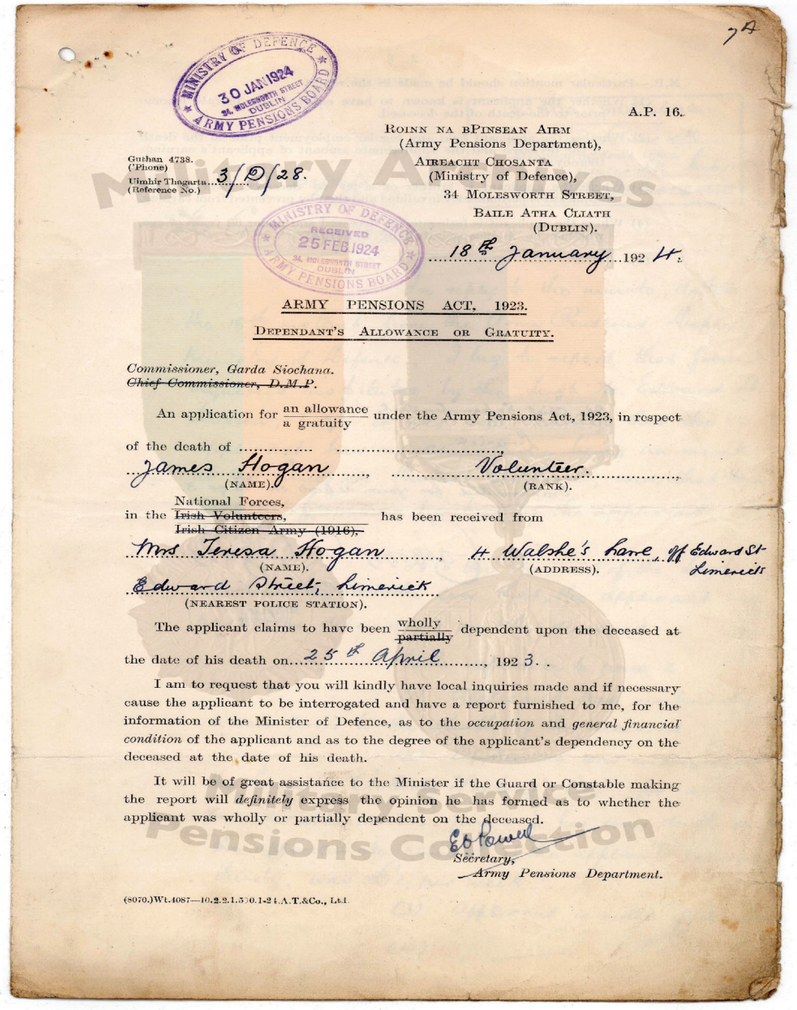
Fig. 59

Siobhán English

The families of at least 59 Limerick men who served with the National Army and the anti-Treaty IRA during the Civil War in Limerick suffered the tragedy of their deaths in 1922 and 1923 and applied for compensation for the enduring effects of their loss. These families contended that the death of their son, husband, or brother meant an additional, significant material loss, as outlined in their compensation applications under the Army Pensions Acts passed between 1923 and 1953. The original Army Pensions Act of 1923 granted compensation to members of the Irish Citizen Army, the Irish Volunteers, and the National Army who had received wounds in the course of active service. It also granted allowances and gratuities to the widows, children, and dependents of members of those organisations who were killed. Applicants were paid a dependents' allowance if fully dependent, or a gratuity if deemed partially dependent, on the deceased. An act of 1927 allowed for compensation to be granted to those who suffered or died as a result of disease attributable to active service and also established the Army Pensions Board to assess claims. In 1932, the incoming Fianna Fáil government extended the provisions of the previous legislation to all organisations involved in the War of Independence, including anti-Treaty IRA, the Hibernian Rifles, and Cumann na mBan. A series of further acts introduced between 1937 and 1980 improved the terms of previous legislation, increased allowances, and eased eligibility criteria. The initial awards of many dependents were appealed and reviewed under the terms of these later acts. The archive produced by these Army Pensions Acts, explored extensively at national level by Diarmaid Ferriter in his recent book, Between Two Hells, offers a revealing insight into dependents' social and economic circumstances, the sense of betrayal felt at the perceived paltry sums offered as compensation, and the lengthy struggle of many applicants to gain any measure of recognition or relief.[1] This essay explores the extent to which these factors applied to claims relating to Limerick city and county.

