Denis O'Neill and the road to Béal na Bla Information in the Military Service (1916-1923) Pensions Collection.

Introduction.

There are four files in the Military Service Pensions Collection (MSPC) relating to Denis O'Neill of 35 Mitchell Street, Nenagh, County Tipperary. One of these files is very likely unique. It is Department of Defence file 2/21085. This file was first compiled by Intelligence Branch of the National Army on Denis O'Neill, a native of Maryboro, Timoleague, Co Cork, in the post Truce period. It consists of 73 pages. These include copy captured IRA documents, Army intelligence reports, copy confidential agent reports, Garda Siochana reports and other material relating to Denis O'Neill, commonly known as "Sonny" up to 10 August 1925. There is one report on the file from Colonel M.Costello, Director of Intelligence, dated 30 September 1925,¹ relating to Daniel O'Neill, a brother of Denis, residing at Enniskeane, Co Cork. The file, in common with all such files generated by Intelligence Branch (G2) of the National Army/Defence Forces in the post Truce period, was handed over to the Headquarters of the Garda Siochana in 1926.

Reports and correspondence on the file from 1926 relate to a claim by Denis O'Neill for a Royal Irish Constabulary (RIC) pension, lost due to his activities during the War of Independence as a member of the Irish Republican Army (IRA) and submitted under Section 5 of the *Superannuation and Pensions Act, 1923*. As part of the administration and investigative process into that claim; which was administered under the Act by the Department of Finance, the G2 file on Denis O'Neill was recalled from Garda Headquarters by the military authorities at the behest of the Department of Defence.

For whatever reason, the file was not returned to the Garda Siochana². It was given a Department of Defence file number (2/21085) and became part of the Departmental filing system whereby it was not required or sought after 31 December 1929 when it was "Put away". It thus apparently escaped examination and partial or full destruction under the Ministerial Order of 7 March 1932, whereby "intelligence reports" and other specified material relating to the 1922-1923 period in the custody of the Department and the Defence Forces were ordered to be destroyed by burning.³ The Garda Authorities were also subject to such an order at that time from the Government of the day.

File 2/21085 was handed over to the Project Manager, Military Service Pensions Project, along with a tranche of pension files from Finance Branch of the Department of Defence in 2011. It was clear that all the material on the file was generated or gathered during the period May 1923 to November 1929. Following up on the information in the file, three other files in the MSPC relating to Denis O'Neill of Mitchell Street, Nenagh were sourced and associated⁴. These also relate to pension

¹ MSP/34Referee/4067/ 2/21085/55

² Ibid /69

³MA/MSPC/DOD/2012/2: Copy Ministerial Order of 7 March 1932 and three certificates of destruction dated 9 March 1932.

⁴ Denis O'Neill: 34/SP/4401, MSP/34/Referee/4067 and LBP/13

claims by O'Neill; two under the *Military Service Pensions* (MSP) *Act*), 1934 and the third is an administrative file dealing with his "Lost British Pensions" case under the Act, 1923. In all there is ca.350 pages/items found and they provide some very detailed information on Denis O'Neill, his service with the Crown, his involvement in the independence movement and his activities during the Civil War and later years. It also proved possible to source files in the collection relating to Denis O'Neill's surviving brothers and their individual claims made under the MSP Act, 1934. The information is presented in summary here and will be released in its entirety online through <u>www.militaryarchives.ie</u> on 2 October 2014.

Service with Crown Forces

Denis O'Neill was born in 1888 and a native of Maryboro, Timoleague, Co Cork. He was one of five brothers who were all active in the War of Independence and Civil War, one Michael being shot and killed on 26 April 1922. Denis O'Neill joined the Royal Irish Constabulary on 25 October 1910 and served for three years as a member of the Rough-riding staff, Mounted Branch, RIC Depot, Phoenix Park, Dublin. His RIC service number is 65559. Constable (Mounted) O'Neill enlisted in the South Irish Horse in 1915, under a scheme whereby one year's war service in the British Army was equated to three years pensionable service in the RIC. He served from November 1915 to May 1917 as Musketry Instructor and Troop Sergeant, South Irish Horse at Cahir Barracks, Co Tipperary before transferring as dismounted elements to the 7 Battalion, Royal Irish Regiment (RIR), being appointed a Section Commander with the rank of Corporal. His RIR service number is 25681.

O' Neill served with the Regiment in France from September1917 until his discharge as "unfit for further service" on 28 October 1918 in the rank of Sergeant. He was awarded a pension by the British Ministry of Pensions as a result of disability caused by a gun shot wound to his right forearm.

IRA service-War of Independence

Denis O'Neill joined the IRA in his home area in early December 1918; his Officer Commanding being Charlie Hurley, later Brigade Commandant 3rd Cork Brigade, IRA. He was immediately engaged in instructing the local units [Companies of the 1st Battalion] in drill and the use of arms. He also carried out intelligence work among the local RIC and military posts in the Brigade area and in early 1920 commenced work as a storeman in Victoria Barracks (now Collins Barracks), Cork and at Bere Island up to September 1920 for the purpose of supplying intelligence gathered to 3rd Brigade HQ.

O'Neill enrolled as a student in the College of Science in Dublin in the academic year beginning in September/October 1920. In December he was introduced to Michael Collins by Liam Deasy and also separately by Tom Barry. He was "attached" to GHQ of the IRA for intelligence duties and his reports were channelled primarily through Paddy Kennedy and Joe Dolan of Collins intelligence section. He had easy access to the RIC Depot, Dublin Castle and various British Army Clubs such as the South Irish Horse Club in Merrion Square, for example. Frank Thornton, head of Collins

Intelligence Section, having initially expressed some doubts as to O'Neill's claims of involvement in intelligence duties in Dublin certified on 21 April 1937 that O'Neill was "...the man supplying us with information relative to Igoe's Gang and he gave us a lot of very valuable information as to their movements including the movements of Igoe himself⁵".

O'Neill also states that when he was going home in June 1921 he was sent for by Deasy and Barry and was "asked" to go into Victoria Barracks on intelligence work, which he continued to engage in until he returned to Dublin in October1921.

Civil War service.

