Very Cruel Cases

The Post-Truce Campaign against the Royal Irish Constabulary in County Limerick

by Seán Gannon

The 11 July 1921 Truce between the Irish Republican Army (IRA) and British Crown forces brought hostilities in Ireland’s ‘War of Independence’ to an official end. But, despite the evident commitment of the Crown forces to observing the ceasefire, attacks on the Royal Irish Constabulary (RIC) continued into the post-Truce period. In fact they persisted well into the summer of 1922 and isolated cases were still being reported throughout.

This was, in ways, hardly surprising. The RIC had quickly emerged as the Republicans’ primary target in 1919. Declaring its history ‘a continuity of brutal treason against [its] own people’, Sinn Féin launched a nationwide campaign of social and economic ostracism against its personnel in April which, according to David Fitzpatrick, soon ‘gave the appearance of a systematic national crusade’ or, in Charles Townshend’s words, ‘a social war’. The RIC also bore the brunt of the IRA’s military onslaught: 428 policemen were killed and almost 700 wounded between 21 January 1919 and 11 July 1921. The public hostility towards the force fomented by the Republican leadership, which was intensified by outrage at the frequent excesses of the police counterinsurgency, could not be simply turned off by a truce. Indeed, the final issue of the RIC’s in-house magazine, the Constabulary Gazette, published in January 1922, carried a lengthy letter deploring the fact that there was ‘little evidence throughout the country of the policy of at least “forgive” towards the RIC’, and the Irish chief secretary, Sir Hamar Greenwood, expressed similar concerns, noting the bitterness of feeling felt towards the force and the ‘consequent almost impossibility of [Irish members] finding any employment in their country’. By June 1922, the assistant under-secretary in Dublin Castle, Sir Andy Cope, was complaining that even the children of RIC men were ‘being driven out of employment’.

The predicament of former force members was exacerbated by a vicious score-settling campaign conducted against them by IRA elements. While some policemen were specifically targeted in retaliation for real or perceived wartime misdeeds, this campaign was largely indiscriminate, with RIC membership alone constituting sufficient cause for intimidation or attack. By the time preliminary instructions for the RIC’s disbandment were issued in January 1922, swaths of the force were in fear for their personal safety, fears shared by Ireland’s police chief, General Hugh Tudor, who reported that ‘conditions in Ireland are now proving that in a great many parts it would be extremely unsafe for members who are disbanded from the RIC to live’. The RIC’s representative bodies agreed, complaining that their members had not only been ‘abused, threatened and insulted in the streets since the Truce’, but subject to shootings and kidnappings as well. General proclamations warning RIC personnel not to return to their homes after disbandment began circulating in certain parts of the country in March while, in other areas, expulsion orders were sent to individual policemen and/or their families. One month later, disbanded policemen were reporting that ‘every county in Munster, Leinster and Connaught [was] placarded that all RIC are to be shot on sight if they return to their homes, and that their “wives and families, likewise, were being ordered to leave”. By June, Cope was complaining to the chairman of the Irish Provisional Government, Michael Collins, of a concerted movement for a wholesale expulsion’ which had started in the south was ‘rapidly extending’ to counties such as Carlow, Meath, Dublin, Cavan, and east Galway. ‘Even men who left the Force fifteen years ago are being victimised’ while, in other instances, families were being ordered to leave their homes even after their RIC relative had gone.
The extent of the actual danger faced by former policemen during this time will, at this remove, never be known. In May 1922, Greenwood told a House of Commons committee that, while ex-RIC and their families were undoubtedly suffering in ‘several counties’, it was ‘not quite fair to say that every disbanded member of the RIC was in danger of his life’. This was certainly true: as Brian Hughes has noted, the ‘concerted attempt at expulsion referred to by Cope was not country, or even county wide’. But there was sufficient incidence of actual attacks, many culminating in murder, to convince ex-RIC that their lives were in peril: at least thirty serving or former policemen were murdered between December 1921 and April 1922, and another eleven in the following two months. These killings, which included the shooting of two sergeants in their hospital beds in Galway in March 1922, identified by Elizabeth Malcolm as having ‘had a particularly serious impact on [RIC] morale’, induced a real sense of panic among disbanding policemen and thousands left Ireland, either in fear of their lives or despair of a future livelihood. Although a more definite judgment must await the release of the 1926 census, it is generally assumed that the majority returned in the short to medium term, when they felt that they could safely do so, or that prospects for ex-RIC had improved. What is certain, though, is that at least several hundred, and at most a few thousand, became permanent exiles.