'His loss to me was irreparable'

For many applicants their grief manifested itself physically. Mary Ryan, mother of John Ryan, Caherconlish, a National Army member who had been accidentally shot, explained that, 'his father, who was in delicate health, died from the shock a week after my son was killed ... As a result of all I suffered, my health is so completely broken that I have not been outside my house for the past 18 months'.[2] In a letter to the lord mayor of Dublin, Mary Hanley, a sister of James Hogan, Edward Street, Limerick, similarly described the effect of James' accidental shooting on their mother, Teresa: 'His death



MINISTRY OF DEFENCE
30 JAN 1924
34 MOLESWORTH STREET DUBLIN
ARMY PENSIONS BOARD

74

A.P. 16.

ROINN NA bPINSEAN AIRM
(Army Pensions Department),
AIREACHT CHOSANTA
(Ministry of Defence),
34 MOLESWORTH STREET,
BAILE ATHA CLIATH
(DUBLIN).

Gushan 4738.
(Phone)
Uimhir Thagartha
(Reference No.) 3/D/28.

MINISTRY OF DEFENCE
RECEIVED
25 FEB 1924
34 MOLESWORTH STREET DUBLIN
ARMY PENSIONS BOARD

18th January 1924

ARMY PENSIONS ACT, 1923.

DEPENDANT'S ALLOWANCE OR GRATUITY.

Commissioner, Garda Siochana.
~~*Chief Commissioner, D.M.P.*~~

An application for an allowance / a gratuity under the Army Pensions Act, 1923, in respect of the death of

James Hogan, (NAME). Volunteer. (RANK).

in the National Forces, ~~Irish Volunteers, Irish Citizen Army (1916),~~ has been received from

Mrs. Teresa Hogan, (NAME). 4 Walshe's Lane, off Edward St Limerick (ADDRESS).

Edward Street Limerick (NEAREST POLICE STATION).

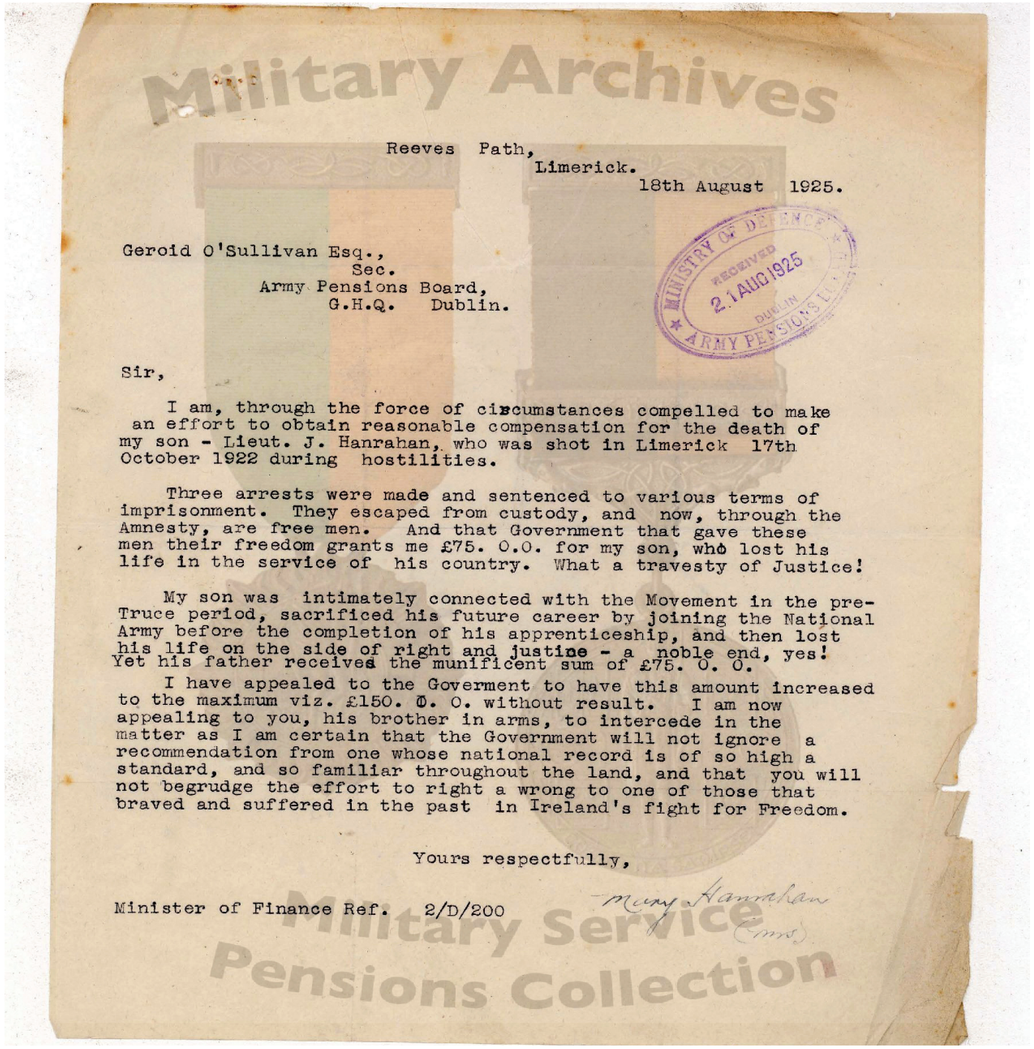
The applicant claims to have been wholly / ~~partially~~ dependent upon the deceased at the date of his death on 25th April, 1923.

