

*AN INTRODUCTION*  
*TO*  
*THE BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY*  
*1913 - 1921*

by

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*Cover: Burial of Thomas Ashe, Glasnevin, 30 September 1917. (CD 227/35/3)*

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## **FOREWORD**

The origins of the collection of archival material described as the Bureau of Military History 1913-1921 are explained in some detail in the first chapter of this publication. As the title implies, this booklet has been produced to act as an introduction to the collection. Hopefully it will serve as such and will assist and encourage students of this period of our history.

As a result of various initiatives the Government decided to release the collection to the Military Archives. After all, the impetus for the project came from within the Defence Forces in the forties and much material of a complementary nature such as 'The Collins papers' and Departmental files are in the keeping of Military Archives.

This booklet is intended to give readers a flavour of the material donated to the Bureau by associates and members of various political, social and cultural groups and other individuals involved in the events of the time. An assortment of themes represented within the collection has been selected, touching on a broad range of topics including the 1916 Rising, imprisonment and hunger strikes and women's participation in the Nationalist movement.

Sincere thanks are due to many people who have assisted and facilitated the release of this collection to the public. An Taoiseach, Mr Bertie Ahern, T.D. and Senator Martin Mansergh, a former Special Advisor to An Taoiseach have shown a personal interest and contribution. Mr Michael Smith, T.D., Minister for Defence; Lt Gen Colm Mangan, Chief of Staff and Mr David O'Callaghan, Secretary General Department of Defence have given valuable support. The National Museum of Ireland, the Office of Public Works and the Crawford Municipal Art Gallery have contributed generously upon request. Much credit is due to the intervention of the National Archives Advisory Council, under the chair of Professor Margaret MacCurtain. The Director of the National Archives, Dr David Craig and staff are thanked for all their assistance. A special word of thanks is due to Ms Catriona Crowe, Senior Archivist National Archives and Liaison Officer to the Military Archives for her tireless work on our behalf.

The many volunteerers who have assisted the Military Archives down the years deserve special thanks. A particular mention for their work with this project goes to Jim Dukes, Jim Stout and Leo Doyle. Thanks to the team of civilian archivists - Mirjana Cupek-Hamill, Orna Summerville, Eibhlís Connaughton and Frances Clarke - who processed the collection for release under the co-ordination of Jennifer Doyle, to the staff of the Defence Forces Printing Press and of the Air Corps Photographic Section.

This booklet is dedicated to the memory of our colleague and friend, Comdt Peter Young (b.16 Jun 1950 - d.27 Oct 1999), late Officer in Charge Military Archives.

Victor Laing  
Comdt  
OIC Military Archives





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## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

ADC	Aide-de-Camp
ASEW	Action Site Easter Week
ASU	Active Service Unit
CD	Contemporary Documents
GAA	Gaelic Athletic Association
GHQ	General Headquarters
GPO	General Post Office
HQ	Headquarters
ICA	Irish Citizen Army
IRA	Irish Republican Army
IRB	Irish Republican Brotherhood
IRPDF	Irish Republican Prisoners Dependant's Fund
OC	Officer Commanding
OFM Cap	Order of Friars Minor Capuchin
P	Photograph
PC	Press Cuttings
RIC	Royal Irish Constabulary
VR	Voice Recordings
WS	Witness Statements



**The East Limerick Active Service Squad  
by  
Con Burke (WS 1412)**

Come, all ye gallant Irishmen, and listen to my song,  
It's of the active service squad. I won't detain you long.  
There's McCarthy and Maloney, Clancy and Tom Rea.  
They are the finest soldiers in the Ireland of to-day.

There's Bourke from Ballindangan, and Ryan from Cappawhite,  
And the hefty blacksmith, Tobin, ever ready for a fight.  
There's Stapleton from Oola, with his kit upon his back,  
Marching ever onwards, and never looking back.

Of Sean Stapleton from Oola, I must make a few remarks.  
He's generous and noble, and fond of making larks,  
And when in marching order, he is a sight to see,  
With his old German Mauser, oh, he's the man for me!

Now I must sing of Shanahan, that brave Glenlara boy,  
For to his home and people, he long since said good-bye,  
And has taken up his rifle to fight for the old sod,  
For God, and home, and Ireland, in the active service squad.

Now, the guide and the observer, a couple of lines deserve.  
They're Michael Walsh and Hennessy, of brave unflinching nerve.  
For a guide and close observer, the equal can't be found,  
Of Mick Hennessy from Kilfinane, who can trail the roughest ground.

Last, but not least, come Maurice Meade and Donard of the Glen.  
No Irish poet did ever write of more determined men.  
That long have famed East Limerick, from the Glen to Cappawhite.  
God send them strength, those Limerick boys, to help the fight go on.  
Till, from the shores of our dear land, the Black and Tans are gone.  
And when the war is over, and the fight is fought and won,  
Let none forget this active service squad and its noble work well done.



## **THE BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY**

The Bureau of Military History was established by the Minister for Defence and former Officer Commanding Dublin Brigade IRA, Mr. Oscar Traynor, T.D. on 1 January 1947. The objective being *'to assemble and co-ordinate material to form the basis for the compilation of the history of the movement for Independence from the formation of the Irish Volunteers on 25 November 1913 to the [signing of the Truce] 11 July 1921.'* (Report of the Director, 1957)

Although the Bureau began its work in 1947, the origins go back to 1944 when Major Florence O'Donoghue, editor of *An Cosantóir*, suggested that a series of articles on Irish military leaders be published in the journal. This series of articles can be found in *An Cosantóir* 1945-1946. Following this a plan was drafted by Major O'Donoghue which was approved by An Taoiseach, Eamon de Valera, T.D. Subsequent to final approval by the Department of Finance the Bureau of Military History came into being.

Over the following ten years 1773 witness statements (WS), 334 groups of contemporary documents (CD), 42 photographs (P), 12 voice recordings (VR) and a selection of press cuttings (PC) were assembled by the Bureau from a variety of individuals who had been active in the period 1913 - 1921. Some well known contributors to the Bureau include: Cahir Davitt, High Court judge, son of the agrarian agitator and nationalist, Michael Davitt; Thomas Johnson, trade unionist and politician; George Gavan Duffy, defence solicitor for Roger Casement and President of the High Court 1936-1951 and Sean T. O' Ceallaigh, President of Eire (1945-1949) and President of the Irish Republic (1949-1959). However, the majority of contributors to the Bureau were the ordinary men and women involved in the movement for Independence. The collection covers events such as the Howth Gun-running, 1914; the Easter Rising, 1916; the formation of the first Dáil, 1919 and the outbreak of the War of Independence, 1919.

The Bureau staff included senior army personnel and civilians. Each investigating officer was given intensive training in interview skills and provided with a code of instruction and a chronology of events of the period in order to assist in obtaining a thorough and accurate account of the witnesses' experience. Their job was to travel throughout the country to gather as much evidence as possible from those involved in the Independence movement. Much of the information was gathered from members of the Irish Volunteers and later the IRA, but other groups including Fianna Eireann, Cumann na mBan, the Irish Republican Brotherhood, the Irish Citizen Army, and Clann na Gael are also represented.

Assisting the Bureau staff was an Advisory Committee appointed by the Minister for Defence, chaired by Richard Hayes and including Robert Dudley Edwards, G. A. Hayes McCoy and Theodore W. Moody. This committee was comprised of



academics and other scholars of Irish history. Its purpose was to offer guidance, oversee progress and deal with general queries which inevitably arose in the course of the work.



1. Photostat of a group of Fianna Eireann members (including Con Colbert, second from right) taken at Belcamp Park, Raheny, Co. Dublin. (CD 91/4)

The immediate problem facing the Bureau was the fact that the principal leaders of the 1916 Rising had been executed and a good number of Volunteers had died before the establishment of the Bureau. It was therefore decided to focus on surviving officers of Divisions, Brigades, Battalions and Companies which had seen active service. In order to achieve this an information leaflet was compiled and circulated, the Minister for Defence made a radio appeal and notices appeared in the national press. This campaign proved to be highly successful in attracting witnesses including many civilians who wished to place on record how they were affected during the Rising and the War of Independence.

### Witness Statements

Detailed instructions were issued to investigating officers, which covered issues such as the taking of evidence, the disclosure of information, communication to the press,



accuracy and literary style of witness statements. Gaining an accurate, factual account from the contributors was of paramount importance to the staff of the Bureau.

*'In listening to and recording his story you should keep an open mind. Your aim at all times must be to get from him an objective, factual record of events based on his own experiences. To that end he should be tactfully questioned on every point, to ensure that what he tells is, in fact, what he knows and not something which he has imagined, read or heard from someone else' (File S. 851. 10 May 1948)*

The Director of the Bureau was aware that personal testimony is subjective and the ability of witnesses to give an accurate account could change over time. Investigating officers were encouraged to gain as true a picture as possible given the circumstances of collecting information after such a long lapse between events.

*'Failing memory will sometimes impart an air of unreliability to what may be a genuine story, and the utmost care must be exercised in such cases... a witness must, under no circumstances, be persuaded to agree to anything which does not accord with his own personal recollection. There must be no attempt to smooth out or adjust a story, in order to make it more plausible or readable.'* (ibid.)

In compiling the evidence from the period the Bureau divided its work into three phases; the formation of the Irish Volunteers and associated organisations, events that led up to the Rising and the Rising itself and finally focused on the events of the period 1917 - 1921.

### **Contemporary Documents**

The contemporary documents consist of a variety of material gathered by individuals at the time and subsequently donated to the Bureau. Scrapbooks of press cuttings, memorabilia, correspondence, drawings and photographs are just some of the items contained in the collection. A Bureau of Military History information leaflet notes that *'Because of the circumstances of the time, and of the conditions under which the military organisations operated, the amount of original documentary material was of necessity very restricted, and unfortunately some of it has since been lost, through destruction, deterioration, or other causes.'* (1 May 1947) Despite this the Bureau did manage to obtain a large amount of material, some of it of varying degrees of importance and quality. Geraldine Dillon, sister of Joseph Plunkett, Robert Barton, a member of the delegation in the Anglo-Irish Treaty negotiations and Dorothy McArdle, historian and dramatist, were among those who donated contemporary documents.

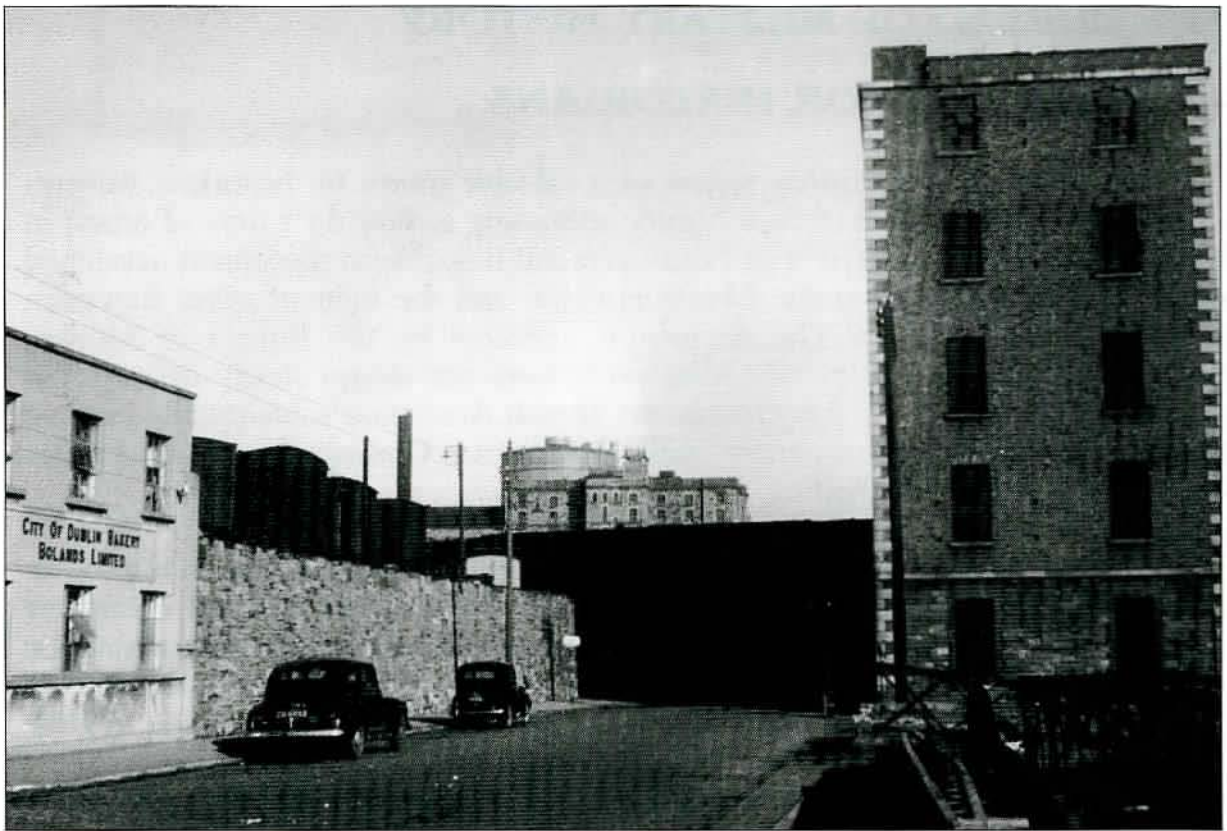
### Voice Recordings

The Bureau's twelve voice recordings were produced with the co-operation of the Irish Folklore Commission during the period 1950 to 1951. Witnesses selected for recording, according to the Bureau's criteria, were deemed '*top level of importance*' and '*unique in some outstanding way from the point of view of historians*' (File S. 1412. 20 December 1951). Efforts to secure recordings of Bulmer Hobson, Denis McCullough and Eamon de Valera proved unsuccessful, de Valera refusing on the grounds that '*his voice had already been sufficiently recorded.*' (ibid, 20 November 1957). Others were not so reluctant and the small number of Voice Recordings made for the Bureau adds a different texture to the collection, giving researchers an opportunity to hear the stories of individuals in their own words. Among those recorded were Áine Ceannt, widow of 1916 leader Eamon Ceannt, who recounts the first meetings of the IRB Military Council in her home at Oakley Road, Dublin, the labour leader William O'Brien, who recollects his memories of James Connolly, and William T. Cosgrave, who describes the operation of Local Government administration under Dáil Éireann.