The IRA’s director of publicity, Páras Béaslaí, subsequently blamed attacks on the RIC in the run-up to the Truce on what he disparagingly called ‘eleventh-hour warriors’, i.e. hitherto undistinguished IRA Volunteers who, in an attempt to burnish their revolutionary credentials, ‘hadn’t made up their arrears’ by attacking soft police targets ‘when the danger seemed past; and some of the attacks which occurred after the Truce were likely similarly contrived’. Others were carried out by so-called ‘Truckleers’, men who joined the IRA after the ceasefire took effect (an estimated 40,000 men did so) and felt that they too had something to prove. But the victimisation of RIC personnel in the post-Truce and early independence period also resulted from a general breakdown in IRA discipline, itself a consequence of poor-quality latter-day recruitment, and a febrile socio-political climate increasingly distinguished by internecine anarchy and a slide towards civil war. The chaos of the Irish Civil War period presented a further context for attacks on ex-RIC by providing what Gemma Clark describes as ‘an opportunity to punish, for their past betrayal, remnants of British rule and relatives of its armed servants’, mainly Protestant Loyalists, British ex-servicemen and former policemen. Although there is evidence that some attacks on ex-RIC during 1922-23 were carried out by members of the new National Army, the overwhelming majority appear to have been the work of anti-Treaty IRA. The extent to which their actions were sanctioned or tacitly supported by their leadership is unclear. While in some areas returning ex-RIC were vetted by local IRA leaders, the fact that the victimisation took different forms in different places suggests the lack of an official approach; indeed, the anti-Treaty T.D. for Kerry, Austin Stack, told one disbanded constable who sought his permission to return home to Tralee in June 1922 that his case was ‘one of thousands on which no general policy, so far as I know, has been settled’. What is clear is that the actions of what Dominic Price terms these ‘self-appointed executioners’ were seldom condemned by the local IRA command.

The process of the RIC’s disbandment in Limerick began with the force’s withdrawal in mid-February 1922. First the county area was evacuated: for example, Kilmallock barracks was vacated on 14 February, followed by Newpallas, Patrickswell, Bruff and Adare over the course of the following two days. Limerick city was evacuated on 23 February when between fifty and seventy policemen departed by train for Mullingar and the five city barracks were handed over to the National Army under Captain F. J. O’Shaughnessy. British-recruited Black and Tans travelled onwards to Britain while Irish policemen were transported to Gormanston depot in county Meath to await their official disbandment.

Street culminated in the police being fired on, leaving one constable ‘very slightly wounded’ and, in early February 1922, a bomb was thrown into the yard of the RIC vehicle repair depot on Henry Street, injuring a temporary constable. One week later, shots were fired at a sergeant as he stood outside Kilmallock workhouse. The first fatality in a post-Truce attack in Limerick was Sergeant Thomas Enright, a native of Listowel stationed in Thurles, who was shot dead in Kilmallock in December 1921. Enright, who was attending a courting meeting in the town, was deliberately targeted on account of his wartime role: according to one of his assassins, the IRA East Limerick Brigade’s Maurice Meade, he was ‘particularly active and bitter against our men ... [and] for this we decided he should pay the death penalty. No opportunity to carry this out had arisen until the Truce’. Enright’s murder was evidently sanctioned at local level only, as it was condemned by both the Dill and the IRA’s chief liaison officer who stated that:

Such deeds are not the acts of members of the IRA, but are the acts of cowardly individuals who endeavour to cloak their misdeeds in such a manner that they may be interpreted as the actions of soldiers of the Republican Army. Should it, however, be proved to be the work of members of the IRA, the General Staff have decided to take most drastic action against the perpetrators.
Yet, ultimately, nothing was done. Two months later, a twenty-one year old Scottish Black and Tan, Constable Laughlin McEdward, was murdered while out walking in Garryowen, shot at point blank range by a number of armed men lying in wait at Blackboy Pike. His assailants were never identified. Perhaps the most well-known post-Truce killing associated with Limerick was that of Sergeant William Leech, shot dead outside Westland Row railway station in Dublin on 28 May 1922. This was almost certainly an IRA revenge killing. Although John Regan, acting County Inspector in Limerick from September 1920 until the RIC’s withdrawal, claimed that he ‘never knew him to have been an active opponent of the IRA’, Leech had in fact earned an unsavoury reputation in Limerick; indeed, according to Tom Toomey, he ‘was one of the two most notorious members of the police in the Limerick area’ (the other being Sergeant James Horan). Moreover, Leech had been stationed in Limerick’s William Street barracks on the night of 6/7 March 1921 when the city’s mayor, George Clancy, and his predecessor, Michael O’Callaghan, were murdered by Crown forces, and was believed to have led the party that shot IRA Volunteer, Joseph O’Donoghue, the same night. However, no evidence has emerged to support this.