I am to request that you will kindly have local inquiries made and if necessary cause the applicant to be interrogated and have a report furnished to me, for the information of the Minister of Defence, as to the *occupation* and *general financial condition* of the applicant and as to the degree of the applicant's dependency on the deceased at the date of his death.

It will be of great assistance to the Minister if the Guard or Constable making the report will *definitely* express the opinion he has formed as to whether the applicant was wholly or partially dependent on the deceased.

E O Towell
Secretary,
Army Pensions Department.

(8070.)Wt.4087—10,2.2.1.5:0.1-24 A.T.&Co., Ltd.



Reeves Path,
Limerick.
18th August 1925.

Geroid O'Sullivan Esq.,
Sec.
Army Pensions Board,
G.H.Q. Dublin.

Sir,

I am, through the force of circumstances compelled to make an effort to obtain reasonable compensation for the death of my son - Lieut. J. Hanrahan, who was shot in Limerick 17th October 1922 during hostilities.

Three arrests were made and sentenced to various terms of imprisonment. They escaped from custody, and now, through the Amnesty, are free men. And that Government that gave these men their freedom grants me £75. 0.0. for my son, who lost his life in the service of his country. What a travesty of Justice!

My son was intimately connected with the Movement in the pre-Truce period, sacrificed his future career by joining the National Army before the completion of his apprenticeship, and then lost his life on the side of right and justice - a noble end, yes! Yet his father receives the munificent sum of £75. 0. 0.

I have appealed to the Goverment to have this amount increased to the maximum viz. £150. 0. 0. without result. I am now appealing to you, his brother in arms, to intercede in the matter as I am certain that the Government will not ignore a recommendation from one whose national record is of so high a standard, and so familiar throughout the land, and that you will not begrudge the effort to right a wrong to one of those that braved and suffered in the past in Ireland's fight for Freedom.

Yours respectfully,

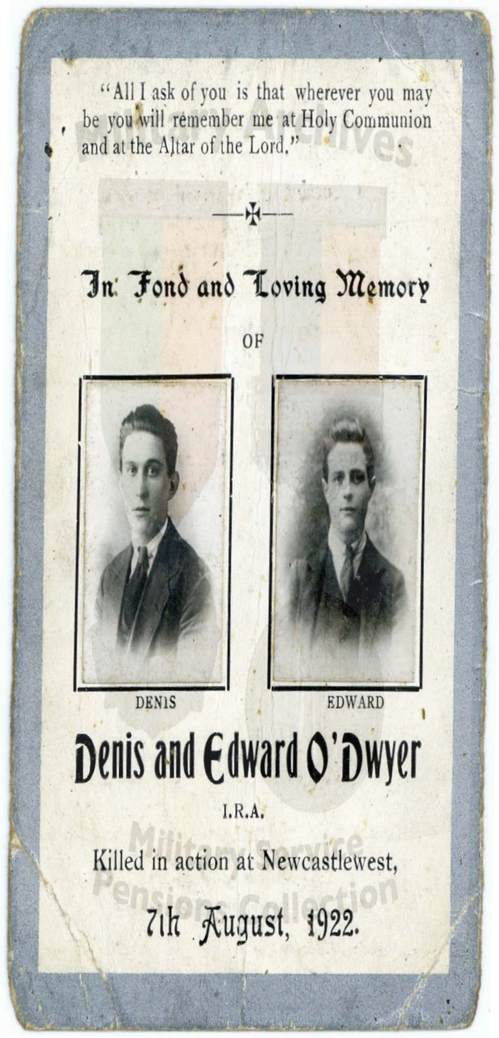
Mary Hanrahan (Mrs.)