### Photographs

Photographs were donated to the Bureau and are an important visual record of the events and people involved. As part of the photographic collection, photographs of Action Sites Easter Week were taken by the Air Corps during the 1950's to illustrate the military aspects of the positions taken by the rebel garrisons in the 1916 Rising. Some photographs are also contained in the collection of contemporary documents.





2. Action site photograph of Bolands Mills and Guinness Stores. Both buildings were heavily attacked by British machine guns during the Rising, the bullet marks are visible in the photograph. (P 32/4)



3. Action site photograph of the Shelbourne Hotel, St. Stephen's Green, Dublin, where British forces were established during the Rising. (P 36/6)



## **THE BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY**

### **- A RESOURCE FOR HISTORIANS**

The Bureau of Military History papers are a valuable source for historians, students and those with an interest in Irish history, addressing as they do a time of unrest in both Ireland and Europe. The Irish Nationalist and Republican movement developed against a backdrop of domestic labour agitation and the fight of other European nations for independence. The documents collected by the Bureau of Military History illustrate this complexity. Allegiances were not always clearly defined. For example, some Volunteers served with the British Army and subsequently became active in the Nationalist movement, whilst Royal Irish Constabulary (RIC) officers sometimes assisted their enemies.

The material collected by the Bureau will be of particular interest to local historians. The witness statements describe in some detail the activities of local volunteers throughout the country. *'Mobilisation and violence were unevenly distributed throughout the country. Due to the general unwillingness of the volunteers to act and the attention that the existing companies needed to survive, units were continuously falling apart as well as being formed, reformed and reactivated until the Truce. Whether the few activists that emerged in an area became violently engaged was largely dependant on their personality and experience.'* (Augustijn, *From Public Defiance to Guerilla Warfare*, p. 72, 1994) The level of activity in certain counties is reflected in the number of statements from these areas. Not unexpectedly Munster is very strongly represented in the collection.

The establishment of the Bureau gave all individuals involved in events of the time a chance to record their own stories. Members of the Irish Volunteers and subsequently the IRA, members of Cumann na mBan, the IRB, Sinn Féin, the Irish Citizen Army, relatives of deceased individuals and people not associated with any organisation all contributed to give as broad a range as possible to the collection.

Despite the name, the Bureau of Military History was not solely interested in the military activities relating to the struggle for Independence. *'The Bureau was interested in every contributory factor or development, reaching back in many cases to the beginning of the twentieth century.'* (*Report of the Director, 1957*). The questionnaire which contributors were asked to complete was broken down into a number of sections addressing such topics as missions abroad, the Vatican, flags, railways and shipping, food and looting.

The Bureau of Military History collection is very significant, not only because of the valuable material gathered but also because it represented a government sponsored initiative to gather and preserve the history of the State. This initiative attracted attention from other countries and resulted in visitors from England, Israel, and South Africa who wished to embark on similar projects. The work carried out by the Bureau has ensured that much valuable evidence relating to Ireland's struggle for Independence has been preserved for future generations.



The policy of the Bureau was to collect every fact, whether favourable or unflattering. Each witness was a source of evidence and it was the object of the Bureau to collect this evidence in an impartial manner, making no attempt to write history itself or to influence the witness in any way. All information gathered and material obtained was donated to the Bureau in confidence.

## IRISH BRIGADE IN GERMANY

The Brigade was established in December 1914 after Roger Casement secured a written agreement with the German government allowing Irish prisoners of war, held in Germany, to join a military unit, ready to participate in the fight for Irish independence. Despite Casement's regular visits to the Limburg Lahn Camp in Prussia, home to over 2,500 Irish P.O.W.s, his Brigade secured a mere fifty three recruits. Disillusioned by this poor response and the often hostile reception he received from the Irish prisoners, who he described as '*not Irishmen, but English soldiers, that is all*' (Parmiter, *Roger Casement*, p. 189, 1936), Casement subsequently recommended that the Brigade not be deployed in Ireland in the event of a rebellion.



4. Identity Card, Irish Brigade, Germany, 6 December 1915, bearing the name 'Irlander Feldwebel Kehoe' (CD 6/2/19)

Irish Brigade.																
Payments for month of April 1916																
No.	Rank and Name		Rate		Balance Ford.		Bread money		1st payment		2nd payment		3rd payment		Remarks	
			M	S	M	S	M	S	M	S	M	S	M	S		
	Ser.	Keloe	10						50	10	50	10	50	10	50	
	Ser.	Quink	9						9	50	9	50	9	50		
	Ser.	Lowling	8						8	50	8	50	8	50		
		outlook	7						7		7		7			Attention 50th; Morning
		Bluesley	7						7	50						
	Ser.	Delamore	3	50												
		Granaghan	3	50												
		Burke	3	50							2		2			
	Ser.	Golden	2	50						3		3		3		
		Donagh	2	50						3		4		4		
		Kelloghan	2	50						3		3		3		
	Private	Canroll	1	50						2		2		2		
		Walton	1	50						2		2		2		
		Barnale	1	50						2		2		2		
		Berry	1	50						2		2		2		
		Brandon	1	50						2		2		2		
		Keas P	1	50						2		2		2		
		Keas J	1	50						2		2		2		
		Burke	1	50						2		2		2		
		Kellins	1	50						2		2		2		
		Kaly	1	50						2		2		2		
		Lavis	1	50						2		2		2		
		Lowling	1	50						2		2		2		
		Lynde	1	50						2		2		2		
		Hulford	1	50	2	50				4	50	2		2		Attention 50th; Morning
		Greer	1	50						2		2		2		
		Harte	1	50						2		2		2		
		Kennedy	1	50						2		2		2		
		Long	1	50						2		2		2		
		Lynch	1	50						2		2		2		
		Keogh	1	50						2		2		2		

5. Paysheet of the Irish Brigade, Germany, for the month of April 1916 (CD 6/2/28)



## 1916 RISING

Many of the witness statements taken by the Bureau in the initial stages describe first hand experiences of the Rising. They cover a wide range of topics such as the frustration and confusion over the countermanding order issued by Eoin MacNeill on Easter Sunday, mobilisation, fighting in the various garrisons, attending the wounded and carrying dispatches. Interestingly, some deal with very specific aspects such as the types of flags that flew over the various garrisons during Easter week (WS 121) and the printing of the Proclamation (WS 323).

The intense confusion over the countermanding order meant that the Rising was largely confined to Dublin. Eithne Ní Shuibhne, sister of Terence MacSwiney, describes the situation in Cork:

*'Early on Tuesday all sorts of rumours were in circulation. The Volunteers were up! The Republic was proclaimed! The Volunteers had captured Dublin Castle, the Custom House, the GPO! They were winning everywhere! Thousands of soldiers had been killed! Thousands of Volunteers had been killed! There was fighting all over the country! and so on. My sister and I were completely puzzled. How could it be that there was a Rising and the Cork Volunteers apparently ignorant of it and inactive?'*  
(WS 119, p.9)

In Dublin, once confusion had turned to action, the Volunteers had plenty of experiences to recount. One Volunteer, Joseph O'Byrne, OC Bolands Mills garrison, describes the intense shelling from the 'Helga' gunboat which had sailed from the Liffey to the Grand Canal Docks and 'incessant' sniping on their position on Tuesday and Wednesday of Easter week (WS 160, p.5). In the GPO Seamus Robinson, member of the Kimmage Garrison, exhausted from lack of sleep describes a similar experience later on that week and hints at the desperate nature of the situation in the GPO in the closing stages of the Rising:

*'I found my way back into the GPO some time about midday on Friday... It was at this time that I remember the first shells hitting the roof of the GPO. They were incendiary shells and despite the efforts of some of the Garrison to control the fire with hose pipes the fire spread and more shells were landing on the roof. Rifle bullets were coming through the windows and pinging on the walls. I could see Volunteers with rifles dodging up and down at the windows looking for opportunities to fire at the enemy who seemed very near'* (WS 156, p.21)

Easter Sunday

Father Eugene Nevin C.P.

This is to authenticate my order  
in today's Sunday Independent.  
Great influence will be needed at  
the first possible moment & in every  
direction to secure faithful  
obedience to that order throughout  
the country & avert a very great  
catastrophe.

Eoin MacNeill

6. Letter from Eoin MacNeill to Fr. Eugene Nevin, Easter Sunday 1916, authenticating his countermanding order which appeared in that day's Sunday Independent. (CD 288/4)

Éamon Dore, member of the Irish Volunteers, Limerick, describes how he was put in charge of the Henry Street entrance to the GPO - the only exit not on fire:

'As we got out the door into Henry St. we lined up 'two deep' with O'Rahilly standing in front and Patrick Pearse by his side... Our gallant attempt to break through failed and the survivors ended in an old burnt out ruin in Moore Street. I saw O'Rahilly fall wounded and my nearest comrade, Pat O'Connor, was killed just in front of me and falling on me pinned me under him.' (WS 153, p.5)





7. Photostat of a group of Irish Volunteers and one member of the Irish Citizen Army inside the G.P.O., Dublin, Easter Week, 1916. (P8)

By Saturday, 29 April 1916, the rebels had surrendered. Joseph O'Byrne, OC Bolands Mills garrison recalls how depressed and disheartened the Volunteers felt:

*'Commandant de Valera who was clearly suffering deeply under the tragedy of the occasion came along and shook each of us by the hands.'* (WS 160, p.11)

In City Hall the Irish Citizen Army were in a similar position. Seán Connolly, Captain in the Irish Citizen Army, Commander of the City Hall garrison had been hit by a stray bullet and killed on Saturday afternoon. By nightfall British forces gained entry. The garrison surrendered and was imprisoned in Ship Street Barracks (WS 391, pp. 38-39). Some of the descriptions of imprisonment in the immediate aftermath of the Rising are quite graphic. Dr. Kathleen Lynn, First Aid lecturer to the Irish Citizen Army and Cumann na mBan, Captain in the ICA, describes how she was transferred from Richmond Barracks, where she had been kept in appalling conditions, to Kilmainham Gaol. Conditions were better but the women could hear the executions being carried out. Not surprisingly she remarks: *'It was a very harrowing experience.'* (WS 357, p.3)





8. Photograph of the Irish Citizen Army groups, outside Liberty Hall, Dublin, 1917. (CD 119/3/5)

The Plunkett family experienced particularly painful times after the Rising. After searching for three weeks and finally locating her father in Richmond Barracks, Mrs Geraldine Dillon, writes:

*'During my first visit to Richmond Barracks, my father told me that the day Joe was court-martialled, he saw him standing in the rain below his window in the barrack square. He knew he was to be shot, and they gazed at each other for about half-an-hour before Joe was moved off. My father was weeping as he told me this.'* (WS 358, pp 22-23)

Dr. Kathleen Lynn recalls how her cell in Mountjoy was beside Countess Plunkett:

*'Of course, she was in a terrible state about her son having been executed, and she used to get awfully lonely and upset at night. We would lie down on the floor and talk; and that would make her better.'* (WS 357, p.4)

It is well documented that General Maxwell acted swiftly after the Rising, detaining more than twice the number that actually took part. He was also determined to impose the most severe sentences on the leaders of the Rising.



The witness statements provide valuable information from individuals on the 'other' side during the Rising, giving us a different insight. Dr. J. C. Ridgway, Royal Army Medical Corps, British Army, describes how he treated James Connolly who had been critically wounded in the shoulder and ankle by sniper fire. Dr. Ridgway offered to send a message to Connolly's wife, which was gratefully accepted by the injured leader. In the same statement the witness recalls that, while on duty, he was handed a telegram that read:

*'Officer Commanding Dublin Castle. The execution of James Connolly is postponed. - Asquith... It was said that when General Maxwell, the General Officer Commanding the troops, read the telegram from the Prime Minister, he at once declared he would resign if a reprieve was granted to any convicted political prisoner. As this would have caused a sensation at that critical stage of the Great War his wish was granted.'* (WS 1431, p.4)

Another witness, Capt. E. Gerrard, an ADC to Gen Sir Hugh Jeudwine, OC 5 Division, 1921, describes a discussion he had with the medical officer, Col. H. V. Stanley, RAMC, who attended the executions of the first nine:

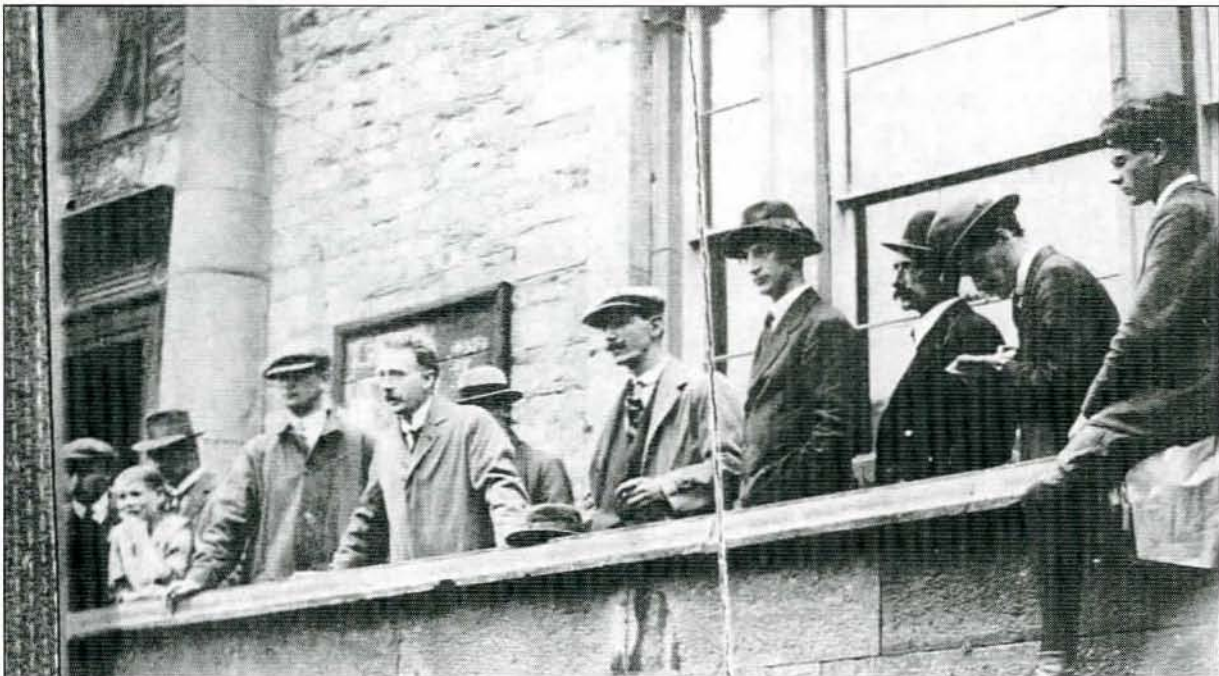
*'After that I got so sick of the slaughter that I asked to be changed. Three refused to have their eyes bandaged... they all died like lions. The rifles of the firing party were waving like a field of corn. All the men were cut to ribbons at a range of about ten yards.'* (WS 348, p.7)