In June 1922 O'Neill was back in West Cork. He took the anti Treaty side. On 1 July 1922 he was called up to HQ 1st Southern Division, then located at Mallow, and appointed Divisional Staff Officer with Captain Rank by Liam Deasy. He states that he was appointed Training Officer with Sean Hyde⁶- the Divisional Intelligence Officer and later one time Director of Intelligence, HQ IRA- to organise and train Divisional Cavalry Columns at Ballincollig Barracks. Seamus Robinson was Adjutant of the Division at that time⁷.

Two cavalry columns, each of 30 men and horses were formed; Sean Hyde taking one column to Buttevant in early August and O'Neill took the other some days later to Macroom and afterwards to Bandon where he "held a line with Cavalry". In his sworn statement made before the Advisory Committee on 16 May 1935, O'Neill continues "and some time about the 14th or 15th of August I got a despatch to come on to meet HQ staff at Newcestown. There was a Brigade meeting held on the Sunday night. A Divisional meeting was to be held the following morning. I had the horses there. We accidently ran into the Ballinablath (sic) thing, Tom Hales and myself. We heard about the party going through in the morning. They took a wrong turning and went into Newcestown. We went down to look at the position in Ballinblath (sic). We took up a position there, and held it till late in the evening"⁸.

O'Neill would continue to serve in West Cork, being in charge of operations under Tom Barry until 27 December 1922, when he accompanied Barry and others to organise "less active" units in the 3rd Southern Division area in Tipperary. O'Neill claimed to have taken part in operations at Curreeny, Castleconnell, Moneygall and Foilduff; being appointed OC 3rd Southern Division in March 1923, "following the death of Matt Ryan" the then OC. He further stated that he "continued in that position to 31 October 1924, being attached [thereafter] to GHQ IRA from the 1 November 1924 to 6 December 1926".

Life after hostilities.

Denis O'Neill married Mary A. Rohan, the owner of a boarding house at 35 Mitchell Street, Nenagh in the early 1920's. Miss Rohan is described in an intelligence report

⁵ MSPC/MSP34/Ref/4067

⁶ MSPC/MSP/34/Ref/16364 Sean Hyde-file contains a detailed, verified account of Hyde's activities in Dublin leading up to "Bloody Sunday", among many other matters of historical interest to researchers. ⁷ One time Commander 2nd Southern Division, member Advisory Committee to the Referee, MSP Act

¹⁹³⁴ and Bureau of Military History 1913-1921 member.

⁸ Readers should see also p/69/93 (177) Moss Twomey papers UCD Archives

on file as having "...advanced political views with a considerable amount of money, at whose house prominent Irregulars have from time to time been put up⁹"

O'Neill applied for his military service pension under the Act, 1934 on 24 August 1934. His claim was successful and he was awarded a pension in the rank of Captain for 5 and ¼ years service, on 27 July 1939. Denis O'Neill accepted the award and his RIC pension was adjusted accordingly under Section 20 (1) of the Act, 1934, leaving him with £135.13.6 pa payable from 1 October 1934.

It is not known to this writer whether O'Neill graduated from the College of Science. As to his "civilian" activities, the files in the MSPC show that Denis O'Neill was a Peace Commissioner in Nenagh and a letter in support of his military service pension claim from Patrick MacGrath, Solicitor, Nenagh testifies to O'Neill's work as Director of Elections "both in the Sinn Fein period and later in the Fianna Fail Organisation" in Co Tipperary.

Denis O'Neill died of coronary thrombosis/cardiac failure at Barrack Street, Nenagh on 5 June 1950. He was survived by his widow Mary, brothers Jeremiah (66) and Daniel (60) and his sisters Mary Walsh and Margaret O'Meara.

The O'Neill brothers.

Michael O'Neill

Michael O'Neill-no rank shown- is listed as a member of "B" (Kilbrittain) Company, 1st Battalion, 3rd Cork Brigade¹⁰. He was shot and killed during a raid on Ballygroman House on 26 April 1922. In the house at the time were the landowner Thomas Hornibrook, his son Samuel and son-in-law retired British Army Captain Herbert Woods, MC

John O'Neill

One time Captain in command of Kilbrittain Company and later in command of the Active Service Unit, 3^{rd} Cork Brigade¹¹. He claimed to be Assistant Quartermaster, 3^{rd} Cork Brigade and one time OC 1^{st} Battalion. He was awarded a Military Service Pension in the rank of Captain for a period of active service of 7 and 23/24 years. A letter in support of his appeal for a higher rank from Liam Deasy for "special service…because of his exceptionally virile pre-truce service [he] was selected to lead a party delegated with a special mission in June 1922, notwithstanding the fact that there were senior officers available, it being considered that for this special mission O'Neill was pre-eminently suited" is included on file. His health deteriorated and was found after examination by the Army Pensions Board to be as a result of his active service. He was awarded a disability pension (in addition to his military service pension), under the *Army Pensions Act*, *1932* of £150 pa from 1 April 1932. John O'Neill (aged 49), a merchant/shop keeper, died on 22 May 1947.

⁹ibid 2/21085/64 &65

¹⁰ MSPC/RO/47/37. Membership rolls of the IRA by Division, Brigade, Battalion & Company

¹¹ MSPC/MSP34/Ref/ 9778: John O'Neill.

Daniel O'Neill

A member of RIC. Resigned due to the "conscription" issue and joined "B" (Kilbrittain) Company, 1st Battalion, 3rd Cork Brigade on 5 May 1918¹². Daniel O'Neill claimed to have been appointed Battalion Intelligence Officer by Tom Hales. He was arrested on 4 February 1921 while conveying Lieutenant Patrick Crowley to hospital in Cork; Crowley was shot dead by arresting forces and O'Neill was imprisoned on Spike Island, in the Cork Male prison and at Maryboro Prison until released in late December 1921. Shortly thereafter he was appointed OC Republican police 1st Battalion, to "superintend" Clonakilty, Bandon and outlying areas; although he states that he was "not the chief superintendent".