Thomas Hanley, a temporary constable with the Auxiliary Division from Maiden Street, Newcastle West, who disappeared without trace in October 1921, was another likely victim of IRA elements. Born in November 1900, he had served with the Royal Munster Fusiliers during the Great War, after which he returned home. When he joined the RIC it is unclear. According to the sworn affidavit submitted by his father, Michael, as part of an application ‘for liberty to presume [his] death’ lodged with the courts in autumn 1929, he enlisted on or around 6 November 1920; however, his RIC record states that he joined on 21 January 1921. Either way, he left the force in February 1921. On the night of 22 June, Hanley was visiting a neighbour in Newcastle West when the house was raided by a group of ‘armed and masked men’ who dragged him into the kitchen and fired several shots into him, leaving him ‘so badly injured that his life was despaired of for about six weeks or two months’. Despite the calling of the Truce three weeks later, Hanley decided to emigrate to the United States when he recovered, and he claimed he applied for compensation for his injuries to Limerick County Court under the terms of Section 5 of the 1898 Local Government (Ireland) Act. He was awarded £50 on 10 October 1921 but disappeared ‘quite suddenly and unexpectedly’ one week later and was never heard from again. His fate is uncertain but Michael Hanley told the court that he had ‘heard rumours that his son had been killed in the County of Cork towards the end of 1921, and that in view of the determined attacks on his son’s life in June of the same year, he believed these rumours were true’. Certainly Thomas Hanley did not travel to the United States; he did not take his passport with him and the American consul in Cobh confirmed for the court that no person of his name had travelled to the United States between 17 October 1921 and November 1929. Moreover, his brother John, who lived in New York and had sent him a ticket to join him there in early October 1921, stated that he ‘had never heard of his brother ‘Tommy’ being in America, and had not met anybody who had seen or heard of him there’. That he met an untimely end is further evidenced by the fact that his compensation award was never claimed. Based on the evidence before it, the court gave Michael Hanley leave to declare his son dead, ‘not positively, but to the best of his knowledge and belief’.

While Limerick was not included in the list of counties complained of by Cope, disbanded RIC living there were not immune to Republican intimidation and attack after the Truce. Indeed, Limerick had previous form as the intimidation of policemen and/or their families had been commonplace during the ‘War of Independence’ period. In late April/early May 1920, notices were posted across the county, describing the RIC as ‘an
abominable and soulless body [which]... must be allowed to wither from our land,' and warning that anyone who associated with the force in any way 'will do so at his peril.' Threatening letters were duly sent to those who had dealings with the force such as shopkeepers and barracks servants, and to those who merely maintained friendly relations with individual policemen. Policemen and/or their families were themselves targets of the IRA's intimidatory campaign. For example, in April 1920 the wife and five children of a constable in Cahercarlish were put out of their house 'by armed and disguised men and their home partially wrecked.' In May, an armed gang broke into the family home of Constable Daniel O'Sullivan in Abbeyfeale (O'Sullivan was on leave from Bantry) and ordered him to resign from the force. At first he refused, but relented after the raiders attempted to drag him outside, causing his mother to faint in terror. He subsequently resigned 'on account of his mother's health.' Three weeks later, a Constable Galvin endured a similar experience while visiting his parents in Limerick: he too was compelled to sign a declaration that he would not return to his station in Cork. In June, Gilbert Hewson of Ballyeagly, Asketon, received a letter ordering him to evict the family of a RIC sergeant to whom he was renting a house. While in September, three persons from Oola were given seven days to remove police wives resident with them. The RIC registers of service record the resignations of a number of other Limerick constables in 1920-21 because of IRA intimidation or social boycott, and potential recruits were also targeted: for example, in March 1920 Michael O'Brien and Michael Condon from Bruff were accosted 'by masked and armed men... who made them promise they would not join the RIC.'