9. Sketch of Joseph Mary Plunkett by Grace Gifford  
(CD 5/1/2)



10. Photostat of Sinn Féin election group Victoria Hotel, Kilkenny, during the Kilkenny by-election, 1917. Standing L to R- Dan McCarthy, Darrell Figgis, Rev. Dr. Browne (Maynooth), Old Tom Kelly, ....Fleming, Eamon de Valera, Sean Milroy. Seated L to R- Laurence Ginnell, Countess Constance Markievicz, William T. Cosgrave, Mrs. Ginnell. (P11)



11. Photostat of William T. Cosgrave making a speech from the Courthouse Balcony, after his election in the Kilkenny by-election, 1917.(P11)



## IRISH VOLUNTEERS - TRAINING, GENERAL ACTIVITIES, ACTIVE SERVICE UNITS

By far the most common descriptions found in the 1773 witness statements are those that record the experiences and activities of the Irish Volunteers throughout the country during the War of Independence. Initially training was of great importance and the majority of the statements highlight this aspect. Typical battalion training activities included subjects such as musketry, arms drill, foot drill, signalling and first aid. Route marches and other exercises took place at weekends. Each company was expected to parade one night each week so that subscriptions could be collected and mobilisation orders issued. Each man was expected to have the following equipment ready for mobilisation: a pack, haversack, water bottle, bandolier, belt and arms, if any. The contents of the pack were to include an overcoat, spare pair of boots, socks, towel, soap, twenty four hours rations, bundle of kindling wood and mess tin. (WS 377, p.2)



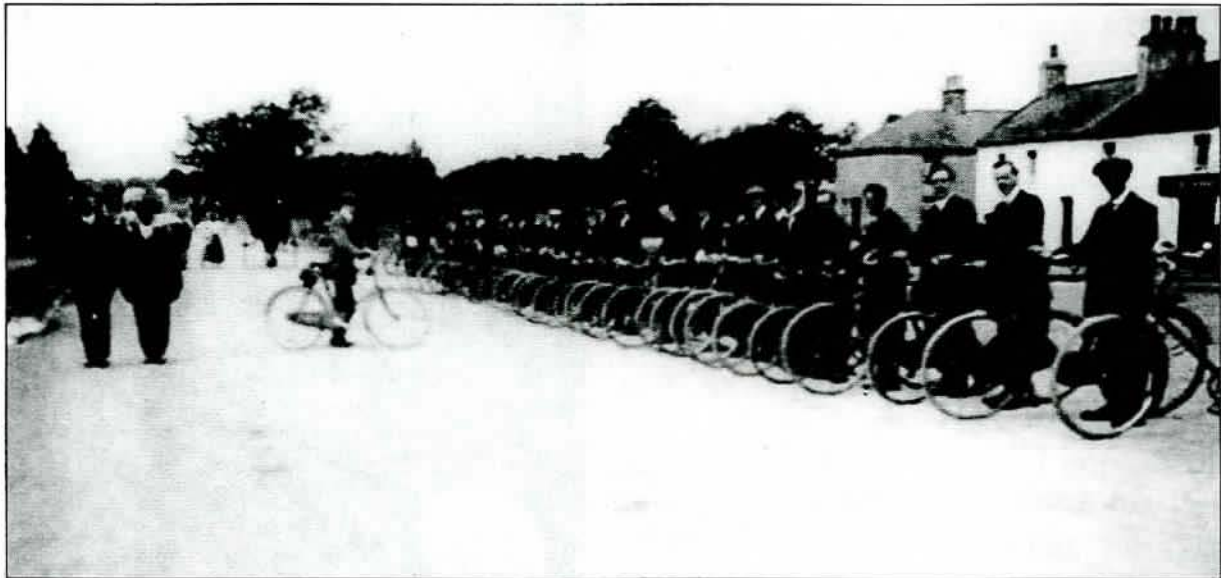
12. Photograph of Tom Cullen in uniform.  
(CD 188/2/1)

Although most of the statements describe general training activities some Volunteers took part in more specialised training that included railway demolitions, general demolitions, communications, road mining, as well as map reading, field sketching, single and double lock bridge building, tree felling by explosives and manual means and the use of fire arms including automatic weapons and machine guns. Initial training soon turned into aggression and by April 1919 the War of Independence had intensified. Throughout the country Volunteers were involved in ambushes, destroying RIC barracks, raiding for arms, raiding mails, trenching and blockading roads, maintaining arms dumps and hideouts, scouting and collecting intelligence.

Needless to say much time was devoted to the procurement of arms and once obtained the concealment and maintenance of these arms. It is clear from the statements that there was never as many weapons as Volunteers. Organised raids took place and both private homes and RIC barracks were targeted. In one

instance the Ballynacargy, County Westmeath Company of Irish Volunteers obtained information about a box of weapons deposited in the strongroom of the Hibernian Bank in Mullingar and successfully raided the bank to obtain it:

*'The box contained shotguns and revolvers and was the property of Colonel Pardon...The police were on the street outside the Bank while we were doing the job and did not notice anything unusual.'* (WS 1498, p.8)



13. Photostat of the Cyclist Company 4 Battalion on parade, Sallins, Co. Kildare, 23 June 1918. (P9)

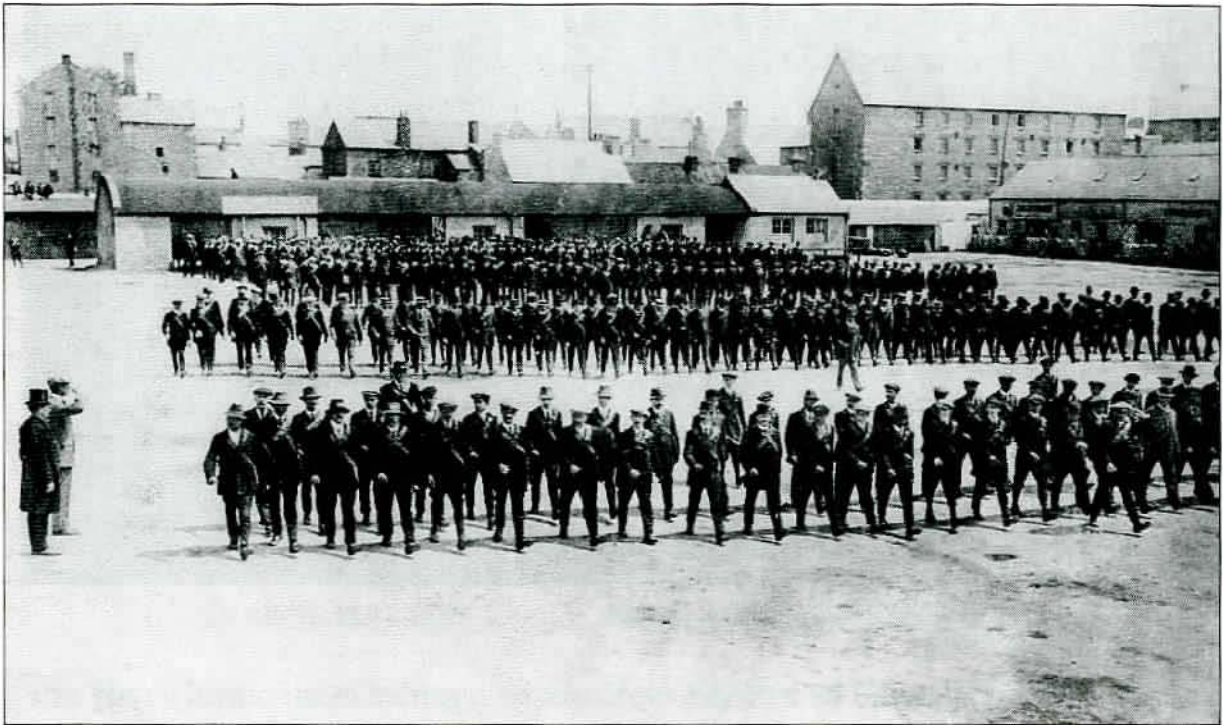
Sometimes more inventive and daring means were used. One man, Padraig Ua Floinn, Captain, Fethard Company of Irish Volunteers gives the following account:

*'...my eldest son, Augustine, was a student in Louvain University, Belgium, where he was studying for the priesthood... Augustine managed to secure some parabellum revolvers and ammunition in Belgium which he sent to me. His method was to cut the centre out of a large book, dismantle the guns and place the parts and the ammunition in the cavity in the book, then parcel it up and post it to me. In this way I obtained at least 10 or 12 parabellums for the South Tipperary Brigade.'* (WS 1221, p.9)

Another description by Seán Scott recounts how the 'miracle' of the bleeding statues in Templemore, County Tipperary provided the local Volunteers with a lucrative means of obtaining badly needed funds for the purchase of arms. During the summer months of 1920 pilgrims flocked to Templemore. The RIC and military were confined to barracks and the local volunteers took over the task of crowd control:

*'We imposed a levy of two shillings and sixpence per day... and in less than two weeks the sum... collected amounted to at least £1,000 which was handed over to the Brigade arms fund'.* (WS 1486, p.7)





14. Photostat of Tralee Battalion, Kerry Brigade, Irish Volunteers, at a parade held in the Market, Tralee, 14 June 1914. The Inspecting Officer taking the salute is Capt. Talbot Crosbie. (P18)

Due to the extreme efforts made by Volunteers throughout the country to obtain arms it is not surprising that every effort was made to conceal these weapons in secure, dry arms dumps. Many arms dumps were constructed in fences near a gap. Waterproofed wooden containers were built into the fence and a large stone was used to secure the opening. These dumps were subject to inspections by officers of adjoining battalions. If an arms dump did not pass an inspection it was condemned and ordered to be rebuilt. (WS 1151, p.21) Other descriptions provide a more unusual insight - necessity being the mother of invention in many cases. Commandant James Cahill, member of Active Service Unit, No. 2 Section, Dublin 1920-21, describes how he and a colleague set off one evening to an arms dump located in a graveyard in Finglas. (WS 503, pp.19-20) In Rathmines the clerk of the church, who was also acting as an assistant to the Company Quartermaster, A Company, 4 Battalion, Dublin Brigade, used the vaults of the church as a dump for the majority of the company's arms and equipment. Imagine his horror when, on the night of 26 January 1920, a fire broke out which left only the shell of the church intact. Luckily the arms and ammunition were saved! The church also acted as a temporary refuge to volunteers who could not remain at their homes for fear of being arrested. (WS 601, pp.13-14)

An added difficulty for many Brigades throughout the country was 'dud' ammunition. Col. Jerry Ryan, Commandant 1 Battalion, 2 (Mid) Tipperary Brigade, describes how he and a group of his company occupied an ambush position on the road between The Commons and Ballingarry, County Tipperary, the intention being





15. Photograph of West Mayo Brigade Flying Column, I.R.A., 1920-1921. (P40)

to ambush an RIC patrol. The ambush could not be regarded as successful – only one RIC man and his rifle were captured:

*‘The .303 ammunition which we were using...had been received a short time before from GHQ and, to our surprise, most of the cartridges were dud, only about one in ten being effective. This, and this alone, saved the patrol from serious casualties and, had the police shown fight, it could have had serious consequences for us. I understand that quite a lot of this ammunition was distributed to the brigades all over the country and had to be recalled by GHQ.’* (WS 1487, p. 8)

Apart from guns and ammunition the Volunteers also required mines and bombs to carry out their war on the RIC and British military. Again, ingenuity played a major role in their manufacture. One witness, Hugh Brady, Brigade Ordnance Officer, South Leitrim Brigade, describes how, towards the end of 1920 while working in a coach building business, he began making mines out of cart-wheel and trap-wheel boxes. The design proved successful and blew a large hole in the gable wall of the RIC barracks at Kesh, County Leitrim. (WS 1266, pp 8-9)

Another description by Michael V. O’Donoghue, Engineer Officer, 2 Battalion, Cork 1 Brigade, recounts how he designed a new type of land mine ‘...lighter, more easily transferable and more reliable than the heavy concrete types...’ (WS 1741, p.174) High explosive tonite or gun cotton and gelignite were fitted into tubes such as cast iron piping to produce a very effective explosive. During the course of making these types of mines it was discovered that metal shore pipes provided ideal raw material for the tubing and not surprisingly these pipes ‘disappeared’ from many streets in Clonakilty and Dunmanway, prompting Cork County Council to write a letter of complaint to Brigade HQ. (WS 1741, p.175)





16. Photograph of North Longford Flying Column, I.R.A., Crott Mountain, 1 May 1921, following an ambush at Reilly's house at Fyhora, in which two Black and Tan soldiers were shot dead. (P14)

As Volunteers became more and more involved in raiding, ambushing, destroying barracks and causing general disruption it became increasingly clear to them that evading arrest meant avoiding their homes. Many of the witnesses remark that as times got tougher they had to go 'on the run'. As a result small groups of men formed themselves into Flying Columns or ASU's. The description of life 'on the run' does not paint a glamorous picture for these men who were isolated from their families and homes and had to rely on the generosity of farmers for their shelter and food. Sgt. Seán Moroney of the East Clare Brigade ASU describes his experience:

*'The ASU suffered a good deal during the winter of 1920-21. We had to sleep in haybarns and often in the open when hard pressed by large raiding parties of military and RIC. The food was not too good as the people were poor, and our regular food was tea, bread, butter and eggs. We very seldom got vegetables, as we were usually in a hurry to move on again and could not wait for them to be cooked. As a result of the food we usually had, we all got what we called the Republican itch...' (WS 1462, p.8)*

The Republican or column itch referred to was in fact scabies and many of the Volunteers describe the pain and discomfort this affliction caused them. One Volunteer, Michael V. O'Donoghue, decided to take drastic action and bathed in Jeyes fluid to stop the unbearable itch. Needless to remark the cure was worse than the disease adding to this individual's misery! (WS 1741, p.220) However, many Volunteers also describe safe houses and hide-outs that provided much needed and appreciated refuge, where a meal and vital information were always available. In addition contact could be made with local scouts who could supply details of enemy movements in a locality and who could carry dispatches or act as armed guards.