O' Neill claimed to be second in command of a Brigade Column in action in Limerick and Cork with actions against Free State [National] Forces at Skibbereen, Bandon, Courtmacsherry, Ballinhassig, for example. He also stated that "*The day Ml Collins was shot I was the first to give direct information to de Valera. I sent the first information to him officially.*"

Daniel O'Neill's claim for a military service pension under the Act, 1934 was not successful. He petitioned for a rehearing of his claim under the Act, 1949 and was awarded a service pension on 2 December 1952 for a total of 5 years service in the rank of Private/Non Commissioned Officer. He apparently opted not to accept the military service pension awarded (see Section 20 Military Service Pensions Act, 1934) and retained his RIC pension awarded him earlier under Section 5 of the Superannuation and Pensions Act, 1923-"the more favourable course for him financially"

Jeremiah O'Neill

A member of the Ballinadee Company, Irish Volunteers from 1914, he transferred to "B" (Kilbrittain) Company, 1st Battalion, 3rd Cork Brigade on its formation.¹³ Among other activities he took part in an attack on Timoleague Barracks in February 1920, acted as a Quartermaster for the local Company, took part in the attack on Free State [National Forces] soldiers landing at Courtmacsherry and "*sniped them all the way to Bandon*". He also states that he sold "*confiscated cattle on the orders of the Brigade Quartermaster*". He was awarded a military service pension for service in the rank of Private/NCO for 3 and 7/36 years.

Jeremiah O'Neill, a farmer, died on 2 October 1961.

Conclusion.

The files and material in the MSPC provide new first hand evidence in many, many cases of veterans, their direct participation in organising and providing military training to IV/IRA units, an involvement in political activities and in the armed activities of the period 1916-1923. As the files continue to be processed and released to the public through the Military Archives, the opportunity for researchers to focus in on these individuals, who in so many cases do not feature in the plethora of books written about the period, will hopefully lead to an advancement of the understanding of our genesis as a State. The happenstance of the survival of Department of Defence file 2/21085 in the case of Denis O'Neill gives a good indication of the nature of the

¹² MSPC/MSP34/Ref/27833:Daniel O'Neill

¹³ MSPC/MSP34/Ref/29692 Jeremiah O'Neill

material generated and collated by Intelligence Branch of the National Army/Defence Forces and by the emergent Garda Siochana and, of course, of what was destroyed by government order in March 1932.

History is about sources. The MSPC and its release through the Military Archives is the real 'stuff 'of revolutionary 20th century Irish history.

Attachments

- 1. Copy Ministerial Order, signed by Desmond Fitzgerald, Minister for Defence, dated 7 March 1932. (Source: Unfiled material in the MSPC).
- 2. Copy report from "Agent No 145", dated 9 April 1924 with description of Denis O'Neill and movements cited.
- 3. Copy report dated 29 Jul 1924 reporting presence of O'Neill in Liverpool. (The report is from demobilised National Army Captain Harry Shorte (Service Number: SDR 4010) appointed Intelligence Officer for Liverpool in "civilian capacity" by Gen Joseph McGrath, the Director of Intelligence at the time. File 24 SP 13067 Harry Shorte refers)
- 4. Copy letter from Director Intelligence to Command Intelligence Officer, Southern Command, dated 2 December 1924.
- 5. Letter in reply from Intelligence Officer, Southern Command dated 18 December 1924.
- 6. Copy report from "Agent No 145" re meeting of North Tipperary Brigade, IRA held on 16 January1925.
- 7. Copy letter from Colonel M. Costello, Director of Intelligence to Secretary to the Minister, Department of Finance, dated 30 September 1925 re Daniel O'Neill, a brother of Denis O'Neill.
- 8. Letter from Mr. W. Doolin, Department of Finance to Secretary, Department of Defence dated 30 October 1929.
- 9. Copy letter in reply, initialled by Edward Fahy, Finance Officer, Department of Defence dated 25 November 1929
- 10. Letter from W. Doolin, Department of Finance dated 27 November 1929, requesting clarification as to Denis O'Neill activities during the post-Truce period.
- 11. Copy letter from Secretary, Department of Defence to Secretary, Department of Finance in reply, dated 28 November 1929
- 12. Copy of sworn statement made before the Advisory Committee (to the Referee) by Denis O'Neill, on 16 May 1935. 4pp

- 13. Copy sworn evidence given before the Advisory Committee on 6 July 1936 by Frank Thornton, on behalf of Denis O'Neill. 1p
- 14. Copy of statement made before the Advisory Committee by Liam Deasy on behalf of Denis O'Neill, on 11 May 1936. 2pp
- 15. Letter from Frank Thornton to the Secretary, Military Service Pensions Board, dated 21 April 1937. 2pp
- 16. Letter from Denis O'Neill to the Secretary, Military Service Pensions Board, dated 19 May 1938 appealing the length of service and rank awarded to him relative to his military service pension application.2pp
- 17. Letter and 2 attachments from Mrs Mary A. O'Neill, widow of Denis O'Neill, dated 24 June 1950. 3pp

Note. Documents from No 2 to No 11 are extracted from file 2/21085. Documents and material 12 to 17 inclusive are from file MSP/34/REF/4067 Denis O'Neill.

saorstát éireann

ROINN COSANTA (Department of Defence), BAILE ATHA CLIATH (Dublin).

The Secretary.

(a) Intelligence Reports - including Reports and particulars supplied by Agents and other persons.

100 Charles

- (b) Secret Service Vouchers, etc.
- (c) Proceedings of Military Courts, including Committee of Officers. Reports on and details of Executions 1922 - 1923 period.

As the above-mentioned documents contain information which may lead - if disclosed to unauthorised persons - to loss of life, you are hereby ordered to destroy same by fire, extracting therefrom previous to such destruction such particulars as you consider might be required hereafter in the conduct of the business of the Department of Defence.

Beron

MINISTER FOR DEFENCE.

Military Service 7th. March, 1932. Pensions Collection Copy of report from No.145.

X

Description of DENIS O'NEILL O/c 3rd Southern Div. (late of Bandon, Co.Cork) (pet name SONNIE).