Minister of Finance Ref. 2/D/200

was the cause of my mother's illness ... After hearing that her son was killed, her mind got deranged and she had to be put into the Mental Home'.[3]

In many cases, there was also a measurable financial loss, such as in that of James McCarthy, Parnell Street, Limerick. McCarthy, a sergeant major in the National Army, who died following the accidental discharge of his revolver while he was visiting the house of a friend. A newspaper report and letter in his mother Catherine's application file state that he had been in the habit of fooling around with his revolver. On this occasion, he placed the barrel in his mouth and pulled the trigger, resulting in his death. Catherine outlined her circumstances following the death of her only son: 'I was absolutely dependent on my son and since his death I am forced to exist on the charity of neighbours'.[4] This was one of eight accidental shootings noted in the applications concerning Limerick members of the National Army in 1922 and 1923 and may be indicative of the lack of training and, sometimes, lack of discipline of this army which had been urgently formed and pressed into service.

Under the strict terms of the 1923 Army Pensions Act, only those who were killed or who died as the result of a wound or injury received while on active service could be considered for compensation. Only dependents of deceased members of the National Army could apply but the scheme was extended to the anti-Treaty IRA in 1932. When adjudicating on applications, financial considerations often took precedence over human compassion. The death of John Cosgrave, formerly of Askeaton (following an operation for gastric dilation and enteroptosis at the Military Hospital in The Curragh, county Kildare) was not attributed to service, despite the plea of a local peace commissioner: 'This boy was an only son who attained the rank of Captain by sheer downright bravery and I am satisfied that it was his services in the Army (when the trouble was at its worst) that broke down his health'.[5] Jeremiah Nunan of Kilfinane had served briefly with the National Army before the Civil War formally broke out in June 1922, but then took the anti-Treaty side. His father Michael claimed compensation for his death, which occurred on 7 February 1923 from the effects of hardship and ill-treatment by National Army forces while undergoing a term of imprisonment: 'His loss to me was irreparable, being the chief breadwinner and sole supporter of myself and his mother'.[6] Supporting documentation for this claim was provided by a former employer, a Limerick County Council road ganger, attesting to Jeremiah's good health prior to his imprisonment. A statement from Dr M. Connery was also supplied, attributing Nunan's death to 'hardship and ill-treatment in prison'.



In addition, Tadhg Crowley TD stated that Nunan was 'a deserter from the Free State Army during the Civil War and I know that he was badly ill-treated in Limerick jail'.[7] However, as Nunan's death was not attributed to active service, no allowance was paid. On occasion, however, pleas were successful. The death from appendicitis of widower Peter Hackett of Michael Street, Limerick city left his young daughter in the care of her impoverished aunt and uncles. The efforts of his former commanding officer, Richard Nunan, in attributing his illness to a gastric ulcer brought on by hardship endured while on active service, as well as the persistence of Hackett's sister in pressing the case, finally resulted in the payment of an allowance.[8]

'There is no-one in the South of Ireland who have a better claim than ours'

Lengthy delays were a typical feature of the applications' process. David O'Donnell, the elderly father of anti-Treaty IRA member Hugh O'Donnell from Oola (who was killed in action at Ballintubber) wrote to the Department of Defence on 16 June 1936 after a three year wait for a decision. Six months later, he again wrote, without response. A gratuity of £50 was finally awarded in February 1938.[9] Similarly, Mary Hanrahan, who had been awarded a £75 gratuity for the loss of her

son, Gerard Hanrahan (killed on active service with the National Army) wrote in April 1933 to complain that her most recent application for a review had not been acknowledged.[10] Many people who suffered these delays were elderly. David O'Donnell was over 80 and John Hanrahan, father of Gerard, described himself and his wife as 'two old people tottering on the edge of the graves as a result of (our son's) death'.[11]