II

The first recorded instance of intimidation after the truce occurred in October 1921 when the family home of Constable James O'Connell in Pallaskreen was raided by 'six masked and armed men'. The raiders searched the house without removing anything. They then went to the house of William Regan of Castle-Ennisk and searched it in like manner. They took away a motorcycle which was stored in the house, the property of James O'Connell, Constable RIC, who was on holidays at this father's place the first house raided. The raiders were members of the IRA and the motive was malice towards the young constable.

Malice towards policemen persisted after disbandment. In mid-April, a gang of armed men stormed into Limerick railway station, held up at gunpoint a party of disarmed policemen waiting for the afternoon train to Newcastle West, and made off with their luggage. Two days later armed men removed stuff from newspaper offices belonging to members disarmed from the [RIC] which were en route to Kerry. Within weeks, ex-RIC living in Limerick were being intimidated or ordered out.

An analysis of RIC pension registers for 1922-23 (which, in most cases, record the locations at which pensions were paid to former policemen from their date of disbandment; January 1923) provides an overview of the displacement that ensued. According to these registers, 173 Irishmen serving in the RIC's 'other ranks' (head constables, sergeants and constables) in barracks across county Limerick were disbanded in 1922. One of them, Constable Thomas Greer, who had served two years in Patrickswell, was murdered almost immediately. He returned to his native Roscommon in late April 1922, but was taken from his family home in Cootehall, Boyle and shot dead along with his father (an ex-RIC sergeant) one month later. The gunman was ostensibly raiding for arms. However, Thomas told his brother Valentine (who had himself served as an RIC constable) before he died that one of them had accused him of murdering Fr Griffin in Galway in November 1920. Of the remaining 172, the whereabouts of 163 in January 1923 is known. As Table 1 illustrates, just 12 were still resident in Limerick while a further 38 were living elsewhere in the Irish Free State, 23 in their native counties. But almost 70 percent of these men were living outside of the state: 7 in Northern Ireland (5 of whom had joined the new Royal Ulster Constabulary), 87 in Great Britain, and the remaining 19 in further-flung places across North America, Australasia and the colonies. Most of the twelve who remained in Limerick were older men long-established in the

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RIC Barracks</th>
<th>Limerick Free State</th>
<th>Northern Ireland</th>
<th>Great Britain</th>
<th>North America</th>
<th>Other</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Limerick city (52)</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>6</td>
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<td>Adare (5)</td>
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<td>4</td>
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<td>5</td>
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<td>Newcastle West (7)</td>
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<td>Oola (2)</td>
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<td>2</td>
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<td>Rathkeale (7)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Barracks unknown (17)</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Totals (163)</strong></td>
<td><strong>12</strong></td>
<td><strong>38</strong></td>
<td><strong>7</strong></td>
<td><strong>87</strong></td>
<td><strong>9</strong></td>
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Table 2: Age ranges of disband Limerick-stationed RIC, 1922

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Age Range</th>
<th>Limerick</th>
<th>Irish Free State</th>
<th>Northern Ireland</th>
<th>Great Britain</th>
<th>North America</th>
<th>Other</th>
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<tr>
<td>55-56</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td>45-56</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>37</td>
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<tr>
<td>55-26</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7</td>
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<tr>
<td>25-20</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7</td>
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The records of the RIC Tribunal provide further insights into this upheaval. Established in April 1922 to address individual cases of exceptional hardship among disbanded policemen, it disbursed disturbance grants (in the generality of cases, comprising two months' salary) to ex-ERIC forced to leave their homes, and separation allowances to those compelled to leave their wives and families behind. The RIC Tribunal also compensated policemen for the loss of property that they had to abandon or that was seized, destroyed, or damaged by their assailants, and for losses arising out of forced sales: auctions of the property of departing ex-ERIC were often boycotted or prospective buyers were warned off, leaving many policemen with little option but to sell at well below market value. Many Limerick-based men were amongst them. For example, forty-one year-old Sergeant Denis Keohane was awarded £145 for 'losses on forced sale' in August 1922 arising out of his expulsion from B EFI from where he had been stationed since 1915 (he received a further £30 in October for 'property seized'), while Sergeant Bernard Fallon, a forty-five year-old father sixteen years resident in county Limerick, received £25 for property seized and £180 for 'loss on forced sale' after fleeing Newcastle West. Both went directly to Chester, where the Home Office had opened a bureau to assist ex-ERIC to find accommodation in the U.K. and to provide advice on securing employment. Thirty-eight year-old Sergeant Michael Daly was awarded £130 for losses on the forced sale of his furniture when he relocated to Bath after six years' service in Fethard. Sergeant Patrick Donoghue (48), stationed in Limerick since 1905, received £140 compensation in May for property destroyed; he returned to his native Kerry. Although British-recruited Black and Tans were technically outside the RIC Tribunal's remit, awards were made in a handful of cases, and two of them were connected to Limerick - Thomas Hamstead from London, who enlisted in July 1920, and had 'established a home in Limerick' with a view to bringing over his family, and William McCarthy, a native of Limerick who was for safety joined the RIC in Liverpool in September 1920, and returned home to his wife on being disbanded from Wicklow in April 1922. Both were 'driven from home'. Incidentally, Sergeant James Horan, a hated figure in Limerick on account of his involvement in a series of controversial killings in 1920-21, also received payment from the RIC Tribunal; he was granted £100 paid in quarterly installments to cover expenses incurred while effectively in hiding, having been judged to be in 'special danger, involving movement even in Great Britain'.