2578 T.F.D. 14

height 5'8", of very stout build, approximate weight 16 stone, smart military appearance. complexion fresh, brown eyes, hair dark but almost grey, slightly bald over temples & crown of head, has a large scar on back of right forearm received in the European war when serving in the South Irish Horse as Sergt. A very down cast appearance, hardly every smiles, never looks a person in the face when speaking, wears heavy whipcord breeches, dark grey, tan laced leggings, very dark brown military boots, grey tweed sportscoat, vest same, grey-green Cardigan, soft collar & tie, light blue woollen scarf, dark grey tweed trilby hat partly drawn over the eyes when worn; age about 45 years, carries a light Bamboo cane in left hand when walking; armed with a Peterthe-Painter with attachable stock; he is a first-class shot and a strict disciplinarian. X

He billets all the time in the mountainy districts of Templederry, Kilcommon, Rearcross & Doon. It is well to understand he never remains the second day or night in any one house.

At the moment he is the only officer on the 3rd Southern Div. as this Div. is not fully organised yet.

Military Service

Pensions Collection

LIVERPOOL.

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Archives?

29th July 1924.

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COPY. (MK)

O'NEILL, 3rd SOUTHERN.

A chara,

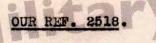
I beg to inform you that this man has turned up here again on the 26th inst., I do not know where he came from.

Report by No.6.

Mise do chara,

H. SHORT.

Military Service Pensions Collection



OFFICE OF DIRECTOR OF INTELLIGENCE, General Headquarters, Parkgate, D U B L I N. 2nd Decr., '24.

The Command I.O., Southern Command, C O R K.

RE: - DENIS (SONNY) O'NEILL, SUPPOSED O.C., 3RD SOUTHERN DIVISION.

With reference to this Office communication of 14th ult. please let me know if you have yet been able to locate this individual. O'Neill is stated to have been very busy in connection with the recent election in Cork with Sean Carroll, P. Hughes and other Irregular leaders. He is stated to be a native of Ballincollig, Bandon, Co. Cork. The following is a full description of him:

> "Height 5' 8"; of very stout build, approximate weight 16 stone, smart military appearance, complexion fresh, brown eyes, hair dark but almost grey, slightly hald over temples and crown of head; has a large scar on back of right forearm received in European War when serving in the South Irich Horse as Sergeant. A very down-cast appearance, hardly ever smiles, never looks a person in the face when speaking; wears heavy whipcord breeches, dark grey; tan laced leggings; very dark brown military boots, grey tweed sports coat, vest grey-green cardigan, soft collar and tie, same, light blue woollen scarf, dark grey tweed trilby hat partly drawn over the eyes when worn; age about 45 years, carries a light Bamboo cane in left hand when walking; armed with a Peter the Painter with attachable stock. He is a first-class shot and a strict disciplinarian."

CAPTAIN.

for DIRECTOR OF INTELLIGENCE.

Pensions Collection

My Ref. No. WI/2950. Your Ref. No. 2518 .

Artedon Personal bard

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OFFICE OF COMMAND 1/0., SOUTHERN COMMAND, H.Q., C O R K. 18th December, 1924.

CAPTAIN.

TO:- Director of Intelligence, G.H.Q., Parkgate, Dublin. FROM:- Command Intelligence Officer, Southern Command. RE:- Denis ("Sonny") O'Neill, Kilbrittain, Co-Cork.

Sir,

CFM/NOS.

With reference to yours of the 2nd inst.

+Denis O'Neill is one of the O'Neill family of Kilbrittain, Co-Cork, and is a brother to Jack and Dan O'Neill. (Your Ref. for Dan is E.27141.S.I.)

He was formerly a member of the R.I.C., from which he transferred to the British Army on Volunteering for service.

Some time prior to the Truce Denis took an active part with the Volunteers, and was a leader. During the recent trouble he was an active Irregular.

Up to some two months ago he was staying at Hickey's, Blackstairs, Kilcommon, Thurles. Of late he frequents the Kilcommon and Glastergain districts, and is very actively engaged in organising for the County Council elections to be held next January.

I have to add that during the recent elections in Cork he did not come under notice.

He is undoubtedly a dangerous man, and is believed to be "O/C., 3rd Southern Division." (Irregulars.)

I have the honour to be,

Sir,

MMAND

Your obedient servant,

On 16th inst., the North Tipp. Brigade held a meeting at James Butlerig, Roilpaguek, Killeen. This fellow is 5th Batt. G/M. and I/O. A very busy sort of lad when there is no sign of danger.

19:1:25.

9.51

47.

The above meeting was attended by Lackin, P. McDonald, Jim Sullivan for Nth. Tipp.. O'Neill for Division, and Wm. Quirke, Fethard.

The general position of Nth. Tipp. was fully gone over. McDonald, who was more than drank, spoke strongly against O'Neill and the Divisional O/Cs. A very heated discussion followed, when O'Neill stood up and left.

North Tipp. Bgc. is now under the 2nd Southern Div. Area in charge of Wm. Quirke. Div. 0/C.

The next sensation was Lackin handed in his resignation, together with Pat Hughes, and will have no more to do with the Volunteers, except a fight crops up (Lacken's own words).

MoDonald is becoming very unpopular just now. He is in town nearly all his time drinking at John MoUrath's, Kenyon St.

Relations between Sullivan and the Bge. are now very much strained because it has begun to leak out on him that his friends made "influence" to get him out of jail, also in connection with James O'Brien, State Solicitor, with whom it is also rumoured efforts were made to get Sullivan out of trouble in connection with the stolen motor car that was in possession of Keogh, Ballina. Sallivan is now in the employ of Morrissey, Auctioneer, Benagh.

Ment. He has gone back to Cork at the moment.

Military Service

ensions Collection

COPY/



Our Ref. No. 27141 Yours: P.11/44/24. Confidential. OFFICE OF DIRECTOR OF INTELLIGENCE, General Headquarters, Parkgate, D U B L I N, 30th Sept., '25.

To/

Runaidhe Aire, Dept. of Finance, Upper Merrion Street, DUBLIN.

SUBJECT: - Daniel O'Neill, Enniskeane, Co. Cork.