Families of deceased anti-Treaty IRA members, having already waited nine years to be included in the pensions' legislation, expected compensation from the new Fianna Fáil government. However, these expectations were not always fulfilled, causing a sense of betrayal on behalf of those who had made the ultimate sacrifice. Such was the case of anti-Treaty IRA members Denis and Edward O'Dwyer from Limerick city. Denis was killed by National Army forces, 'put against a wall and his body was riddled by machine gun fire'.[12] Edward was killed in action near Newcastle West. Writing to Minister for Finance Seán MacEntee on 22 October 1932, their sister, Catherine O'Connell, declared that 'under a Fianna Fáil Government, I am perfectly satisfied that the case will be dealt with satisfactorily'.[13] Another sister, Anne Ferguson, wrote to the Department of Defence in January 1936, claiming that 'my whole family and relatives on all sides gave all they could give for the cause of the Republic and we have supported the Fianna Fáil Government on every occasion. There is no-one in the South of Ireland who have a better claim than ours in respect of my brothers' deaths'.[14] However, the claim was denied, as a sister could only receive an award if under 21, invalided, or unmarried.

Widows and guardians often struggled in the face of rigid bureaucracy to rebuild their lives and the lives of dependent children. Annie Meehan, widow of Timothy McCarthy of Newcastle West, re-married and left Limerick due to a scarcity of work. She successfully pursued a claim to have her children's allowance transferred to America, where her children would receive a good education.[15] The Department of Defence did not, however, accede to Annie Gleeson's request for advance payment of her allowance of eight shillings and sixpence for each of two children of her brother, Christopher Smith, from Mungret Street, Limerick city, a member of the National Army. (Smith's wife had died four months after his death by accidental shooting). Gleeson sought to have three years' allowance paid in advance and the same amount every three years to enable her to join her relatives in the United States. However, the army finance officer replied that there was no provision in the 1923 Act for the payment of allowances in advance.[16]

The plight of orphaned children was illustrated by the unsuccessful claim of Michael Naughton for

compensation on the death of his son, Patrick, shot dead while serving in the National Army during an attack on Rathkeale Barracks. A Garda report on the case noted that Michael had been more of a torment than a support to his family and that, for some years before his son's death, he had not been allowed into the family home. This meant that Michael's wife had been dependent on Patrick prior to her death. This had occurred just six months before Patrick himself was killed, leaving her three daughters (who, the Garda Report stated, had intellectual disabilities) dependent on the charity of neighbours. Twenty-year-old Ellie was placed in the Good Shepherd Convent while her twin sister Katie worked for John Parnell of Chapel Lane, Bruff for 3 shillings per week. Their 14 year-old sister Mary lived in impoverished circumstances with a Mrs O'Donnell, The Green, Bruff. As none of the girls was deemed capable of handling the allowances awarded, the local relieving officer, Mrs A.M. Coll from Kilmallock, agreed to take responsibility for the finances of Katie and Mary, while the Good Shepherd Convent would look after Ellie's money.[17]

Equally poignant was the case of Daniel O'Brien, Murroe, who died of pneumonic phthisis (or T.B.). His brother, John, applied unsuccessfully for compensation for Daniel's orphaned children, with the secretary of the Army Pensions Board admitting that 'the case is a deserving one, several orphans having been left unprovided for'.[18] However, as O'Brien's death could not be definitively attributed to service, no award was made, and the White Cross paid an allowance of 10 shillings per week to John O'Brien for each child.

In the words of Diarmaid Ferriter, the pensions process 'indicates a noble effort to alleviate suffering', but also 'a monument to disappointment and disillusionment'.[19] While the Army Pensions Acts of 1923-53 assisted families who would otherwise have been totally destitute, delays, harsh decisions, and the neglect of orphans and the elderly caused bitterness and disillusionment among dependents of both the National Army and the anti-Treaty IRA.

Notes

1. Diarmaid Ferriter, *Between two hells: The Irish Civil War* (London, 2021).

2. Military Archives (MA), Military Service Pensions Collection (MSPC), REF 3D290 John Ryan: Statement appended to Application Form, 11 July 1924.