III

Detailed information on individual cases of intimidation and/or attack on ex-ERIC living in or returning to Limerick is found in compensation claims lodged by the victims with the authorities in Ireland and Britain. In Ireland, the statutory instrument for which records survive was the Damage to Property (Compensation) Act (DPCA). Enacted on 12 May 1923, the DPCA covered claims for damages inflicted by any person or persons acting in armed resistance to the Provisional Government of Ireland and, subsequently, the government of the Irish Free State, or by 'persons belonging to, or acting, or purporting to act on behalf of any unlawful or seditious association' (essentially, the anti-Treaty IRA), between 12 July 1921 (the day after the Truce) and 20 March 1923. In Britain, applications for compensation during this period were assessed by the Irish Grants Committee (IGC), established in March 1923. A reconstitution of the earlier Irish Distress Committee, its original remit was the provision of relief through grants or loans to refugees from Ireland, but its terms of reference were extended in 1926 to cover compensation payments to Irish loyalists for personal injury and/or damage to property suffered on account of their loyalty between 11 July 1921 and 12 May 1923. The IGC assessed claims by policemen who had been pensioned off prior to disbandment; and although disbanded RIC were, in theory, outside its remit (on the basis that they had been looked after by the RIC Tribunal), the IGC examined such claims on individual merit and, in numerous cases, paid out.

Sergeant Maurice Reidy from Glin was one of those compensated by the IGC. Born there in May 1870, he had joined the RIC in September 1889, serving first in Mayo. In late 1901 he was transferred to Oughterard, county Galway where he was promoted to sergeant in June 1909. Reidy retired from the RIC on pension in February 1921 and elected to remain in Oughterard where he and his family (he was married with two adult children) had long made their home. However, in late April 1922, they were ordered out:

You and your family are to leave this Divisional area within 24 hours. If at the expiration of that period you have failed to obey this order you must be prepared to take the consequences.

Knowing the serious consequences of failing to comply with this order - violence against ex-ERIC was by now commonplace in county Galway - Reidy obeyed and removed his family to Tinkadilla, Ballyhahill in county Limerick. However, he quickly found himself unwelcome there too, arriving to find that some of his furniture, which he had sent ahead by rail to Foynes, had been 'wanstly and maliciously damaged or destroyed', and that his two bicycles had been commandeered by the local IRA. Reidy's demand for the bicycles' return was rejected and ten days later he was served with another expulsion order.
IRA Barracks,
Foynes
14/5/1922

To Ex-RIC Reidy:

You are hereby notified to leave this area on or before Wednesday 17th inst. This notice is final.

O/C Barracks

J. T. O'C.

Reidy went into hiding in Dublin and "other parts of the country" for a period of several months, before returning to Glin. Despite living in daily fear of expulsion, the family was left undisturbed, although Reidy was complaining to the IGC a full five years later that "up to the present time, I have been unable to get any employment for myself or my children, owing to the fact that I am an ex-member of the RIC." He also blamed his wife's illness and death in January 1928 on the strain placed on her already "nervous disposition" by the events of 1922: "[the] poor woman got a great shock when I was ordered out twice by the IRA from which she never completely recovered." 49