In reply to yours of 19th inst., the above resigned from the Royal Irish Constabulary during the Conscription Menace in 1918, and shortly afterwards identified himself with the Volunteers in his native district. He joined the late Sean Hales' Battalion, viz., 1st Battalion, Cork No. 3 Brigade, and was appointed Battalion I.O. He held this appointment until arrested by Crown Forces on 4th February, 1921. He took part in several engagements against the British Forces prior to his arrest, being a member of the 3rd Cork Brigade Flying Column. He was interned in Spike Island and afterwards at Maryborough until his release at the General Amnesty towards the end of 1921.

After the Army Split he figured prominently with the Irregulars, took part in all their engagements around Limerick and Kilmallock in July 1922 and later in Ballineen, Skibbereen and Bandon attacks on National Posts. He succeeded in evading capture throughout.

O'Neill is stated to be a very unscrupulous individual and to have taken part in such operations as lotting of Post Offices, robbing of Postmen and the murder of several Protestants in West Cork in May, 1922. A brother of his was shot dead by two of the latter-named, Woods and Hornbrooke, who were subsequently murdered.

He is a most aggressive enemy of the present Government and Constitution and is likely to take an active part in any movement having for its object their overthrow.

A short time ago O'Neill married a prominent Irregular supporter, Miss Woods, Publican, Enniskeane, and since then his residence has been a rendezvous for disaffected persons.

Pensions Collection

(Sgd.) M. Costello, Colonel Military Se Director of Intelligence. Ein-fhreagra ar an litir seo, is mar seo ba choir é sitúradh:-(Any reply to its communication should be addressed io:-An Rúnaidhe, (The Secretary); (Pn uimhir seo:-(and the following number quoted:-) P.10/407/24.

Fruc Fruc A. M. Confidential.

ROINN AIRGID, (Department of Finance).

> SRÁID MHUIRBHTHEANN UACHT., (Upper Merrion Street), BAILE ÁTHA CLIATH.

3.0 October, 1929.

A Dhuine Uasail,

I am directed by the Minister for Finance to inform you that he has under consideration the claim for a pension under Section 5 of the Superannuation and Pensions Act, 1923, from Mr. Denis O'Neill, a former member of the Royal Irish Constabulary. The applicant, who is a native of County Cork, at present resides at 35 Mitchell Street, Nenagh.

Mr. O'Neill joined the Royal Irish Constabulary in October, 1910. In November, 1915, he enlisted in the South Irish Horse for service in the European War, but did not re-join the Constabulary on the termination of his Army service in 1918. His claim was not recommended by the Committee of Enquiry into Resignations and Dismissals from the Constabulary, on the ground apparently that they regarded the date of his leaving the Constabulary to join the Army as the date of resignation, which date was outside the Committee's Terms of Reference. The claim for a pension was accordingly . disallowed.

The Minister has now been asked to reconsider the case on the ground that Mr. O'Neill's refusal to re-join the Constabulary on discharge from the British Army was caused by his national sympathies. Copies of recent communications from Deputy Kerlin regarding the case are enclosed. The Minister has had the claim investigated so far as it related to events antecedent to the Truce, and he is now desirous of obtaining information as to the applicant's post-Truce record. In this connection, I am to refer to your Department's letter of the 30th September, 1925, (copy enclosed for reference) in regard to a claim for a pension made by Mr. Daniel O'Neill, brother of the present applicant, and I am to say that the

Minis ter -

The Secretary, Department of Defence.

Military Archives

Minister will be obliged if you will cause him to be furnished with any particulars available from the records of the Intelligence Branch as to Denis O'Neill's activities with the "Trregulars" with particular reference to his association (if any) with the incidents mentioned in the letter of 30th September, 1925, in which his brother Daniel was implicated and also with any information from respensible Army Officers still serving who had first hand knowledge of the facts.

I am to request the favour of an early reply.

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Military Service

ensions Collection

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November, 1929.

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The Secretary, Department of Finance.

Military Archives

With reference to Mr. Doolin's minute (P.10/407/24) of the 30th ultimo relative to the claim of Mr. Denis C'Neill for a pension under Section 5 of the Superannuation and Pensions Act, 1923, I am directed by the Minister for Defence to inform you that from record, which were kept by the Intelligence Branch of this Department, it would appear that Mr. O'Neill was an active Irregular during the civil strife in 1922-23. He was regarded as a dangerous man and was believed to have been O/C. 3rd Southern Division of the Irregular Forces. This information has been corroborated by two serving officers. It is understood that O'Neill married a Miss Rohan of Nenagh, a lady of advanced political views, at whose house prominent Irregulars have from time to time been put up.

It is also understood that O'Neill is in receipt of a disability pension of 30/- a week from the British Army.

(b) &. 7. a/s. HUNAIDHE.

Military Service Pensions Collection

MH.

Ein-fhreagra ar an litir seo, is mar seo ba choir é stiúradh:--(Any reply to this communication should be addressed to:--)

P.10/407/24.

ROINN AIRGID, (Department of Finance),

> SRAID MHUIRBHTHEANN UACHT., (Upper Merrion Street),

BAILE ATHA CLIATH. (Dublin). 27th November, 1929.

CONFIDENTIAL.

A Dhuine Uasail.

I am directed by the Minister for Finance to acknowledge the receipt of Mr. Fahy's minute of the 25th ultimo, (No. 2/21085), relative to the case of Mr. Denis O'Neill, a former member of the Royal Irish Constabulary, and I am to point out that this minute makes no reference to the question raised in my letter of the 30th ultimo as to Mr. O'Neill's association with the incidents mentioned in your Department's letter of the 30th September, 1925, in connection with the claim for a pension made by his brother, Daniel.

The Minister will be obliged if you will cause him to be furnished with any available information on this point and also with details of any acts of a criminal character committed by Mr. Denis O'Neill during the post-Truce period.

I am to request the favour of an early reply.

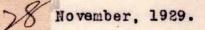
Mise, le meas,

The Secretary, Department of Defence.

Milita

2/21085.

Confidential.



72,

The Secretary, Department of Finance.

With reference to Mr. Doolin's minute (P.10/407/24) of the 27th instant, I am desired by the Minister for Defence to state that, as far as the records in this Department show, Mr. Denis O'Neill would not appear to have been associated with the incidents mentioned in this Department's letter of the 30th September, 1925, in connection with the claim for a pension made by his brother, Daniel.

itary Archives

The Minister has no knowledge of any acts of a criminal character committed by Denis O'Neill during the post-Truce period.

ensions Collection

K RUNA IDEE.