3. MA, MSPC, REF 3D28 James Hogan: Hanley to Byrne, 24 November 1938.

4. MA, MSPC, REF 3D171 James McCarthy: Application form.

5. MA, MSPC, REF 3D247 John Cosgrave: Statement of Thomas Blackwell, 30 September 1924.

6. MA, MSPC, REF DP2700 Jeremiah Nunan: Statement of Michael Noonan [sic], 25 November 1932.

7. Ibid., Statement of Maurice Casey, 10 January 1933; Statement of Dr M. Connory, 10 January 1932; Crowley to Aiken, 30 November 1932.

8. MA, MSPC, REF 3D104 Peter Hackett.

9. MA, MSPC, REF DP1184 Hugh O'Donnell.

10. MA, MSPC, REF 2D200 Joseph Gerard Hanrahan.

11. Ibid., Hanrahan to Minister for Defence, 8 April 1925.

12. MA, MSPC, REF DP1263 Denis O'Dwyer: File summary sheet.

13. Ibid., O'Connell to MacEntee, 22 October 1932.

14. Ibid., Ferguson to Department of Defence, 15 January 1936.

15. MA, MSPC, REF 3D255 Timothy McCarthy.

16. MA, MSPC, REF 3D201 Christopher Smith.

17. MA, MSPC, REF 2D118 Patrick Naughton.

18. MA, MSPC, REF 1D241 Daniel O'Brien: Col. S. O'Higgins to Secretary of the Army Pensions Board, 11 December 1929.

19. Ferriter, *Between two hells*, p.136

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Fig. 60

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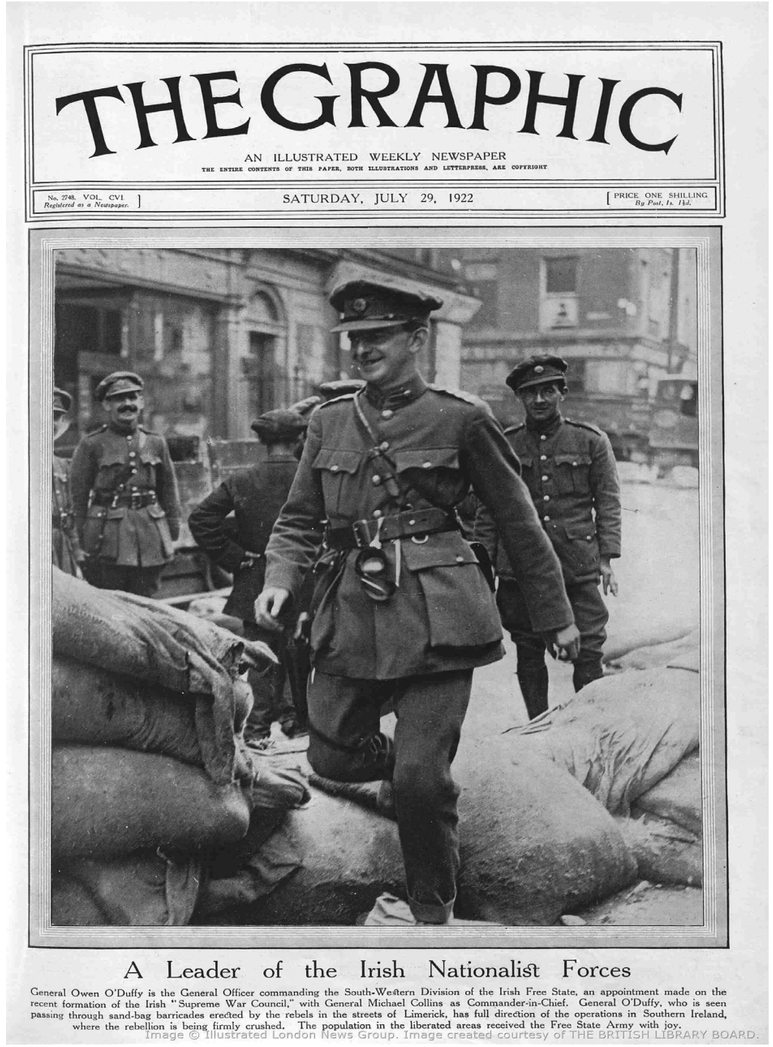

THE GRAPHIC

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A Leader of the Irish Nationalist Forces

General Owen O'Duffy is the General Officer commanding the South-Western Division of the Irish Free State, an appointment made on the recent formation of the Irish "Supreme War Council," with General Michael Collins as Commander-in-Chief. General O'Duffy, who is seen passing through sand-bag barricades erected by the rebels in the streets of Limerick, has full direction of the operations in Southern Ireland, where the rebellion is being firmly crushed. The population in the liberated areas received the Free State Army with joy.

