ADVISORY COMMITTEE TO THE REFEREE, MILITARY SERVICE PENSIONS ACT, 1934

BIOGRAPHIES OF FORMER IRA OFFICERS

Military Archives

- Brennan Austin
- Liddy Seán
- McCoy John
- Mulvihill Daniel
- Murphy Humphrey
- Robinson Seámus

Colonel BRENNAN, Austin (1894-1983)

Austin Brennan is one of three brothers from Meelick, Co Clare with prominent service in the Irish Volunteers from 1914, right through to the 11 July 1922, the subsequent Civil War and during the early history of the State. All came from a farming background.

Austin Brennan served in the Irish Volunteers from 1914 and joined the Irish Republican Brotherhood in early 1916. He was an active organiser and was arrested prior to Easter Week 1916. He mobilised with the Meelick Company, Limerick Brigade on Easter Sunday and marched to Bunratty, where Volunteers from Cratloe and Newmarket-on Fergus also assembled. On receiving word from Battalion Headquarters in Limerick that the Rising was "off", Brennan was given the responsibility for collecting and hiding the weapons and ammunition of the party.

On the organisation of a Clare Brigade in early 1917, he was appointed Captain, Meelick Company and later went on to command the Battalion in that area. He was arrested in July, 1917 and went on 10 days hunger strike in Cork Prison, then in Mountjoy where he was forcibly fed for seven days and finally in Dundalk Prison from where he was released on medical grounds. He resumed full time activities as an organiser and in training. He was appointed Brigade Commander, Clare Brigade and took part in operations such as the attack on Scarriff Barracks (Sept 1920), Cratloe ambush (January 1921) and the Glenwood ambush later that month, for example.

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He went automatically into the National Army and would serve in the rank of Colonel in Athlone Command and the Curragh, finally commanding 1 Brigade, Curragh Military District.

He resigned from active service on health grounds on 16 February 1929 and served as an officer on the Reserve up to 27 March 1933. He was awarded a Military Service Pension of 9 years service in the rank of Colonel on 21 March 1927 and subsequently would be awarded a disability pension relating to his activities and treatment during the War of Independence.

He was appointed a member of the Advisory Committee to the Referee, following the enactment of the *Military Service Pensions (Amendment) Act, 1949* on 6 February, 1950 and served in that appointment up to 31 December 1955. He also served on the reconstituted Board of Assessors at that time.

Austin Brennan married Christina Hogan on 9 November 1938 at St Patrick's Church, Monkstown, Co Dublin. He died on the 5 August 1983 and was survived by his wife, Christina; sons Austin Patrick, Desmond, Niall and Michael and his daughter Colette.

His two brothers, mentioned earlier were Major General Michael Brennan who would serve as Chief of Staff of the Defence Forces from October 1931 to January 1940 and Major General Patrick Brennan, who resigned from the National Army on 11 December 1922 while serving as OC 1 Western Division and would later retire from public service as Superintendant/Clerk to the Oireachtas in the 1940's. Major General Patrick Brennan had also served as an Assistant Commissioner in An Garda Siochána when the force was being established from February 1922; resigning from that appointment on 10 September 1922.

LIDDY, Seán (1890-1965)

Seán Joseph Liddy was born 9 August 1890 and farmed at Cooraclare, Kilrush, Co Clare when he joined the Irish Volunteers in January 1917. He went on to form a Company of Volunteers at Cooraclare. He was appointed the Company Commander in the rank of Captain and was an active organiser throughout West Clare when he was arrested at Cree on the 15 August 1917. Following a Court-martial at Cork he was sentenced to 3 years imprisonment in

Mountjoy Jail, Dublin. Here he was a hunger striker and after his transfer to Dundalk Prison, he again went on hunger strike until his release in November 1917. He returned to Clare and continued his organising activities and was appointed OC 3 Battalion, West Clare Brigade. In December 1918 he commanded a party of Volunteers and disarmed an RIC Patrol near Cooraclare.

He was appointed Brigade Commander, West Clare Brigade in early 1919 and operated in a full time capacity; leading and taking part in operations at Cooraclare, Cahercomaun, Tullycrine and Krock, for example. He took part in the attack on British forces in Kilrush, leading a party in street fighting and operating under the command of General Michael Brennan. He enlisted in the National Army and was appointed Captain in early 1922, but by March he had moved to become a founding member of An Garda Siochána, being appointed Superintendent under the command of the then Assistant Commissioner Patrick Brennan on 1 April 1922.

He was elected TD for Clare to the 3rd Dail, on a Coalition Treaty platform in the General Election of 16 June 1922.