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SWORN STATEMENT made before the ADVISORY COMMITTEE by DENIS O'NEILL, on

16th MAY, 1935. FILE NO. 4067.

4th Period:

Q. You were instructing all ranks in the use of arms?
A. Yes. I did some drilling before that. We got arms at Rathelaren when some of the lads held up British army men. We had the drilling before that.

When did you join? Q. A . In December, 1918.

5th Period:

- You were engaged on intelligence work besides the usual Q. I.R.A. service?
- Wrong

Yes. Before that, there was a party of military brought to Kilbrittan Castle. I made free with them, and picked up intelligence which led to the ambush afterwards, and A. got the rifles off them.

- Were you on intelligence work for a Battalion? Q. Not at that period. A .
- To whom were you reporting? To the local Company captain. Q.
- A.
- Were you working in the barracks at the time? Q.
- No. I was an ex-R.I.C. About that time, a communication came that I was to rejoin. There was a question as to whether I should ne or not. It was up to me which to do. I did not want to join, but could not let the authorities know that. I went into Cork Barracks sick. There I got A. in touch with an officer who gave me a job in the stores Department in Cork Bks., at the time.
- 6th Period:

Q. You were attached to H.Q., in Jork and Dublin? A . I came up to Dublin, and was introduced to Collins. They put four or five fellows to keep in touch with me, First was Joe Dolan. Generally speaking, I handed any reports to Jim Kirwan in Parnell Square, or Paddy Mennedy, or a few others.

- Was Joe Dolan in the Free State army afterwards? Q.
- Yes. They transferred me from there to Sergeant Prenderville. Later on to Neary's Hotel. They wanted me to get a line on a man named Campbell. I had access to the R.I.C., Depot, and Dublin Castle.
- Q. Were you working in Dublin at the time?
- I was going to the College of Science. A.
- Q.
- How, long were you in Dublin? I came to Dublin in October, 1920. A .

Were you in Dublin up to the Truce? Q.

Till June, 1922. During this period, from June, 1921 to October, 1921, I was in Cork Barracks slso. I came back to Dublin in October, 1921 and remained till June, 1922.

- Q. Were you sent to Cork In June, 1921 on intelligence work?
 A. Yes, to Cork Barracks. There was a Captain Kelly (?), working in the barracks, whom they wanted to get, and I located him accidentally. He was taking photographs of the I.R.A. in the country. I got the post in the Stores and in these stores was kept photographic material. One morning this was to be ready, and also tradesmen's tools, for Capt. Kelly. I reported this to Tom Barry, and Deasy. They sent up their men, who did not take their guns. They were spotted by Kelly, and he returned. They did not get him.
- Q. Who gave you instructions to go to Cork?
- A. Deasy, and Barry.
- w. Did they send for you?
- A. Not exactly. I was going down home, and they asked me to go in.
- 7th Period:
- Q. Were you working in the Depot?
 A. No. I had access to it. I knew most of the fellows there. I nearly got plugged there a couple of times.
- Have you a reference from Deasy?
 A. No. 1 wrote to him, but have not yet heard from him. He goes about a good deal. 1 am living in Tipperary now.

8th reriod:

- Q. You were from October, 1921 to June, 1922 in Dubling A. Yes.
- Q. Were you doing much intelligence work during that period? A. From June, 1921 to October, 1921, 1 was practically the whole time in Cork Barracks. when I came back here, there was a message awaiting me in Kirwans to meet a man named Mick Martin who was in the Castle. I met him that night. He had a message in connection with negotiations in London which necessitated my seeing Collins that night. Collins was in Eccles Street that night, and I had to go up there and see him.
- Q. Can you give us reference to certify you were in touch with Collins?
- A. I do not know that I could exactly. I am not quite sure who the man was who took me to Eccles street that night. Fom Barry first of all introduced me to Collins when I came up. I amed send in my reports.
- 9th Feriod:

Q. You were in the activities shown on your form for the period?

A. At the start of the civil war, I was with the First Southern Division in Mallow, till we transferred to Buttevant. I used go back every night. During that period, I was engaged in Buttevant. For instance, rigging up a field kitchen. Then there was a question of Bruff, or Druree (I forget which), where an isolated post was held. I had to go up with rifles and grenades. The day afterwards, we formed a cavalry column, in Dellincollig. I was 0.C., Training. Senator Robinson was our Adjutant at the time. I was training there till 7th or 8th August. Cork was evacuated. We were sent to Macroom, and were a week there. I was sent to Bandon (R); we held a line with cavalry there, and some time about 14th or 15th August, I got a despatch to come on to meet H.Q. staff at Newcestown. There was a brigade meeting held on the the Sunday night. A Divisional meeting was to be held the following morning. I had the horses there. We accidentally ran into the Ballingblath thing, fom Hales and myself. We heard about the party going through in the morning. they took a wrong turning, and went into rewcestown. We went down to kkw look at the position in fallinblath. we took up a position there, and held it till late in the evening.

- Q. A re you a brother of John o'Meill?
- Yes. mother brother, Mick, was killed.

loth Period:

Q.

You were "on the run" for the "Cease Fire?" A. I was attached to Headquarters here till December, 1926. 1 was with the late Frank Callanan.

You were "on the run" up to 1926? Q. A. Yes.

aank:

Q. on the first critical date you were attached to G.H.Q., as intelligence officer? Yes. A.

5.

Where were you on 11th July, 1921? I was left publin that time. I would be in Cork. That would be the period when I went into Cork Barracks the A . second time.

beasy would be able to substantiate the statement that I was in touch with Collins.

I first met Deasy in September, 1920. I met him with Charlie Hurley. I was arranging with him to go into Bere Island.

In 1922, Dan Hurley was captured in Clonakilty. He was sick, and put into the mercy nome. 1 was sent from Glengarriff or Gougane Barry to bring him out, which 1 did.