These houses also provided a place where sick and injured Volunteers could billet in safety while they recovered. (WS 560, p.54). In a letter to the Director of the Bureau of Military History Oliver St. John Gogarty wrote:

*'When the Black and Tans behaved in such an excited and unsoldierly way by endangering my daughter's life when she was playing in St. Stephen's Green, I resolved to give all the help in my power to the Resistance movement headed by Michael Collins. His confidant, Batt O'Connor, was a patient of mine. To him I gave whatever gold I could come by for his reserve... I also gave him a latch key of my house, 15 Ely Place, and prepared that apparently impassible cul de sac so that Collins, if hard pressed, could use my garden and appear in St. Stephen's Green.'* (WS 700)

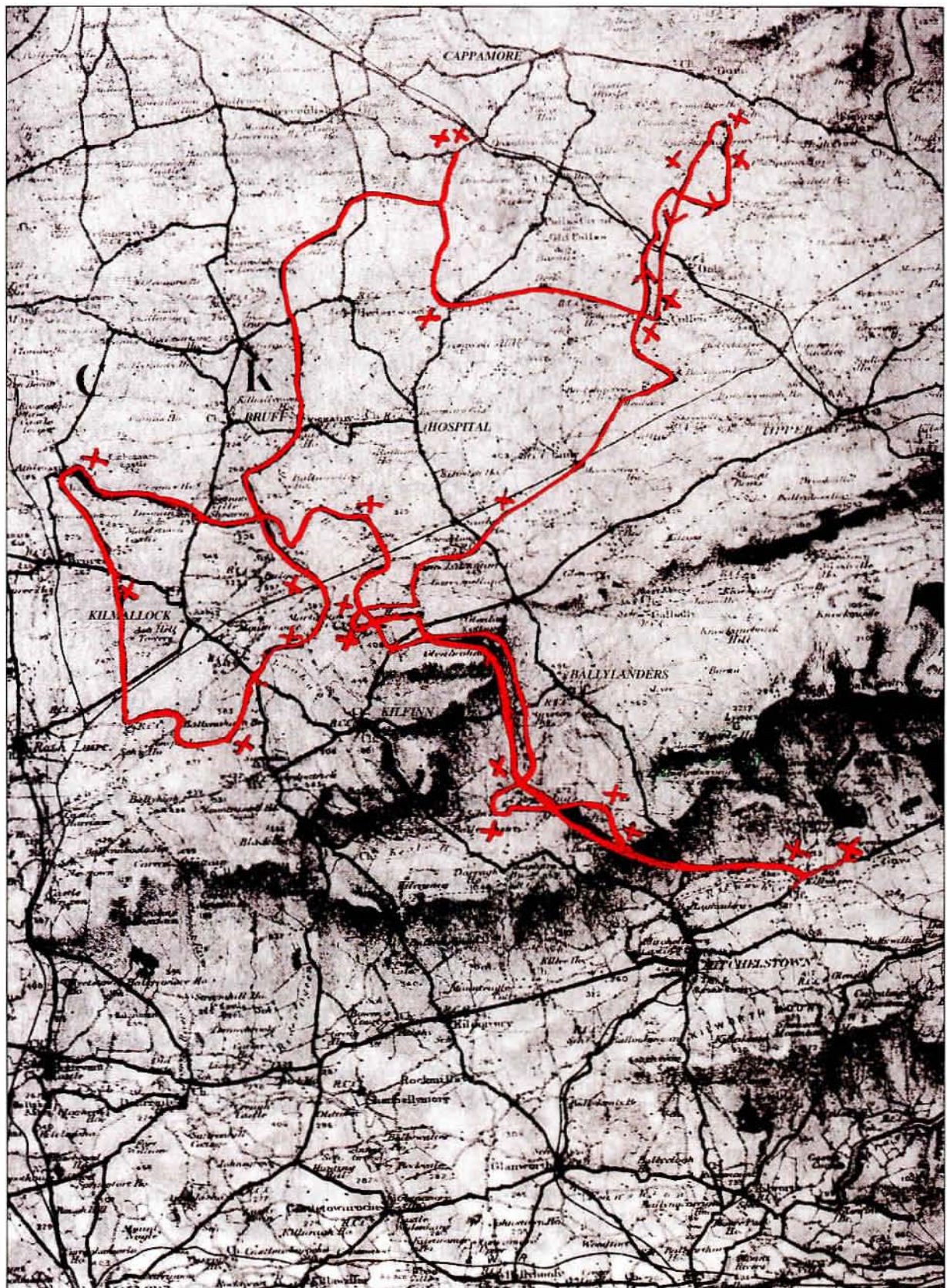


17. Photostat of a group of officers of the Longford Brigade, I.R.A., taken by Thomas Reddington, OC Longford Brigade, about fourteen days prior to the Truce of 11 July 1921.  
Front Row L to R - E.H. Moran, M. Heslin, S. Conway, Bernard Masterson.  
Back Row L to R- Bernard Garraghan, James Mulligan, M.F Reynolds, 'Brig' Callaghan. (P1)

Where a safe house was not available then a hideout had to be found or constructed. One Volunteer, Martin Fahy, Irish Volunteers, Galway University and Brigade Engineer, South-West Galway, 'on the run' describes how he, his brother and another friend struck on the idea of constructing a hide-out in a cock of hay:

*'It was warm and comfortable... We slept there from about the middle of November 1920 to the end of January 1921.'* (WS 1018, p. 17)





18. Map indicating the day to day routes followed by the East Limerick Flying Column and where the unit was billeted. (WS 883)



## INTERNMENT AND HUNGER STRIKES

After the 1916 Rising and during the War of Independence the British Authorities imprisoned approximately 3,000 Irish men and women in jails and internment camps in Ireland and Britain. Among these were Ballykinlar Internment Camp, the Curragh, Spike Island, Kilmainham Jail, Stafford Jail, Wakefield Prison, Lincoln Prison, Wandsworth Prison and Glasgow Prison.

Frongoch Internment Camp, Merionethshire, Wales has been described by Seán O'Mahony as '*a veritable political university and military academy*' (O'Mahony, *Frongoch, University of Revolution*, p.58, 1987). Frongoch was notorious for its appalling conditions. Internees suffered from '*that tired Frongoch feeling*.' (CD/45/4/17). On imprisonment these men and women demanded better conditions and recognition as political prisoners, but the prison authorities and the British Government disregarded their pleas given that political status implied recognition as prisoners of war. In this case not only would the injustice of internment be highlighted, but it also meant that the treatment of Ireland by Britain would be brought to international attention.

The struggle for political status usually began with a refusal to carry out the menial tasks normally associated with criminal prisoners. This method achieved no results. The prisoners discovered that the only way to gain political status was to hunger strike en masse. This drastic action strengthened the resolve of the internees and their families and also gained external support.

Seán Moylan, OC Cork 4 Brigade and Brigade OC ASU, Cork, sums up what it felt like to be on hunger strike:

*'I shall always hate jails and sympathise with prisoners. The food was uneatable; the bullying tones of the warders unbearable; the harsh routine of prison life a constant insult. I went on hunger strike. Then began the struggle for freedom. Day after day I found my mind preoccupied with the devising of menus. Elaborate and often incongruous combinations of food - flesh, fruit, vegetables - passed on the assembly belt of imagination before my eyes leaving the craving that encompassed me more insistent as the days went by. At no time, however, did this delicious dream of food tend to weaken my determination to continue the strike. Spirit triumphed over matter.'* (WS 838, pp.68 - 69)

*'Wearisome, interminable, the days of my hunger strike dragged out at slow length. Threatened, abused, ridiculed at first, later I was wooed and tempted with specially prepared delicacies. I refused to break.'* (Ibid, p.70)

One of the most famous hunger strikes occurred in Mountjoy Jail, Dublin in September 1917. The reaction of the prison authorities in Mountjoy, as elsewhere later on, was to force-feed the hunger strikers. As a result of 'forcible feeding' Thomas Ashe died. His death brought about the granting of political status to Irish prisoners arrested in the aftermath of Easter 1916. It was the first time that Irish Republican prisoners were granted political status.



19. Photograph of a group of prisoners, Stafford Jail, England, c. 1916. Included in the picture are Sean O'Briain, Fergus Kelly, Eunan McGinley, Desmond Ryan, Denis Daly, Bryan Joyce, Eamon Dore, Joe Sweeney, J. Kilgallon, Tom Clifford, Eamon Bulfin, Colm Murphy, Frank Burke, Fergus Kelly, Michael Collins and Dr Joseph Ryan. (P41)

Thomas Ashe had been sentenced to twelve months by Courtmartial on 11 September 1917 for a speech he made in Ballinlea and had refused to recognise the court. On arriving in Mountjoy he immediately commenced hunger strike and was soon joined by his fellow prisoners. The hunger strikers had support and concern from many Dubliners who held vigils outside the prison gates.

Laurence Nugent, Lieutenant K Company, 3 Battalion, Dublin Brigade, told:

*'Near the end of the month we heard reports of serious trouble in Mountjoy jail over a demand by Republican prisoners to be treated as prisoners of war. About 40 republican prisoners were in Mountjoy at that time and the reports were that they were out of control and on hunger strike. Day to day news of the hunger strike was published: it was reported that forcible feeding was resorted to. Great meetings of protest*



took place concerning the treatment of these men. de Valera and Cathal Brugha spoke at a huge demonstration in Smithfield. On September 26th the press published the following report:

*DEATH OF THOMAS ASHE IN MATER HOSPITAL, at 30 past ten p.m.  
Tues. night 25th.10. (sic) 1917.*

*He had been removed from Mountjoy prison by the authorities when they saw that he was about to die: they did not want the death to take place in the prison. The remainder of the prisoners were offered certain concessions, but they refused any privileges less than their original demands to be treated as prisoners of war. So the hunger strike went on.'*  
(WS 907, pp.125 - 127)

Within the prisons Volunteer rank applied as normal, William McNamara, a Volunteer from Ennis, County Clare, was in Mountjoy at the time and received an order from his OC, Paddy Brennan to see the Prison Governor on the following Saturday and demand to be treated as a prisoner of war:

*'When Saturday came, every Irish Volunteer prisoner in Mountjoy was before the Governor making this demand and the poor man was in a rage. He ordered us back to our cells and also stopped all exercise. Then the fun started, We broke the cell windows, furniture and everything we could lay our hands on. The first move in reply by the Prison Authorities was that all prisoners detained for political offences were transferred into one wing, C.I.18, and all the convicts removed to the other wings....In the course of a few days after this turmoil began we received orders to go on hunger strike... I believe we were six or seven days without food or exercise when, one morning, three warders rushed into my cell and dragged me to the prison doctor's room where I was placed on an arm chair. My legs and hands were tied to it and my head held back. The doctor commenced the 'forcible feeding'. Although I was very weak I resisted but failed to prevent him from feeding me as he forced some kind of instrument into my mouth, causing it to remain open. Next, he inserted the tube and fed me. I was taken back to my cell in a very exhausted condition. Each prisoner had to go through the same treatment. We got orders from our leader to resist as best we could. I was fed twice per day and each time the warders had to carry me up to the chair where I continued to resist as best I could. I was fed through both the nose and mouth. All told I think I was forcibly fed thirteen times during the strike which lasted 14 or 15 days. I felt very weak the whole time, but as I had no mattress and had to lie down on the boards I was at a disadvantage as compared with the big majority of the others... It was only then we heard Thomas Ashe had died and that Joe McDonagh and James Griffey of Ennis were in hospital in a very weak condition. All of us got medical treatment until we were restored to normal health after which we were treated as prisoners of war.'*  
(WS 1135, pp.4 - 6)

Not only did the death of Thomas Ashe result in the changing of status, his funeral demonstrated overwhelming public support for the remaining prisoners. Laurence Nugent tells how:

*'Great meetings of protest still were held all over. Thomas Ashe's funeral procession from the Mater Hospital to the Pro-Cathedral was enormous as was the procession to the City Hall for the lying-in-state, where Volunteers in uniform kept guard. Over 30,000 viewed the remains and all festivities were called off. The funeral of Thomas Ashe was of very large dimensions. Volunteers marched in uniform and carried rifles with bayonets fixed. The public houses were closed. The British Military were confined to barracks and the police were not to be seen on the streets. A firing party at the graveside in Glasnevin fired the usual salute, the Last Post was sounded and an oration was delivered by Mick Collins as follows:- "Nothing additional remains to be said. The volleys which we have just heard is the only speech which is proper to make over the grave of a dead Fenian."' (WS 907, p.127)*

To hunger strike was a terrifying risk as it often led to horrific and fatal consequences. Stephen Keys, Section Commander A Company, 3 Battalion, Dublin Brigade, portrays how frightening the prospect was. He was imprisoned in the Curragh when a hunger strike was called:

*'I thought to myself that I could not go on hunger strike. I was married at the time and I said, "I am not going on hunger strike and have to go out of this place as a cripple."' (WS 1209, p.39)*

Nevertheless he eventually joined his comrades:

*'We went on hunger strike, and I said I would not stop on it any longer than fifteen days, because there was a rumour around the Camp that, after fifteen days on hunger strike, you lived on the marrow of your bones and that you were likely to be a cripple for the rest of your life. On the fifteenth day, I was ready to break it the next morning. The way you broke your strike was: you went up to the cookhouse; You told them you were off the strike. That morning when I went up there were five or six hundred of us breaking it because of the rumour. You got a little drop of Bovril for a start. Some of the men from the country did not understand this. I saw one man in particular going over to the swill bucket, taking food from it and eating it, and, within a short period, he was lying on the ground and the orderlies were taking him away on a stretcher. The rumour came that he was dead. Two or three men happened to die from the same thing, eating too much and not being able to get to the hospital quick enough.' (Ibid, p.40)*

The hunger strikers achieved the attention and support they desired, infuriating the British military authority in Ireland. In 1920 a group of enthusiastic supporters of Sinn Féin in Miltown Malbay, County Clare decided to celebrate the unconditional release of hunger striking prisoners from Mountjoy. A tar barrel was lit. Edward Lynch, Captain G Company, 4 Battalion, Mid Clare Brigade, was watching proceedings from Kinucane's shop. He did not take part in the party as he was 'on the run':



*'In the midst of the celebrations a party of seven or eight armed soldiers came along from their post in Temperance Hall, passed by the crowd and went on to the RIC Barracks. After a short time the soldiers, accompanied by some RIC men under Sergeant Hampson, left the Barracks and headed straight for the crowd. As soon as they reached the outskirts, Sergeant Hampson drew a revolver while the other policemen and soldiers took up firing positions about him. The Sergeant called on the crowd to disperse and simultaneously fired from his revolver. The other police and soldiers also opened fire. People began falling all over the place and there was a wild stampede. I saw a Volunteer named John Joe O'Loughlin fall within a few feet of the blazing tar barrel. Thinking that he might be burned in the flames, I rushed out of Kinucane's to his assistance. On the way I met Pat Maguire, a local blacksmith, and called upon him to help me remove O'Loughlin. Though I was not aware of it at the time, Maguire himself had been wounded through the thigh, but nevertheless he helped me in carrying O'Loughlin up to Kinucane's. Poor O'Loughlin was unconscious. After uttering an act of Contrition into his ear, another Volunteer named 'Dido' Foudy had come along and I dispatched him for spiritual and medical aid. Foudy came back in a few minutes in a most excited state. On his way to the priest's house, he tripped over the dead body of another man who turned out to be Thomas O'Leary, a most inoffensive individual who belonged to no organisation... In the meantime, I heard that Patrick Hennessy, also a Volunteer, had been killed. I went to his home to which his corpse had just been taken and remained there until the early hours of the morning... For the next few days the enemy forces in Miltown Malbay were confined to the Barracks. The village was left entirely under the control of the Volunteers. The three men who had been killed received a military funeral attended by Volunteers from all over Clare. The usual route was not taken and the coffins were borne past the RIC Barracks and the military post... but the police did not show their faces. Public feeling against the enemy forces became very hostile following these murders in Miltown Malby. Of their own accord, most of the local shopkeepers refused to supply them with food and drink' (WS 1333, pp.4 - 6).*

The effect of internment on families is related by Phyllis Morkan, member of Cumann na mBan, Dublin. Her husband was jailed in Knutsford Prison near Manchester after the Rising. As soon as she discovered where he was imprisoned she made plans to go and visit him:

*'I crossed the following night and word must have gone around that I was going, because at the boat there were about 20 people, all with parcels and letters for me to take to their men folk. I arrived at the gaol gate on Friday morning and was admitted at 10 o'clock and escorted to a waiting room. I stood at the window looking out on the square and after a short time I saw, marching along in single file, half a dozen men. I could not see my husband at first and the only way I recognised him was by his walk. He was still in uniform, but had grown a beard. We were so pent up at seeing each other again that I think we scarcely spoke at all. The first question he asked me was what the people at home thought of them and he was overjoyed when I told him that the whole country was with them' (WS 210, p.4).*





20. Photograph of a group of I.R.A. prisoners, on board a British Admiralty Tender docked in Portland Harbour, prior to their transfer to Portland Prison c. 1921.(P29)

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Via **Bres Head & Kingstown**

Description	Class.	NO. OF PASSENGERS CONVEYED AT			Ordly. Single Fare.	Amount Payable. £ s. c
		1/4 of Single Fare.	1/2 of Single Fare.	3/4 of Single Fare.		

21. Great Western railway ticket from Frongoch to Kilrush, Co. Clare, 22 July 1916  
(CD 261/1/1)

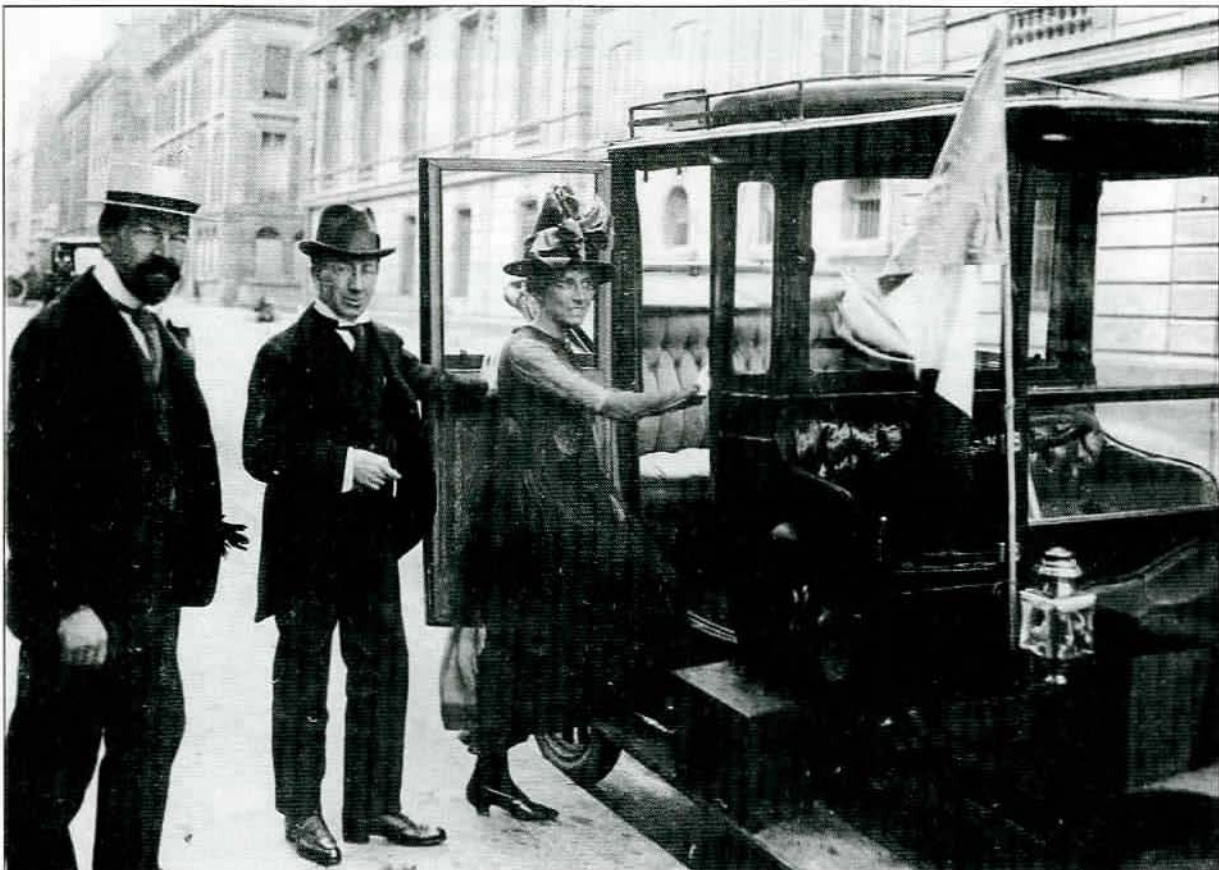


## INTERNATIONAL LINKS

The nationalist movement sought support not only on the domestic front, but also abroad, particularly from the Irish communities in Britain and the United States. Australia, South Africa and Argentina were also targeted.

Patrick J. Little gives an interesting account of his activities as Irish Representative to South Africa and Argentina, 1920-1921. He travelled extensively seeking support:

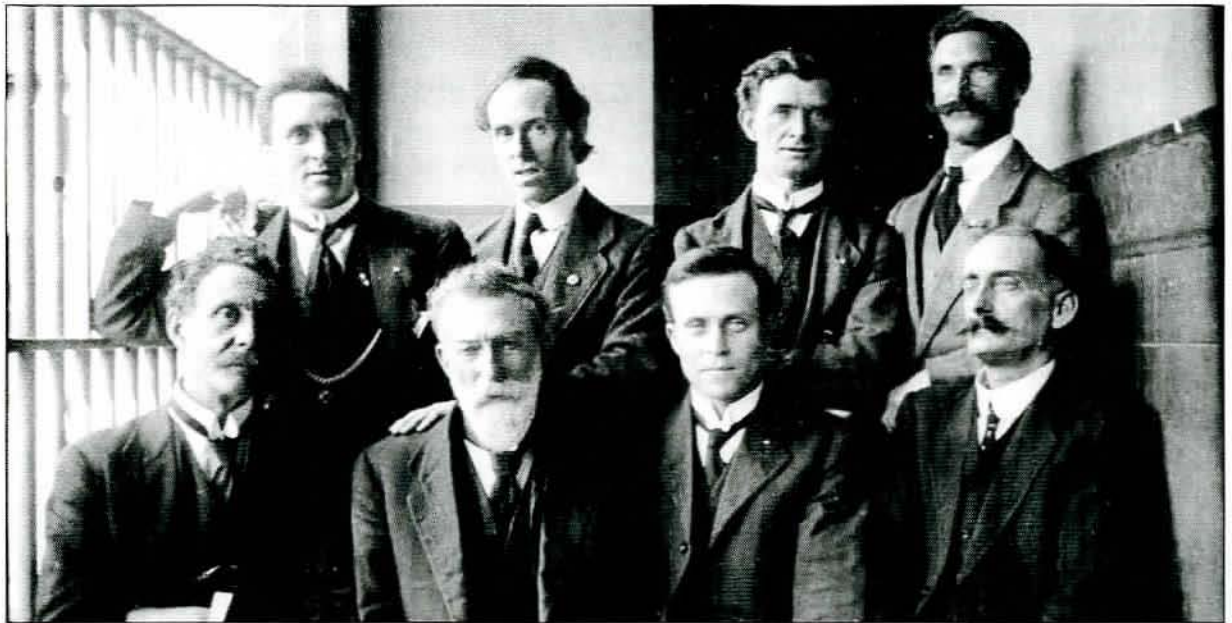
*'I was able... to wire to Mr. De Valera that nineteen meetings had passed the resolution, demanding withdrawal of the British Army of Occupation from Ireland, and the recognition of the Irish republic on the principle of self-determination. This resolution was passed in Johannesburg, Pretoria, Capetown, Stellenbosch, Bloemfontein, Kimberley, Krugersdorp, Beroni, Roodepoort, Germiston, Klerkesdorp, Kopjes, Vredepoort, Parys, Heilbron, Standerton, Ermelo, Witbank, Lydenberg.'*  
(WS 1769, p.74)



22. Photograph of George Gavan Duffy and Séan T. O'Ceallaigh, envoys of the Government of the Irish Republic and Mrs Gavan Duffy in Paris, prior to their visit to the French Prime Minister and member of the Select Committee of the World Peace Conference, Georges Clemenceau, May 1919. (CD 95/6/6)

The IRA was anxious not only to draw attention to its freedom fighting activities, but also to develop international links, which would be important for developing the economic position of the emerging state. J.J. Moran, member of the Irish Republican Association of South Africa relates:

*'Mr de Valera's decision to send an envoy to South Africa to tour under the auspices of the Association was warmly welcomed and when he (Mr. P.J. Little) arrived the resources of the Association were at his disposal. He, acting as an Irishman: we, as Irish South Africans. His lectures 'The Truth about Ireland' were organised in each centre by the Association and they focussed interest on Ireland and Ireland's case for independence.'* (WS 1492, p. 3)



23. Photograph of Irish republican internees in Darlinghurst Gaol, Sydney, 1918-1919.

Back Row- L to R William MacGuinness, Frank MacKeown, Michael McGing, William Fegan.