Superintendant Liddy commanded an Active Service Unit (armed) of An Garda in Co Kildare from July to September 1922; uniformed members of the Force not bearing arms after 10 September 1922.

Thereafter he went on to serve as Superintendant in Longford Garda District and as Chief Superintendant in Sligo. He was awarded a military service pension of 6.5 years service in the rank of Captain under the 1924 Act on 13 October 1927.

Seán Liddy was appointed a member of the Board of Assessors, under the *Military Service Pensions Act, 1924* on 1 January 1955.

He had married Anna Marie Breen on 22 September 1922. Their son, Seán, commenced training as a Cadet in the Defence Forces on 20 November 1941 and was subsequently commissioned as a 2nd Lieutenant. Lt Liddy went on to train as a pilot in the Air Corps in 1945 and was tragically killed, while serving in the rank of Commandant, in an aircraft crash, two miles North of Wicklow Harbour on 18 August 1970.

Seán Liddy died as a result of a traffic accident on 30 March 1965. He is remembered today as a founding member and 1st President of the Garda Siochána Retired Members

Association, established in 1961. The Garda Veterans Injury Award-*The Liddy Medal*-is named in his honour.

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McCoy, John (c.1888-1971)

John McCoy was born at Tullymacrieve, Mullaghbawn, South Armagh in c.1888. His was a farming family and he was occupied as a farmer and auctioneer at that address when he joined the Irish Volunteers in December 1917. He became a full time organiser and was appointed Captain of the Mullaghbawn Company, Dundalk Battalion in February 1918. He was appointed Battalion Adjutant, Camlough Battalion in May 1918 and Brigade Adjutant, Newry Brigade in May 1920. He had taken part in the raid on Ballyedmond Castle and the planning for an abortive capture of Newtownhamilton Barracks in February, 1920. He was arrested in July 1920 and released from Belfast Prison in November that year. He went on to take part in operations at Camlough (12 December 1920 and 7 January 1921), Cullyhanna (13 January) and raids for mails on trains, for example. McCoy was appointed Adjutant, 4 Northern Division in March 1921; with Frank Aiken as Commander and Seán Quinn as Quartermaster. He was wounded and captured at Mullaghbawn on 24 April 1921 and treated in the Military Hospital, Victoria Barracks, Belfast until his release on 1 August 1921 (the photograph depicts the wound caused by a bullet entering through the nape ofthe neck and exiting through his lower right jaw). He served as Liaison Officer for Counties Armagh, Down and Louth during the Truce.

Following on from the capture of the town and Military Barracks Dundalk on the night of 15/16 July 1922 by units of the 5th Northern Division, under the command of Colonel Commandant Dan Hogan; McCoy as Acting Divisional Commander, 4th Northern led the party who attacked Dundalk Prison on 27 July, resulting in the escape of Frank Aiken and 100 other prisoners. McCoy was captured by National Army forces and interned at Tintown

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in the Curragh Camp. He escaped from there in April 1923, being wounded in the lower leg during the escape. Following his recapture 10 days later he was tried by Court-martial and sentenced to death. This sentence was commuted to 10 years penal servitude and McCoy was released from the Military Hospital in the Curragh in June 1924.

John McCoy was appointed a member of the Advisory Committee to the Referee, under the *Military Service Pensions Act, 1934* on 17 December 1934. He was awarded a Military Service pension of just over 8 years service in the rank of Lieutenant General on 15 March 1940 He was to serve as a member of the Advisory Committee until the Referee concluded his investigations under that Act on 31 July 1947. He also served as a member of the Board of Assessors as that board was reconstituted from time to time up to August 1944. McCoy went on to serve as a Temporary Investigating Officer with the *Bureau of Military History, 1913-1921* in 1948 and gave his own *Witness Statement* (WS 492) on 16 March 1951.

John McCoy died on 17 January 1971 and was survived by his daughter Catherine.