Q. You claim U.C., 1st southern pivision on second date? A. Yes. In March, 1923, or first week of April, 1 was appointed. Matty Ryan was 0.C. before me. Moylen left Cork Southern at the outbreak of the Civil War. There was no 0.C., there then. it was going wild. Matty Ryan was killed on 28th March, 1923, 1 think. I was automatically appointed ... i was called to Dublin, to Frank Aiken. I did not want to take over the job. Frank Aiken sent for me. He insisted on my taking over charge.

Cork, and attached to G.H.Q.? On 11th July, 1921, you were doing intelligence work in I left Jublin in June, where I was attached. I was at G.H.Q. till June; after wards in Cork.

6. Have you a pension from the british? Yes. Å.

From the ministry of rensions? 6.

Yes. It is purely a wound pension. I resigned the A. R.I.C. pension.

Were the British paying you part R.I.C. pension for a 6. while?

-4-

- No, they never were. I never got anything from that source. while I was in Cork Bks., there were two communications sent down. One was with reference to H.I.G., soldiers Comfort Fund. There was money left when the war was over. I was to make a claim for it. That communication was kept from me. fom Barry afterwards gave it to me, also a letter from Dublin Gastle to the D.I., in Glonakilty, asking him to keep an eye on me. It was up to me to goback to the R.I.C. or not. we had a consultation. It was decided 1 would go back. They afterwards changed their minds, so then I went back to Cork Barracks sick. I got in touch there with an officer named Oliffe, and a man named Hurphy, and got the job in 1920 in the stores there. There was a vacancy in Dere Island at the time. The first time I met, Dessy was then. They decided to go to Bere Island, but there was nothing there of any use. I came back from there in about September, 1920.
- On second critical date you were staff officer attached to the First Southern Livision? Q.
- i do not know what the position was with regard to rank, A. but I was attached for general purposes. Anything that was going, I got it.

REFEREE.

You were attached in a training capacity? Q. Α. Yes.

Military Service

Pensions Collection

SWORN B EFORE ME ON

GH .

SWORN EVIDENCE given before THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE on 8th JULY, 1936, by MR. FRANK THORNTON, on behalf

of:- DENIS O'NEILL. (4067).

- Q. Was Paddy Kennedy one of the Squad men? A. Paddy Kennedy, Ned Kelleher, and George Fitzgerald.
- Q. Kennedy's letter does not look too good?
- A. Before he wrote that letter he came and saw me, and discussed it, and he does not want to 'damn' the fellow's case altogether. Kennedy was in charge of that end.
- Q. He Was Divisional O.C. in the Civil War in Tipperary, he kix claims - he has good Civil War service.
- A. Yes. I personally never met him, and the only other one who was mentioned was Joe Dolan, but I do not think Joe Dolan was in touch with him at all. I will try to get in touch with Joe Dolan, and see what the if he had ever had contact with him.
- Q. Joe Dolan, Kennedy, and you A. If there was any contact, it was very slight. Tf T did not know & those in touch personally, I knew of them. I will make further enquiries, and will write.
- Q. He mentions Kirwan, Paddy Kennedy, and Joe Dolan? A. Paddy Kennedy told me that he saw Jim Kirwan before this fellow had come along to him, and Jim could not recollect him at all - but it would be well to write to Jim Kirwan.
- Q. O'Neill was on intelligence in Cork for the Southern fellows, before he came to Dublin in the Tan War; he cannot qualify for service in Cork unless he has service in Dublin.
- A. You would imagine he would be transferred if he were coming to Dublin - that notification would come through J.Q. I shall make further enquiries, and let you know.
- Q. Liam Deasy said he brought him direct to Collins in December, 1920. They cannot give any service to him in Cork in the 7th Period, as he was in Dublin.
- A. That might have happened all right; but there was a number of these fellows linked up, and absolutely dropped as being useless - that might have happened. At least twenty to my knowledge came along from different parts of the country, and they would be transferred to the Depot, or the Castle, or elsewhere, as no good. I will try to check up with the Collins and of it. end of it.

Q. Kirwan was a Tipperary man? A. Yes.

STATEMENT MADE BEFORE THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE BY LIAM DEASY on behalf of DENIS O'NEILL - No. 4667 - 11th MAY, 1936.

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¢. M	What about Denis O'Neill? We are prepared to give O'Neill credit from some time in August or September, he was whole time from that. He claims service from early 1919 but we can confirm that he worked information from Cork Barracks out to us from September 1920. He was sent up to Dublin and he was in touch with Collins.
Q.	Florrie O'Donohue says he made careful enquiries in the case and he was unable to certify any service in the Cork No. 1 Brigade area in the period 1/4/21 to 11/7/21?
A.	I am prepared to give you a statement that he was in touch with Cork 3 Brigade between August or September and July 1921. I brought him on to Collins in December 1920, he was transferred up, and he was kept in touch here as well. I think you have a statement of mine on the file.
Q.3 A.	How much will we give him in 6? His work was purely intelligence.
Q. A.	He has all the Civil War? Yes, he was sent to the 3rd Southern Division and eventually became Divisional O/C.
Q. A.	Would 1/6th be enough for him in the 6th Period? I think he is entitled to get service from September 1920. From the time he became a volunteer he has a great record.
Q. A.	Was he in the R.I.C.? Yes, and then he joined the British Army.
A.	Did he get a re-settlement pension when he came back? I suppose he did. He should get $\frac{1}{2}$ of 6.
Q. A.	Was he working before October? Yes.
Q. A.	Was he there the whole 6th Period in the Barracks? Yes, from June on.
Q. A.	Did he give and valuable information? Yes, the bit about Kelly was valuable but we could not avail of it at the time. I am prepared to certify him from September. In October he came to Dublin and worked here.
Q. A.	What information could he give while he was up here? I do not know, he gave a certain amount of it.
Q. A.	When did he cease working in the Barracks? He was there during the greater part of the Truce. He got into the College of Science at some time.
Q. A.	He was in Dublin in the 7th Period. He came in the 6th Period to Dublin too.
Q. A.	We will give him $5/12$ th of 6 - how much should he get in the $T_{ruce?}$ one-half. He was working all during the Truce on intelligence, purely intelligence.