Seated- L to R Edmund MacSweeney, Maurice Dalton, Albert Dryer, Thomas Fitzgerald (CD 259/2)

International attention also turned to the imprisoned hunger strikers. Michael O'Loughlin, member IRB, Liverpool, described how:

*'In April 1920, we decided to call an unofficial strike at the docks as a protest against the treatment meted out to Irish Political Prisoners who were hunger-striking at Wormwood Scrubs. The dock labourers and the crews of the cross channel boats - B&I, Cork, Limerick, Dundalk and Newry - came out to a man; and several of the Transatlantic ships, if not actually tied up, had their personnel very much reduced. In the case of the coalheavers, every man came out with the exception of eight. The number employed was 5,024 and out of that number 5,016 came out on strike, completely crippling the movement of all ships in the Port of Liverpool. Our pickets (Volunteers) were at work at each dock, and the docks only looked a shadow of what they usually were.'* (WS 797 p.29)



## INTELLIGENCE GATHERING

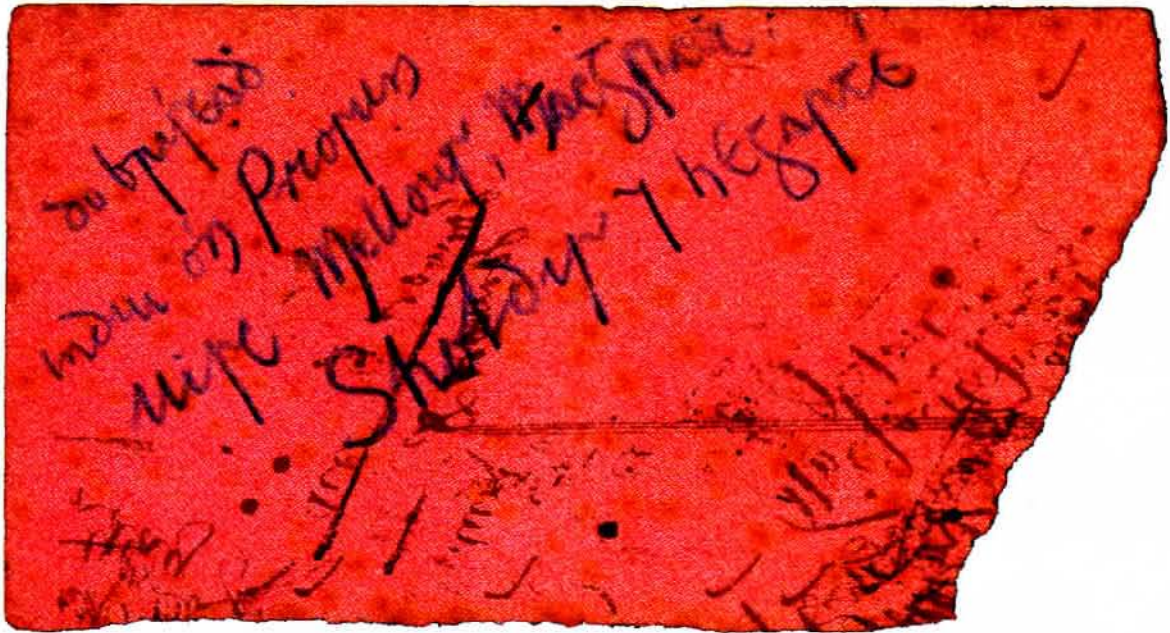
The collection of intelligence relating to the enemy was an essential activity for the IRA. Most battalions or brigades had officers specifically detailed for these duties. Thomas Howley, a Battalion Intelligence Officer, County Mayo, gives details of the information required and methods of collection involved:

*'I called a meeting of the Intelligence Officers and gave them instructions for their duties and the best method of obtaining contacts for the getting of all kinds of information. Among other things we had to have an accurate list of all cars in the Battalion area with their numbers, names of owners and so on with a general description whether friendly or otherwise; a list of people whose homes could be regarded as 'safe' for men 'on the run'; a list of all those who possessed arms, whether shotguns or other stuff. About July, 1920, Crown Forces made a seizure of all arms and ammunition on sale in the shops. As we had advance information, however, we forestalled them in this Battalion area, having seized the stuff beforehand.'* (WS 1122, p. 7)

Information on members of the Crown Forces and their planned activities was actively sought. Intelligence officers searched the press for news of military appointments or social activities.



24. Selection of photographs included in scrapbook of press cuttings and photographs, compiled by I.R.A. Intelligence, 1919-1921. (CD 227/35)



25. Piece of blotting paper used by Eamon Broy to pass on information that some Volunteers had escaped from Usk Prison, January 1919. (WS 539, p. 5)

In addition members of the Crown Forces or RIC were also engaged to work for the movement for Independence. Eamon Broy, officer with G Division, Dublin Metropolitan Police, later Commissioner of the Garda Síochána was one of the most well known double agents employed. Bean Mhicil Ui Fhoghludha relates:

*'I can't remember exactly when I met him [Eamon Broy] first, but finding out I was interested in The Gaelic League, he always talked Irish to me and always warned me when there was going to be a raid on the Volunteer houses. One day in January, 1919, he came in on some excuse to my cash office. He pretended to be settling up a bill and wrote in Irish on a piece of my blotting paper that some Volunteers had escaped from Usk: I telephoned the news immediately to Michael [Collins] who had his office in 25 Bachelors Walk. Broy had been giving me information for at least six months at that time.'* (WS 539, p. 5)

RIC Auxiliary officers were also recruited or offered their services to the Volunteers. Charles Browne, Adjutant 7 Battalion, Macroom, Cork 1 Brigade, records that:

*'Contact was made by our Intelligence Service with an Auxiliary Officer named Patrick Carroll, a native of the west of Ireland. He agreed to give any information he could obtain regarding enemy activities and as an earnest of good faith brought out from time to time over six revolvers, with ammunition, which he handed to our agent, Miss Gretta Graham, Middle Square, Macroom. He also provided information of intended enemy activities and refused to accept any sort of compensation.'* (WS 873, p. 46)



Ordinary people who were not involved in any military or nationalist organisation, but who were occupied in the provision of services to the RIC and the British Military were also encouraged to help the nationalist cause by divulging information about patrol movements. Workers in the postal and railway services were of particular value so that mails could be made available for IRA censorship, which was an integral part of intelligence gathering (WS 276). *'Any contact with the police - and later the army could be grounds for the darkest suspicions... This proscription was rapidly extended to include police and army recruits and anyone who served, supplied, or worked for the constabulary or the army, to anyone who entertained them socially or even, by 1921, to those who wrote letters to friends or relatives in the police or armed forces.'* (Hart, *The IRA and Its Enemies* p.297, 1998)

Suspicion often extended to those who were actually working for the nationalist movement. Brigid O'Mullane, Cumann na mBan organiser, recounts her experience of being mistaken for a spy who had been responsible for the arrest of a senior Volunteer officer, Paddy Moran, in Naas, County Kildare:

*'He had a butcher's shop in the Main Street. On entering the shop, I saw a Black and Tan standing in the back doorway and could hear the noise of other Tans moving through the house. The shop-girl, who, I found, was a sister of the man I was looking for, was standing in the shop. On seeing the situation, I immediately asked for a pound of steak and, when she went to the display window, which was some distance from the Tan, I succeeded in conveying to her my business with her brother and asked where I could find him. She whispered back that Paddy was in under arrest in the yard and that the Tans were in possession of the house.'* (WS 450, p.22)

Having escaped from the shop and continuing about the task of organising Cumann na mBan meetings, Brigid O'Mullane was surprised to have:

*'...a visit at my hotel from a strange young man. He begged me not to go to that particular district that night, as the Volunteers had arranged to shoot me while I was crossing a bridge on the way. It appears that information had been given them that a woman spy was operating in the area and they believed I was that spy. The coincidence of my presence in Naas with the raids and arrests of the two prominent Volunteers*



26. Photograph of Head Constable Igoe, included in scrapbook of press cuttings and photographs, compiled by I.R.A. Intelligence, 1919-1921 (CD 227/35)

*convinced them [he told her]. "They have decided to crouch behind the ditch near the bridge with only the rifle barrels protruding" - and I was to get a volley from each side of the road which would riddle me with shot; and the label, 'Spy', was already prepared to be attached to my body after death, while they made a getaway.'* (ibid p.23.)

Obviously it was not only the Volunteers engaged in intelligence gathering, this was also a significant activity for the Crown Forces. Both sides employed similar methods. The movements of individuals prominent in the National movement were closely scrutinised. An RIC patrol diary from Limerick notes the travels of Ernest Blythe, Munster organiser of the Irish Volunteers.

*'Sunday 14th March 1915*

*Suspect, Ernest Blythe, arrived about 8.30 pm on Friday, the 12th inst. He put up at The Riordan's in the village of Hospital where he remained all day on Saturday 13th inst. On Sunday 14th inst, made arrangements to hold a meeting for the purpose of organising a branch of the Volunteers under the leadership of Professor MacNeil. His associates while here were George Downes, publican, Hospital and John Carroll, farmer, Lodge.'* (CD 29/1)



27. Photograph of Frank Thornton, Intelligence Headquarters, Antient Concert Rooms, Dublin, 11 July 1921. (CD 188/1/2)



### CULTURAL NATIONALISM

The impact the cultural revival had in developing a growing sense of national identity in Ireland in the early years of the twentieth century is clearly reflected throughout the Bureau of Military History. The witness statements in particular serve to illustrate the political role played by organisations such as the Gaelic League, the Gaelic Athletic Association, Inghinidhe na h-Eireann, the Industrial Development Association, Irish Texts Society and Celtic Literary Society and influential periodicals like Anna Johnston's and Alice Milligan's *Shan Van Vocht* and Arthur Griffith's *United Irishman*. It is evident from numerous personal testimonies that these groups brought their members into contact with an increasingly radical political agenda, providing as they did an initial point of reference for many who later became active in the political and military struggle for Irish independence. Patrick Higgins, a member of both the South Parish Branch of the Gaelic League and Brigade Council of the Irish Volunteers in Cork, highlights this connection in his recollections to the Bureau:

*'The whole Volunteer movement in Cork and the position it created grew out of the activities of a relatively small group of men and women who had been working in different ways to promote one or other of various aspects of the Irish Ireland movement.'*  
(WS 25, p.1)

This overlap in membership between largely cultural and overtly political groups is reinforced in Patrick Harris' witness statement. Harris, Adjutant B Company, Cork City Irish Volunteers, who was initially associated with Cork's Celtic Literary Society (c. 1902-8), describes the Society's membership, *'active in all advanced national and cultural activities'*, as providing the nucleus for the Sinn Féin movement in Cork. (WS 80, p.1).

Seamus Mac a Muilleora, a Gaelic League organiser, outlines similar evidence of a cultural, political overlap:

*'The G.A.A. and the Gaelic League were strong and kept the spirit of freedom alive. The members of the county teams meeting the teams from other areas where the spirit of freedom was strong, developed a national spirit...and made the organisation of the country easy. In the same way, members of the Gaelic League going to the feiseanna prepared the ground for the movement.'* (WS 1574, p.2)

The collection also indicates that nationalists were conscious of the importance these groups played in fermenting a greater political consciousness. Henry C. Phibbs, a member of the Dublin branch of the Celtic Literary Society, in recalling Seán McDermott's attendance at their meetings, wrote:

*'Seán used to visit many of these societies, evidently keeping contact with people who were 'in the movement'.'* (WS 848, p.2)

DO CUM SLÓIRE DÉ 7 ONÓRA NA hÉIREANN

**CONNRAO NA hAEÓILZE**  
CRAOB CLUAIN DOLCÁIN

**GRAND**

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DOORS OPEN AT 7 O'CLOCK

CONCERT AT 7.30 P.M.

**Come and Spend an Irish Night**

28. Poster advertising an Irish Concert in aid of the Clondalkin branch of the Gaelic League.  
(CD 58/10)



The significance of the Gaelic League in both cultural and political terms is clearly illustrated throughout the collection. Patrick Sarsfield O'Hegarty, a member of the Supreme Council of the IRB, in his testimony provides a vivid account of the impact of the League, which captures the sentiment of the period. Referring to his introduction to the League, at the Munster Feis in Cork in 1902, he recalls the attraction the movement had for him:

*'Something in the songs... something in the music - something in the atmosphere - gripped me, and I seemed to be put into touch with something far back in the Race...For the first time I saw the whole of Ireland. It was a revelation, and one which in the fifty years that have since elapsed has not faded.'* (WS 839, p.2)

The important role it played among the Irish diaspora is similarly noted by O'Hegarty, who describes the rank and file of London's Gaelic League:

*'... minor clerks, minor civil servants, domestic servants and people in generally small jobs' as 'mostly young people, drawn together by the language from every county in Ireland, and fused together by a common hope and a common purpose the hope of doing something for Ireland.'* (ibid, p.7-8)

The effect of the League in politicising younger members, despite its official role as a purely cultural organisation above politics, is acknowledged by the writer and founder of The National Council. Seamus MacManus in his statement recounts:

*'Although the Gaelic League was founded primarily for the revival of the Irish language, it became the most powerful nationalising influence in the country. Everyone who joined it became fired with enthusiasm for the freedom of the country. Credit must be given to it for bringing the younger people into line with all the ideals of Sinn Féin.'* (WS 283, p.10)

Political frictions within the Gaelic League itself is recollected by those who gave statements to the Bureau, pointing to conflicts between those committed to a strictly cultural programme and a membership also associated with bodies such as the Irish Republican Brotherhood and Sinn Féin.

Diarmuid Lynch, a member of the Supreme Council of the IRB and League activist, outlines these ideological tensions within the organisation. Referring to the conflict within the League's Coiste Gnotha, he describes a *'growing divergence between what may be termed the 'Right Wing' and 'Left Wing' over the years prior to 1915,'* which culminated in the disputes which marked the Ard Fheis in Dundalk in July 1915.(WS p. 5)

Conflicts between the conservative and radical elements of the League are also recalled by Patrick Higgins, in his account of a controversial address given by James Connolly in Cork. Describing the clerical opposition this received he recounts:

*'One result of this action was that the priests tried to get control of the Gaelic League but the result of their efforts was that they were thrown out. Even the mildest Gaelic Leaguers would not have it.'* (WS 25, p.1)

Efforts to politicise the Irish language revival met with similar hostility in Trinity College, Dublin in 1914, when Charles Wyse Power, a future defence counsel for IRA prisoners, invited Patrick Pearse to speak to the College Gaelic Society. His statement, which relates to the opposition his proposal received from the College Provost Sir John Pentland Mahaffy, recalls:

*'This did not prevent us from holding the meeting. We hired the Antient Concert Rooms in Brunswick St. and we had a very successful meeting at which Yeats and Tom Kettle, as well as Pearse, spoke.'* (WS 420, p.1)

The collection provides similar insight into the role patriotic drama groups had in promoting a spirit of national identity. Seamus Cassin, an original member of Fianna Éireann, refers in his statement to the formation of the Fianna Players, which he recalls chose Pádraig Colum's *The Saxon Shilling* for their first production (WS 8). Notable references are also made to the influence of Inghinidhe na h-Éireann's patriotic *tableaux vivants* of Irish history, which were performed in Dublin in 1901. Margaret Keogh (nee Quinn) the Inghinidhe treasurer, recounts how women such as Sinead Flanagan, Alice Milligan, Anna Johnston, Máire Nic Shiubhlaigh, Helen Laird, Susan Mitchell and Ella Young all *'co-operated to make them a success as did all the boys of our acquaintance.'* (WS 273, p.5).