MULVIHILL, Daniel [?-1985]

Daniel Mulvihill of Brackhill, Castlemaine, Co Kerry joined the Milltown Company of the Irish Volunteers in November 1916. He was later appointed Intelligence Officer for that district and operated in a full time capacity, drilling and training, up to 10 October 1919. On that date he commenced a course at the Department of Agriculture School, Clonakilty, Co Cork and at completion in June 1920 returned to duty with “A” Company, 5 Battalion, Kerry No 1 Brigade. He was in command of the Active Service Unit (ASU) of Kerry No 1 Brigade in the Lispoole ambush of 21 March 1921 and commanded an element of the ASU in the Glenbeigh ambush of 26 April 1921. Following the dismissal/suspension of the Officer Commanding Kerry No 1 Brigade and Column commander (Paddy Cahill) on 15 May 1921 and the subsequent re-organisation, Mulvihill organised a Battalion ASU of 6 Battalion, Kerry No 2 Brigade. He commanded the ASU at the Ballymacandy ambush of 1 June 1921 and effectively was Brigade ASU commander (elements of 1 and 2 Brigades) until he was transferred in August 1921 to the Brigade Staff, 2 Brigade as Intelligence Officer. He was appointed Liaison Officer for Kerry in October 1921 and following the evacuation of British Forces transferred to the staff of 1 Southern Division as Divisional Police Officer, being finally appointed as ADC to General Liam Lynch, OC Division. He was present with Lynch at

the burning and evacuation of Fermoy Barracks on 11 August 1921 and shortly afterwards appointed as Command Adjutant, Kerry Command. He was arrested at Meelin, Kilcummin, Co Kerry after a fight with National Army forces and held in Mountjoy Jail until his release in December 1923.

Daniel Mulvihill was awarded a Military Service pension for 5 years and 10 months active service with the rank of Colonel on 15 February 1938.

He was appointed a member of the Advisory Committee to the Referee on 6 February 1950 and served in that capacity at the Department of Defence until the 31 December 1955. He also served as a member of the Board of Assessors, under the *Military Service Pensions Act, 1924*, at various times up to 1951.

Daniel Mulvihill died a bachelor on 9 January 1985.

MURPHY, Humphrey H. [?-1935]

Brigade Commander Kerry 2 Brigade and Kerry 1 Brigade (1 July 1922).

Humphrey Murphy was a member of the Kerry Brigade Irish Volunteers with continuous service from its formation. He functioned as an active Volunteer and as a full time organiser from May 1918. He was appointed Brigade Quartermaster on the formation of Kerry 2 Brigade, IRA, under Daniel Mahony as Brigadier, and later went on to command the Brigade. He took part in the attack on Gortlea and that at Scartaglin RIC Barracks, which operation he commanded, as well as the fighting in Brosna, Rathmore, Farranfore and Castleisland, for example.

He was an Assistant Teacher in Kilsarcon Boys National School, Farranfore, Co Kerry before his full time active IRA service and returned to his profession at the end of the Civil War.

Humphrey Murphy was appointed a member of the Advisory Committee to the Referee under the *Military Service Pensions Act, 1934* on the 17 December 1934. He is credited with the recommendation and decision to form Brigade Committees from the surviving officers of the Old IRA Organisation and to seek the submission to the Referee of membership rolls and records of activities carried out by the Brigades and their sub-units to assist the work of the Advisory Committee

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Humphrey Murphy died on 13 November 1935 and his widow Bridget became the beneficiary of his Military Service Pension, which was awarded on 23 July 1941 for a total of 8.5 years service in the rank of Brigadier.

Mrs Bridget Murphy died on 5 August 1955 and was survived by her daughter Mrs Mary Mc Sweeney.

ROBINSON, Seámus (Seumas) (1890-1961)

Seámus Robinson was born in Belfast in January 1890. He joined the 1st Fianna (Red Branch Knights) founded by Bulmer Hobson in 1902 and by the following year was a member of the Gaelic League in Glasgow, where his family had emigrated. He joined the Irish Volunteers in December 1913 and in January 1916 moved as a volunteer in a party from Glasgow to join the Kimmage Garrison and ultimately commanded a section of men holding Hopkins & Hopkins premises at Sackville Street during Easter Week, 1916 (near O' Connell Street Bridge). He was interned at Richmond Barracks before being moved to Stafford Jail, Frongoch and Reading Gaol, being released on 24 December 1916. Robinson became an organiser in Tipperary from early 1917 and was imprisoned in Cork and Belfast Jails from April 1918 to October, 1918. He was a full time activist and was appointed Officer Commanding South Tipperary Brigade in October 1918. Full details of his activities during Easter Week and the War of Independence are to be found in the Witness Statements he made to the *Bureau of Military History, 1913 -1921(WS 156, 1721 and 1722).* Robinson was an opponent of the Anglo- Irish Treaty and later commanded the 2nd Southern Division in the Civil War. He was elected to Seánad Eireann in 1928 and appointed a member of the Advisory Committee to the Referee, under the *Military Service Pensions Act, 1934* to replace the late Brigadier Humphrey Murphy on 30 November 1935. He also went on to serve on the reconstituted Board of Assessors, *Military Service Pensions Act*, 1924. He was awarded a Military Service Pension of 14 years service at the rank of Lieutenant General on 10 April 1935.