Q. A. What rank had he? He had no rank - what does he claim on the 2nd critical date? Attached to Divisional staff. If he was a G.H.Q. Officer Q. on the 2nd critical date he would be entitled to 'D'. We would have to go to Frank Thornton to certify his attachment to G.H.Q. on the 1st critical date? I think Jim Kirwan's recommendation is strong enough. A. Will you make out a statement about his service generally to go before the Referee? Q. I can only make a general statement. When he was transferred A. here we got him in touch with Collins himself and Collins got him in touch with others. Q. I think we should see Thornton about him? A. What .rank had he in Cork on the 2nd critical date? Q. A . I. do not know.

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Military Service Pensions Collection

TELEGRAMS "EIRENUA DUBLIN"

1

TELEPHONE NO. 44364 (4 LINES).

NEW IRELAND ASSURANCE CO. LTD.

12 DAWSON STREET, DUBLIN C.2. (BOX 71).

M. I. O' RASALLAS

IN REPLY PLEASE QUOTE REF 21/4/37/2/MC. ASST. MANAGER'S OFFICE.

21st April, 1937.

Secretary, Military Service Pensions Board, Griffith Bærracks, Dublin.

1

re: Denis O'Neill, Mitchell Street, Nenagh.

A Chara,

Some time ago the above man's application was referred to me for verification of the period 1920 to the Truce, and at that time I replied informing you that I would get in touch with the Officers who were named, i.e. Paddy Kennedy and Joe Dolan.

I since had an opportunity of discussing the matter with one of these officers namely, Paddy Kennedy, and as a result, I am satisfied that the Denis O'Neill referred to is a man who was definitely in touch with our Department during that period. This man had been in the R.I.C. up to 1915 and during the period referred to - 1920 to the Truce - was in Dublin as a student in the College of Science, having resigned from the R.I.C. in 1915. Although I never met Denis O'Neill during that period, I was aware of the fact that he was the man who was supplying us with information relative to Igoe's Gang and he gave us a lot of very valuable information as to their movements including the movements of Igo himself.

Both Paddy Kennedy and Joe Dolan kept in constant touch with him on my instructions right up to the Truce.

I sincerely regret the delay in sending along this

Comluce na h Gineann um Anadas Ceónanca NEW IRELAND ASSURANCE CO., LTD.

Military Service Pensions Board. 21st April, 1937. For Secretary,

information, but it is extremely difficult to remember names of men I came in contact with so long ago, and I wanted to be quite sure before replying for fear I might do an injustice. I an, however, perfectly satisfied that Denis O'Neill was the man who supplied us with the information during that period which was of very valuable assistance to us.

Trusting that this information may assist you in completing this case.

Is mise,

Military Service Pensions Collection

10 JORRO F/E Mars 35 Mitchell St Acholidyh Carton Lotostania Nenagh 19/5/38 201938 4067 A. Chapa 1200 AL1938 yours Ref. No. 4067 of 29/4/58 Committee re my application for a military Lervie Pension which was submitted to the Reforce is not acceptable to me. I claim that I am entitled to greater Service and to a higher grade. according to your communication my service with the J.R. a began in the 6th Period and I am awarded service for one-balf of same which, I lake it, means that for pension purposes my service legan on 1/10/20 I claim that I had service during all the 6th period as during the Spring and lummer of 1920 I was on Intelligence work in Cork Barracks and in Bere Island Liam Deasy should be able to testify to some as he was present when the late Charlie Hurley made awargements with me for the carrying out of this work. During 1919 I was regularly engaged in training local Units in driel and muskeloy as well as in doin Intelligence work amongst the local RIC and military ports in the area. Many of the Officers in the Bandon area should be able to testify to this. During the first '20 of the 8th Renod I was on Intelligence work in Cork Barracks and I presume that this is the period for which I am allowed service in this period. I must also claim service for the remainder of this period during which I was again back in Dublin and was almost continually on duty in the city - Visiting the haunts of the British Forces and R. J. C. and reporting on the activities of same. Re my Rank Collectio

I am awarded Grade E on the first Critical date. Jush to point out that on first taking up J.R. C. Considered heing at least equal work I was, from the starty as being at least equal in rank to any of the local Battalion Officers and and consequently was never in Grade E The fact that I was attacked to Divisional H. Q immediately on the start of hostilities in 1922 proves this especially when it is remembered chat all the old Officers of that area were again at their ports in the J. R. Q.

In March 1923, while I was attached to the 3rd S/Division, when the Divisional of was killed in action I was immediately promoted to fill his place by Jom Barry (then of Southen Command as I was then recognised as the Senior Officer in that area. This promotion was subsequently confirmed by Mr. Frank aiken personally and he can testify to same. I am now the only officer who held the rank of Oft 3rd Spinsion during the Civil was period.

At the time I was promoted to be Dursional Ofc. there were four Bigados in the area with the full complement of officers on the Staff of each as well as the usual complement of Officers attacted to the Dursional Staff. Many of these have now received their pensions and have been graded variously A. B. and C.

I desire that this statement be submitted to the Reference as possible so chat it well recare his consideration and enable him to make his report to the minister at an early tate as it is now over three years since my case was first heard by your Board.

The Secretary Thilitary Service Russions Board

Kongen St. \$/1751 24/6/50 Re Kais o'Neill Henryn St. Hangh deed. 2 separce t abover terelose Statutory Seclention, copy death bertificate and receipted bill paid for Furnal expenses, thy late husband paid me the amount te received each month, Ishell thank you to let me have being order for compart due. The Secretary Lo mise, le reas Sept. of Sefence Um May A. o'Naill Subli Military Service Pensions Collection

UIMHIR TAGARTHA.

1751

FORM OF STATUTORY DECLARATION.

NAME	
generial o Weith	 Bother
Saniel a Neill	
Mary Malsh	
Margaret S'Meara	 sister

And I make this solemn declaration conscientiously believing the same to be true, and by virtue of the provisions of the Statutory Declarations Act, 1938.

Signature of Declarant. Mary anne Olleell

Date 212 June 1950

Peace Commissioner for Taperary

Declared and subscribed before me

SP 9069 300 1-48 RC 2/50103

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