Such concerts, plays and céilís all became an increasingly common feature of Irish life, following the formation of the Irish Volunteers. Cumann na mBan member Mairín Ryan (née Cregan) describes how her *'active involvement with the National movement in Dublin before the Rising'* began with performances at the various Volunteer concerts, which took place throughout the city. (WS 416, p.2).

Material relating to these popular cultural and social events is to be found throughout the Bureau's Contemporary Document collection and includes numerous invitations, tickets, handbills and posters. Among these ephemera is a programme for the Harlem Gaelic Society's performance of *'Outwitted - a two act drama of Love and Adventure depicting the marvellous escape of an Irish rebel from an English prison'* (New York, April 1920) in aid of St Enda's School, Dublin. (CD 323/9/1).



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**The Harlem Gaelic Society**

AT  
**St. Joseph's School Hall**  
127th Street and Montrosside Avenue  
**Sunday Evening April 11, 1920**  
PROCEEDS  
St. Enda's School Fund—Dublin

J. F. McManus, Printer, 214 West 45th Street

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anpo. Ceapd no cap o'faical 7 e cap  
cujar.*

**"OUTWITTED"**  
A Two Act Drama of Love and Adventure depicting the marvellous  
escape of an Irish Rebel from an English Prison  
Staged by the members of the Harlem Gaelic Society in behalf of St.  
Enda's School Fund

**CAST OF CHARACTERS**  
In the roles of their first Abduction

Kathleen O'Rourke.....	Communist-infiltrator	Miss Rose Egan
Samson O'Hanlon.....	James J. O'Regan	
A Sinn Féin Organizer and in Love with Kathleen		
Matt O'Hara.....	Wicklow Peasant.....	Jerry Lenthian
Shamus Lynch.....	Matt's Companion.....	William Fitzpatrick
Shamus.....	An Irish Youth.....	Shamus MacMenamin
Corporal Taggart.....	English Soldier.....	Patrick Moran
Private George.....	Measur. Seamus Gallagher	
Henry.....	English Soldier.....	Eugene Green
Edward.....	Shamus MacMenamin	
Captain Armstrong.....	English Officer.....	Andrew J. O'Dowd
Shamus O'Neill.....	Dublin Bartender.....	James Crowley
Fergus O'Brien.....	Sinn Féin Sympathizer.....	Patrick F. Carroll
Thage O'Kelle.....	James Healy	
Harry Simple.....	Castle Guard.....	Eugene Green
Maure O'Shea.....	Communist in Disguise.....	Belinda Hopkins
George Walker.....	Prison Governor.....	Mr. W. O'Dowd
Sir Percy Numbull.....	Governors Adviser.....	Joseph McCauley
Father Tim Burke.....	Catholic Priest.....	Daniel Kern
Henry Spear.....	Prison Keeper.....	Clara Lenthian
Geo. Slickers.....	Andrew J. O'Dowd	
Nora O'Brien.....	Tess O'Flanagan	
Eily O'Shea.....	Communist-infiltrator.....	Maure O'Donoghue
Una O'Donoghue.....	Dina O'Kelly	
Reggie Nolan.....	Warden.....	Patrick Moran
Larry Doyle.....	Basket Fisherman.....	Patrick Moran

**SYNOPSIS OF SCENES**

ACT I—Scene I. Wicklow Glen. Arrest of Bannan.  
Scene II. Dublin Café. Hold Up Castle Center.  
ACT II—Scene I. Exterior of Prison. Outwitting the Prison  
Keepers.  
Scene II. Interior of Prison. Daring and novel escape  
of Bannan, aided by the Commies on the Run.  
Scene III. Night on the Kerry Shore. Farewell boat  
scene.

The following Artists will perform between the Scenes:  
Mr. Patrick Moran—Song..... "Sinn Féin March is On"  
Miss Eileen McNamara—Song..... "The Dear Little Shamrock"  
(In Irish)

And other Well-Known Vocalists

Director and Author—TIMOTHY M. CARMODY  
Coach—Mr. LIAM O'DOWD  
Stage Manager—Mr. EUGENE GREEN  
Gaelic Song Composer—ANDREW J. O'CROWLEY

Time—Present day

Dancers—Misses Dina Kelly, Catherine O'Neill,  
Belinda Hopkins, Nellie O'Connor  
Messrs. E. Green, T. M. Carmody,  
A. J. O'Connell, J. Lenthian

Music by Prof. P. J. McNamara

Costumes—Schaffer, Third Avenue and 121st Street

29. Programme for the Harlem Gaelic Society's annual entertainment, featuring, 'Outwitted, A Two Act Drama of Love and Adventure depicting the marvellous escape of an Irish Rebel from an English prison,' 11 April 1920. (CD 323/9/1)



30. Photograph of a raid by the British military forces on Sinn Féin Headquarters, Harcourt St., Dublin, 12 September 1919 (P11)



31. Photograph of an Auxiliary raid on Liberty Hall, Dublin, 22 November 1920. Among those arrested in the tender are Thomas Johnson and Thomas Farren (third and fourth from left). (P 37)



## WOMEN AND NATIONALISM

The Bureau of Military History, including as it does one hundred and forty nine witness statements and twenty-seven contemporary document collections written and compiled by women, provides a valuable insight into women's participation in the Nationalist movement throughout the early decades of the twentieth century. Contributions from activists from Inghinidhe na h-Eireann, the Gaelic League, Cumann na mBan and the Irish Citizen Army, officers from the Irish Volunteer Dependants' Fund, the White Cross, Dáil Éireann and the Sinn Féin Courts, all point to the comprehensive nature of the involvement of women in Irish politics, despite the restrictions placed upon them.

Reflecting the growing confidence of a new generation of politicised women, the recollections of Helena Molony focus initially on her early involvement with Inghinidhe na h-Eireann, which she recalls as coming 'into being as a counterblast to the orgy of flunkysim' which marked Queen Victoria's visit to Ireland in 1900, and 'formed itself into a permanent Society, of Irishwomen pledged to fight for the complete separation of Ireland from England, and the re-establishment of her ancient culture.' (WS 391, p.3)



32. Cumann na mBan First Aid Certificate, issued to Brighid Ní Dhiscín. (CD/ 182)



Reminiscences of Inghinidhe members to the Bureau also outline their work in providing classes for children in the Irish language, customs and history and their simultaneous efforts to restrict the movement and activities of British soldiers stationed in Ireland. The social ostracisation of members of the Crown forces was obviously a central concern for many nationalists, as reflected by fellow Inghinidhe officer, Margaret Keogh, in her statement:

*'We tried to get the soldiers off the streets. We did not succeed fully in this. We got them however, confined to certain areas. They could only walk at one side of O'Connell Street. Our main object was to save the young Irish girls from falling into their hands. A decent girl could not walk down the Post Office side without being molested.'*  
(WS 273, p.3)

Such concerns are reiterated in the Contemporary Documents. Donations from Helena Molony include an Inghinidhe leaflet, which warns women about the dangers of association with British soldiers:

*'Irish girls who walk with Irishmen wearing England's uniform remember you are walking with traitors. Irish girls who walk with English soldiers remember you are walking with your country's enemies, and with men who are unfit to be companions of any girl.'* (CD 119/3/1)

The collection also highlights the more general role played by women in the wider nationalist movement in the early years of the century. Statements refer to their association with the Gaelic League, their participation in patriotic dramatic groups and their work to promote Irish industry. Author and Cumann na mBan officer Sydney Czira (née Gifford) in her statement indicates just how effective their campaign to encourage Irish manufacture proved to be. This was, she recalled, fully appreciated by D.P. Moran of the Leader, who:

*'quickly realised that the women had a great deal of purchasing power in their hands and put on a spurt and, soon, Irish manufactured articles became more noticeable in the shops.'* (WS 909, p.14)

The increasingly militant nature of Irish politics is clearly reflected in the witness statements made by women, many of whom joined Cumann na mBan. Eileen Murphy (née Walsh) provides an interesting account of the early activities of Cumann na mBan members:

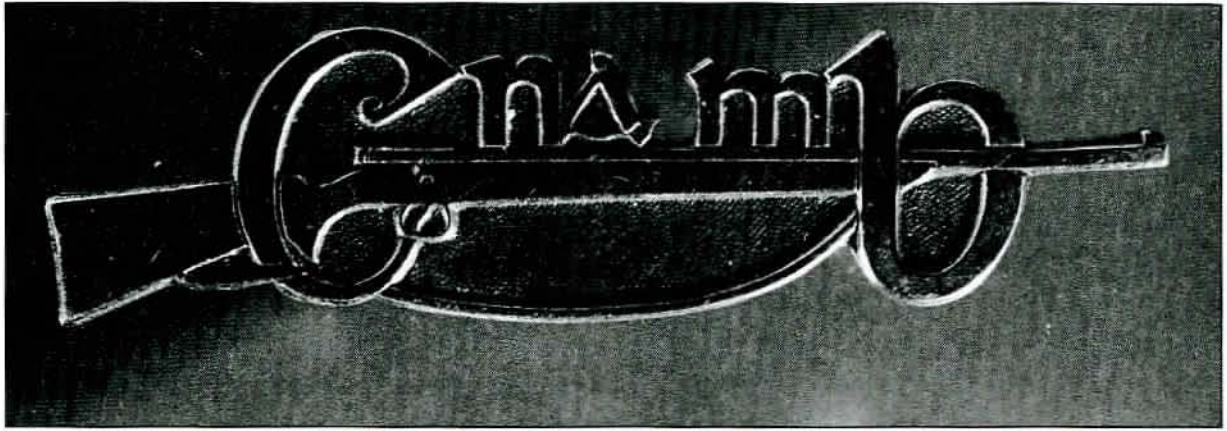
*'We drilled in the Fianna Hall in Camden Street under the instruction of Seamus Pouch...Simon Donnelly often came to the hall in Camden Street and drilled us also. We drilled twice a week. We did route-marching and flag-signalling. I do not remember any rifle practice, but we were shown how to load, unload and clean a gun. We learned First-Aid in our own Branch under Dr. Kathleen Lynn and other doctors...We also went to No. 2 Dawson Street to make field-dressings so as to provide a store for any emergency that might arise.'* (WS 480, p.1)





33. Photograph of Eilís Ní Riain, in Cumann na mBan uniform, before the Easter Rising.  
(CD 202/1)





34. Cumann na mBan brooch.

Perceptions as to what was appropriate for women at the time did pose problems for nationalist women and many of the witness statements illuminate how discriminatory attitudes added to their difficulties. Bulmer Hobson's testimony, which describes the formation of Fianna Éireann, refers to the obvious reluctance among the membership against the election of Constance Markievicz as a Fianna officer 'principally on the grounds that she was a woman, and I had on many occasions to point out privately that they could not accept her financial help and refuse her membership or office.' Hobson concludes by stating: 'This feeling against the presence of women in the organisation continued in varying degrees of intensity for many years and probably never completely disappeared.' (WS 31, p.3)

Discrimination against Cumann na mBan was also recalled by Brighid O'Mullane, a prominent provincial organiser within the organisation. Referring in her statement to her work as a recruiting officer, she wrote:

*'I had a good deal of prejudice to overcome on the part of parents, who did not mind their boys taking part in a military movement, but who had never heard of and were reluctant to accept, the idea of a body of gun-women.'* (WS 450, p.2)

Several witness statements reveal first-hand accounts of women who participated in the 1916 Rising. These outline their work in carrying dispatches, preparing meals and caring for the injured. Eileen Murphy's contribution recalls that her 'chief activity' throughout Easter Week:

*'was rendering first-aid to the wounded as they were brought. There were from twelve to sixteen beds ranged round the sides of the hall, and from the Wednesday they were practically all occupied. Eilis Ryan (Mrs. Sean O' Conaill) was there and many others. We were kept busy the whole time.'* (WS 480, p.7)



Rosie Hackett, an Irish Citizen Army member based in the Royal College of Surgeons, had a similar experience, being stationed at a first aid post. She does however relate how her colleague Margaret Skinnider led an Irish Citizen Army attack in which she was wounded. (WS 546)

The significant input made by women of varying political backgrounds in the anti-conscription movement is evident from Thomas Johnson's donation of Contemporary Documents. This includes material relating to the organisation of the Women's Day Pledge against conscription on 9 June 1918. The relevance of widespread involvement of women, including trade unionists, nationalists, feminists and suffragists, in the anti-conscription movement is evident in a letter from trade unionist Louie Bennett to Johnson, dated 23 April 1918:

*'this fight against conscription needs the help of the women if it is to be carried through successfully. And if they are not definitely enlisted to help... their enthusiasm will die out. They will in many cases yield to the temptation of good jobs and good pay.'*  
(CD 258/9/1)

The continuing political and military contribution made by women throughout the War of Independence is well represented in the collection through the accounts from women who played a direct role in the conflict and their colleagues in the IRA. Frank Neville, Quartermaster, Knockvilla Company, in describing the input of local women, wrote:

*'There were about a dozen girls in the Cumann na mBan organisation in the company area. Miss Bridget O'Mahony of Belrose and Miss Kathleen O'Sullivan were their leaders and they did remarkable despatch work and took a lot of small arms from place to place for the Company. They cared for wounded and sick men. They helped us at billets and looked after the welfare of active men generally.'* (WS 443, p.17)

The exact role played by Cumann na mBan in the conflict is indicated in Eilís Uí Chonaill's contribution of Contemporary Documents. Cumann na mBan documentation recommended its members provide first aid and field dressings, locate and prepare safe houses for men on the run, promote Irish industry and study Irish. Dispatches were to be carried by those *'trained in the knowledge of roads, by-roads and short cuts in areas - shall be good walkers and cyclists.'* (CD 202/5)

Women also played a pivotal role in the support networks established to assist republican prisoners. Áine Heron, a Cumann na mBan Captain and Justice in the Sinn Féin Courts, recounts her work with the Irish Republican Prisoners Dependants' Fund. As an IRPDF official visitor to Mountjoy prison, she interviewed the Commandants of each wing, to:

*'pass any complaints they made about the treatment of the prisoners.'* Their activities expanded in 1921, as she recalled: *'When the prisoners were being released after the Truce we were given the use of Ierne Hall... for the reception of prisoners. We took them in and, if they were going to the country, we gave them a meal and anything else they required. Eventually the IRPDF had an office in the building and gave each man £10 to buy clothes and his fare after coming out of prison. I used to go there every morning about 5 o'clock because we used to have an average of seventy for breakfast. These were people from English gaols, a great many of whom were weak and for whom we had to provide medical attention.'* (WS 293, p.12)

While this confirms the more conventional image of women supporting their fighting men, it is worth noting that some leader members of the IRA envisaged a more active role for women. Séan McLoughlin, Lieutenant of D Company, 1 Dublin Battalion, recalls in his statement, that both he and Liam Lynch suggested to the IRA leadership that fighting units should include Cumann na mBan members. (WS 290).