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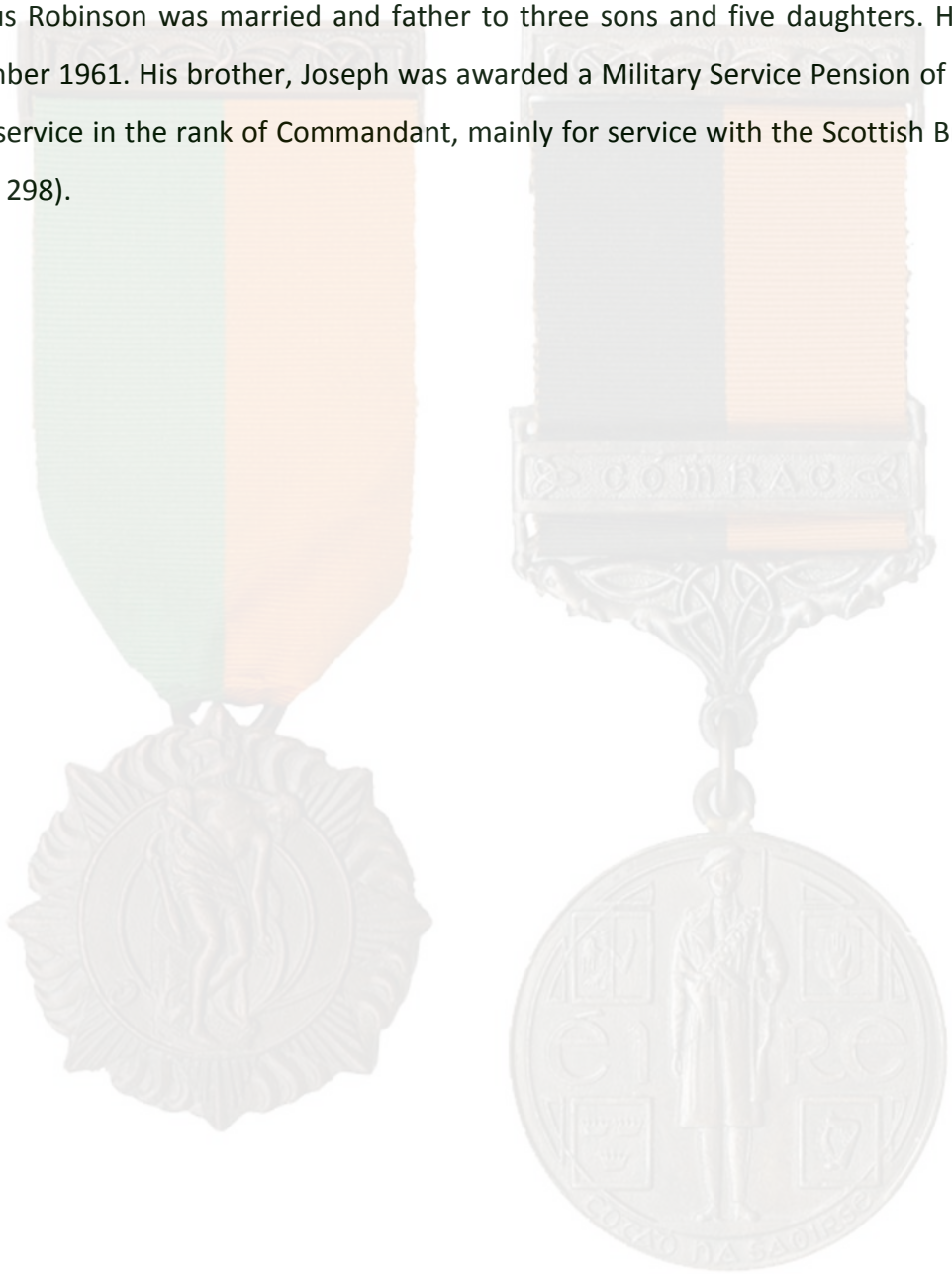
The Referee and Advisory Committee concluded investigations on 31 July 1947 and Seámus Robinson went on to be appointed, along with John McCoy, as a Temporary Investigation Officer with the *Bureau of Military History* in 1948. He later served for a time with the Military Service Registration Board (3) in the 1950's

Seámus Robinson was married and father to three sons and five daughters. He died on 8 December 1961. His brother, Joseph was awarded a Military Service Pension of just over 13 years service in the rank of Commandant, mainly for service with the Scottish Brigade-(MSP 34 Ref 298).



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