Contributors

Dr Matthew Potter is Curator of Limerick Museum and Honorary Fellow of the Department of History at the University of Limerick. He has published eighteen books and numerous articles with a primary focus on the history of local government, and the history and heritage of Limerick.

Stephen Kelly is a former member of the Defence Forces with 31 years of service and was the founding member of the Military Museum Sarsfield Barracks, Limerick. He is currently researching a Ph.D. in History at Mary Immaculate College and is co-author of the books *Images of Sarsfield Barracks* (Cheltenham, 2008) and *The FCA: An illustrated history* (Cheltenham, 2011).

Dr John O'Callaghan lectures in Atlantic Technological University, Sligo. Among his publications on the Irish Revolution are *The battle for Kilmallock* (Cork, 2011) and *Limerick: The Irish Revolution 1912-23* (Dublin, 2018).

John Dorney is an independent historian and chief editor and writer of the Irish Story website. His books include *Peace after the final battle: The story of the Irish Revolution, 1912-1924* (Dublin, 2020) and *The Civil War in Dublin: The fight for the Irish capital, 1922-1924* (Newbridge, 2017).

Professor Linda Connolly is Professor of Sociology and Director of the Maynooth University Social Sciences Institute. She is author and editor of a number of books including *The Irish women's movement: From revolution to devolution* (Dublin, 2002) *and Women and the Irish Revolution: Feminism, activism, violence* (Newbridge, 2020).

Benjamin Ragan is a departmental assistant and Ph.D. candidate studying the history of the Irish Revolution at Mary Immaculate College in Limerick. He received his MA in History from Mary Immaculate College. He researches the interaction between supernatural beliefs and warfare.

Sharon Slater is a historian and author based in Limerick. She is currently the Historian-in-Residence in Ormston House and her recent publications include *The A-Z of curious county Limerick* (Cheltenham, 2021) and *100 women of Limerick* (Limerick, 2022).

Dr Brian Hughes lectures in the Department of History at Mary Immaculate College, Limerick. Among other publications on the Irish Revolution and its aftermath, he is the author of *Defying the IRA? Intimidation, coercion, and communities during the Irish Revolution* (Liverpool, 2016) and, with Conor Morrissey, editor of *Southern Irish loyalism, 1912-1949 (*Liverpool, 2020).

Dr Gemma Clark is Senior Lecturer in British and Irish History at the University of Exeter. Since her first book, *Everyday violence in the Irish Civil War* (Cambridge, 2014), she has published on sectarianism, gender-based violence, and arson, in outlets including *The Irish Times, Irish Historical Studies, Atlas of the Irish Revolution,* and *Ireland 1922.*

Dr Seán William Gannon works in the Local Studies Department of Limerick City and County Library Service and has published widely on the Irish Revolution and British imperial themes. His first book, *The Irish imperial service: Policing Palestine and administering the empire, 1922-1966* was published by Palgrave Macmillan in 2019 and he is currently co-editing, with Dr Natalie Wynn, a volume of essays on the Limerick Boycott of 1904/06.

Thomas Toomey is a Limerick historian who has published widely on the revolutionary period in the county. His publications include *Forgotten dreams: The life and times of Major J. G. 'Ged' O'Dwyer* (Limerick, 1995) and *The War of Independence in Limerick, 1912-1921* (Limerick, 2010), a comprehensive study of the independence struggle in the city and county.

Siobhán English is Deputy Principal in Nicker N.S., Pallasgreen and has designed and delivered Summer School courses on exploring local History for teachers in Mary Immaculate College. She is currently researching a Ph.D. in Mary Immaculate College under the supervision of Dr Brian Hughes.

Comhairle Cathrach & Contae Luimnigh
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An Roinn Turasóireachta, Cultúir, Ealaíon, Gaeltachta, Spóirt agus Meán
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