The level of commitment and resulting sacrifices of women is evident from the Bureau's witness statements. Brigid O'Mullane, in recollecting the period, wrote:

*'The life was strenuous, as I generally worked in three meetings a day to cover the various activities of each Branch. My meals were, of course, very irregular, and the result of this sort of life, which I led for three years... was that my weight was reduced to 6 stone. I got many severe wettings and consequent colds, which I was unable to attend to. The reaction to this came during the Truce, when I broke down and had to get medical attention.'* (WS 450, pp.4-5)

Fellow Cumann na mBan member Mairín Cregan, wrote of her work in Wexford *'We took part in every political activity there and took our share of the consequences.'* (WS 416, p.9) Raids, harassment, loss of employment, imprisonment and hunger strikes, all features of the experience of women are documented throughout the collection.



## ALTERNATE VIEWS OF CONFLICT

The majority of contributors to the Bureau of Military History were members of the Irish Volunteers, Fianna Eireann, Cumann na mBan and other Nationalist or Republican organisations. In keeping with the objective of the Bureau to compile evidence of a complete picture of the period 1913-1921, contributors from other backgrounds such as the RIC, British military forces and the clergy were also sought.

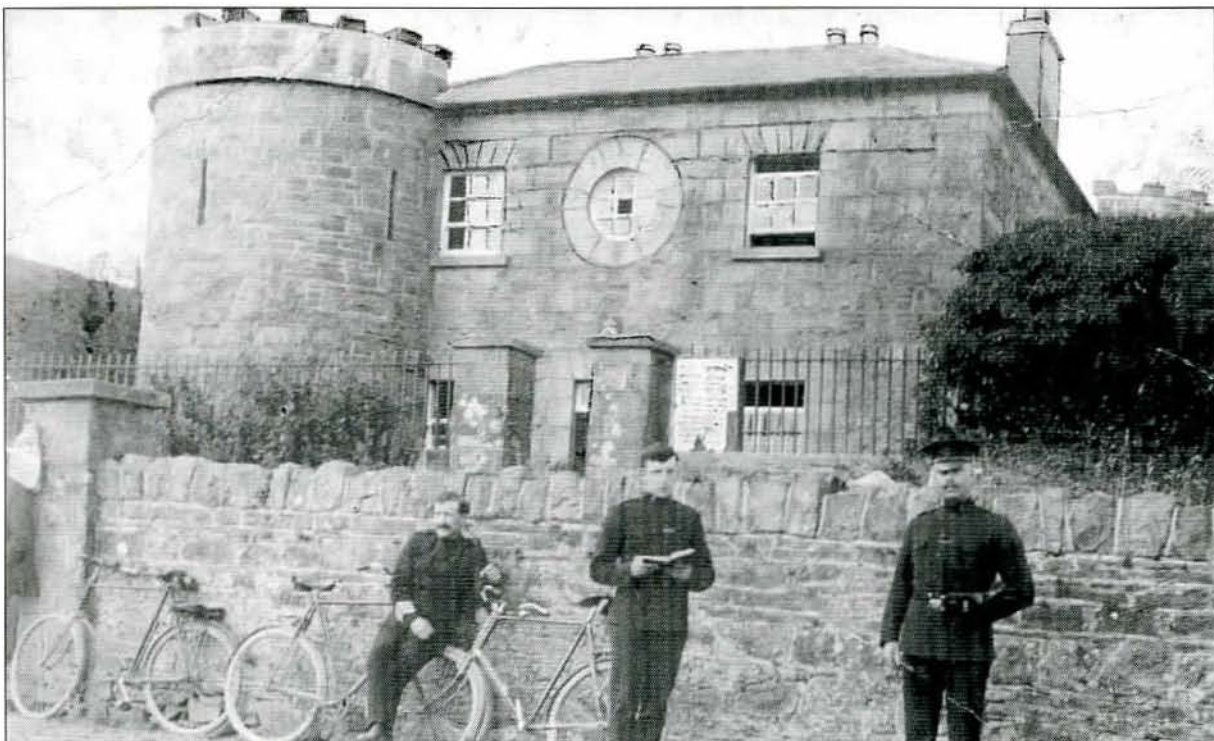
*'The RIC was the primary target of the Irish Republican Army at the start of the War of Independence as the police barracks were the most convenient symbol of British imperialism in Ireland. The Force was not equipped to fight a guerrilla war.'*

(Herlihy, *The Royal Irish Constabulary*, p.101, 1997)

J.R.W. Goulden, son of an RIC sergeant based at Tourmakeady, County Mayo recalls:

*'Our barracks was inspected and it was obvious that if attacked it could not be defended by my father and his three or four men. It had at that time no defence except the bars common to all RIC stations on the downstairs. There were no steel shutters or even sandbags. In 1916, each policeman had, I think, 20 rounds of rifle ammunition and, even though that had been increased to 60 immediately afterwards, four men could not do much against a serious attack, especially as half the building was taken up with married quarters which were occupied by my mother and the four of us children.'*

(WS 1340 p. 2)



35. Ballinamuck RIC Barracks, County Longford (P 2)

The RIC and British forces were the targets of volunteer ambushes and attacks and their families were also affected by the guerrilla war being fought. The impact on the families of the RIC is revealed again by J.R.W. Goulden, he recalls the attitude of the local people to his family prior to the closure of the RIC barracks in 1920:

*'I think it was Easter Week 1920, that a large number of barracks from which the police had been withdrawn were burned and the women and children who had been left behind were turned out. For a little time before this we had found difficulty in getting milk and generally used condensed milk. However on occasions on which any child was ill, we always managed to get supplies. There was always a sort of undercurrent to be felt, but no one was unpleasant, though we were frequently asked if we were going away soon.'* (WS 1340, p. 3)

Major Geoffrey Ibberson, Lieutenant, The Border Regiment, British Army, 1921, recounts his reaction on arriving at the scene of an ambush on an RIC patrol, Tourmakeady, County Mayo:

*'We saw one or two bodies of Constables with whom we had worked and whom we respected and I personally was filled with feelings of vengeance.'* (WS 1307, p. 4)

Despite serving the Crown some members of the RIC were sympathetic to the nationalist cause and were uncomfortable with their association with the Black and Tans and the Auxiliaries. T.J. McElligott, Pro Patria, organiser of the National Union of Police and Prison Officers, recounts:

*'I contacted IRA leaders and told them of the movement to resist conscription. I said it would be the greatest opportunity they could get of seizing arms in the police barracks, where they would be handed over by most men if conscription was to be enforced.'* (WS 472, p. 4)

The experience of the clergy is also revealed in the BMH collection. The reaction of the clergy to the Rising and the War of Independence varied. While some priests were supportive of the Volunteers and ministered to them, others were very hostile, even encouraging their parishioners to be antagonistic towards the rebels. Some of the witness statements indicate the different levels of involvement by the clergy. In a statement given by Diarmuid Lynch to Capt. R. Henderson, for the Historical Exhibition of the Military Tattoo 1945, Lynch has nothing but praise for the work of one priest:

*'A special tribute is due to the conspicuous bravery of the late Canon John Flanagan, then Father Flanagan of the Pro-Cathedral. Not alone did he minister to the GHQ wounded since Monday [Easter Week, 1916], but also to the non-combatants and British soldiers who fell in the streets - apparently without a thought about his personal safety.'* (WS 1686 p. 24)



Fr. Augustine OFM Cap. recorded his experience of attending to those sentenced to execution at Kilmainham gaol after the Rising:

*Thursday Morning*

*This morning before 3pm we heard loud knocking at the Bowe street gate. I went down at once and the first words one of the soldiers said were: "You've got to hurry, Sir, as we have but little time." I quickly called Fathers Albert, Columbus and Sebastian and we started for Kilmainham where the Governor told us that four were to be executed Edward Daly, Michael O'Hanrahan, Joseph Mary Plunkett and Willie Pearse. The governor told us that there was not much time, but he had specially got a slight postponement of the hour, so as to give an opportunity of attending to the men. Father Columbus, having met him before at the surrender, naturally went to the first, Father Albert to the second, Father Sebastian to the third, and I to Willie Pearse whose hands were already tied behind his back. He was beautifully calm, made his confession as if he were doing it on an ordinary occasion, and received Holy Communion with great devotion. A few minutes later he stood before the firing squad, and with Our Lord in his heart, went to meet his noble brother in a better land. After I had left Willie Pearse I saw O'Hanrahan for a short while in his cell and I now write here again what I wrote of him in another place shortly after he had laid down his life for Ireland. He was one of the truest and noblest characters that it has ever been my privilege to meet. His last message to me before he went out into the dark corridor that led to the yard where he was shot was: "Father, I'd like you saw my mother and sisters and consoled them." I promised him I would, and whispering something in his ear, I grasped the hands that were tied behind his back. In his right hand he pressed mine most warmly; we exchanged a look, and he went forth to die.' (WS 920 p. 20)*

The religious that were unsympathetic to the volunteers also exhibited their antipathy. John C. King, Adjutant, Leenane Battalion, IRA, recounts the reaction of the local priest who happened upon an active service unit laying explosives to blow up a bridge.

*'The Pastor, Father John O'Grady, was from Louisburgh, County Mayo. The charge was laid in the bridge by Eamonn Ó Maille (the engineer), and an electric cable led to a battery, some distance away. Some of the men stood guard while others went to houses close by, to warn the occupants to evacuate until after the detonation. It was a heavy charge of dynamite, as the bridge was very strongly constructed of granite arch... Father O'Grady and two missionaries came along, and Father O'Grady asked what was amiss. The OC told him that we were at war with the British, and that we had to destroy bridges which afforded the enemy a circular route, and explained that it was essential to military strategy to do so. Father O'Grady would not listen, but began a long tirade about a lot of foolishness as well as the hardship entailed by his parishioners... Father O'Grady said he would stand on the bridge and let it be blown up under his feet.' (WS 1731, p. 13)*

## **‘AN IRA COLUMN’ BY SEÁN KEATING**

Seán Moylan describes how, on a visit to Dublin in August 1921 for a meeting of Dáil Éireann, he visited the National Gallery with a friend, Albert Wood (a well-known figure of the Irish Bar at the time) who suggested having a painting done of Seán Moylan by the artist Seán Keating. Moylan agreed and after a number of sessions in Keating's studio it was decided that the painting would have more historic value if a group of men who had fought in the War of Independence could be depicted. The men in the picture were from North Cork and Moylan remarks that practically all of them were Duhallow men (WS 505, p.4). In a letter dated 3 January 1951 from Seán Keating to Michael McDunphy, Secretary Áras an Uachtarán and Director of the Bureau of Military History, the artist describes his first encounter with the men in the painting:

*‘They trooped in, dressed and armed very much as they must have been on many an ambush.’ (WS 505)*

There are in fact two versions of this painting. In a further letter dated 22 January 1951 to McDunphy, Seán Keating explains how this came to pass. The first, an unfinished painting is included in the Douglas Hyde Historical Collection in Áras an Uachtarán and the other is in the Crawford Gallery, Cork. The artist describes how he had to leave his studio in the School of Art and re-establish himself, his canvas and the column in the Mansion House but discovered that the lighting and surroundings were totally different from his studio. In addition Keating soon found himself ejected from the Mansion House and decided to return to the School of Art causing more disruption to the completion of the canvas:

*‘I arranged to have the sitters come in, one by one, and to smuggle the arms 1 rifle and equipment etc. in and keep it there hidden. I discovered as I might have foreseen that the picture would not be coherent working in this patchy way and in different lighting conditions. I decided to begin another picture and to introduce certain changes in the composition to improve it.’ (ibid)*

This second version did not include Seán Moylan who remarks that for safety reasons, he was not included in the later version of the painting *‘it was believed at the time that the Truce was transient that the fighting would be resumed and that, under such circumstances, it was unwise that the pictures and photographs of leaders should be available to the British. It seems a poor reason now, but that was the only reason.’ (ibid).*

Keating corroborates this in his letter:

*‘During all this time the political tension grew from hour to hour and it became more and more difficult to have the members of the column free to come and go. However, I completed the 2nd version and put the 1st aside.’ (ibid)*





36. 'An IRA column' 1921 by Sean Keating (Crawford Municipal Art Gallery)



37. Unfinished painting by Sean Keating

*Figures in the Painting:*

*Standing L to R - Jim Riordan, Denis Mullan, James Cashman, Seán Moylan  
Seated L to R - Michael Sullivan, Jack Jones, Rory O'Kiely and Dan Brown  
(Douglas Hyde Historical Collection)*

In conclusion Keating gives his opinion on the first and unfinished version of the painting:

*'The picture which you purchased from me in '44 is the 1st version and has a quality of nerve and dash that would probably have been lost had I been permitted to carry it further in a calmer atmosphere, so that, perhaps, from the point of view of a historical document it has qualities more descriptive of the time and circumstances than something done out of a mood of reflection and deliberation.'* (ibid)

Perhaps it is fitting to leave the final words to the artist:

*'Revolutionaries should remember that they are making history, and that history belongs to posterity and should be documented in paint as well as print.'* (ibid)

In much the same way the BMH has sought to record for posterity the history of Ireland's struggle for Independence.





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