Constable Fenton Kirwan also endured relatively short-term exile from Limerick. He had been posted to Limerick in May 1912, serving in Dromcollogher, Kilddimo and finally, Rathkeale. On the night of 26 April 1922, exactly one week after his disbandment, he was roused from his sleep by a party of armed men who... warned him to leave the country within 3 days at peril of his life. Kirwan quickly complied: for the safety of his wife, his six children and himself, he left Ireland and arrived in England at the beginning of May 1922, settling first in Stamford, and later in Biggleswade, Bedfordshire. 50 Kirwan was not alone in having to leave: the medical attendant to the RIC in Rathkeale, Dr. Henry Bouchier Hayes, reported that:

All the members stationed in the town had to clear out to England otherwise they would be in grave danger owing to the disturbance. None of the force remained here who were serving at the time. 52

And an examination of RIC pension registers and RIC Tribunal records confirms that all of Kirwan's Rathkeale colleagues left the town at this time. According to Bouchier Hayes, these men 'were not able to get back until the times mended' and Kirwan did return to Rathkeale in August 1925 and lived out the rest of his life there. 53 Most, however, did not. Some, such as Michael Clohessy (52), relocated to other counties; he was being disbanded in Dublin when, on 27 April, 'Sinn Feiners' called to his house and ordered his wife and two young children to leave Rathkeale within three days 'or put up with the consequences'. According to Clohessy, they returned 'several times looking for me and threatened her with revolvers when she wouldn't tell them where I was'. Terrified, she tried to dispose of their furniture but, as 'none of the auctioneers in Rathkeale would sell the furniture of RIC', she got 'practically nothing'. She removed with her children to Dublin on 9 May where the family was still resident in 1926. 54 Sergeant John Fahey (48) also resettled elsewhere in Ireland: he first fled to Sheffield after his house was raided by six young men armed with rifles and revolvers who ordered himself, wife and family to clear out of Ireland within 3 days. They returned to Ireland in April A party of masked and armed men called to my house at Rathkeale and only gave my wife and family three days to clear out of Ireland and seized all papers and some valuable documents I had in my possession. My wife and family had to leave Rathkeale for Dublin on 3rd May 1922 where herself and family remained... until 28th August 1922. 55

Larkin emigrated to England on 8 May, eventually settling in Sheffield, where his family then joined him. They left behind properties, including a 45 acre farm in Rathduff, county Cork that had been inherited by his wife. Larkin was in no doubt whatever that his family's travels were the result of his twenty-six years RIC service. 56 Similarly with Sergeant James Hopkins. He left for Sheffield on 2 May 1922, one week after a 'armed and masked men called to my home... and ordered myself and my family to leave' Rathkeale. His wife followed with their children in July after she 'got two threatening letters after [Hopkins] left Ireland telling her that they would burn herself and her children out of the house if she did not leave'. They were still resident in Sheffield six years later. 57

The Rathkeale IRA cast its net further afield when seeking out ex-RIC. Petitioning the IGC in 1927, former District Inspector Thomas Stapleton recounted how his wife was delivered at their home in Adare of letter signed 'O/C IRA Rathkeale', warning that he would be shot on sight if he returned 'as he was a traitor to their cause by being employed recruiting Black and Tans'. (Stapleton had been detailed for this duty in Manchester, Birmingham and London). He fled to the UK, leaving his wife to 'break up home and dispose of [their] effects'. However, 'the irregulars would not allow her to have an auction' so she was forced into a private sale at considerable loss, before joining his husband. They returned to Ireland 'at his own peril' three and a half years later on account of his wife's failing health (she wanted to die 'amongst her relatives') and settled in Glasnevin in Dublin. 58

Constable William Hall became another permanent exile from Limerick on account of the anti-RIC campaign. A native of county Cavan, Hall had joined the RIC in August 1893 and was posted to...
Limerick in April 1894. He had come to the IRA’s attention prior to the Truce: on 26 August 1920, he and an English Black and Tan, Constable Thomas Huckerby (who earned a reputation as ‘by far the most notorious of all the Black and Tans in county Limerick’), had been taken prisoner in Shanagolden by an eight-strong detachment of IRA Volunteers led by Captain Timothy Madigan, stripped of their boots and uniforms and, after being paraded around the village for over an hour, sent walking to Foylins in their trousers. An RIC reprisal followed that night, during which Huckerby shot dead a local man, John Hynes. Hall was not present. But, having recognised all eight of his and Huckerby’s assailants, he was involved in a police raid on the Madigan home in December during which Timothy was shot dead and his brother, William, arrested for having ‘robbed Constable Hall RIC of his tunic, boots and stockings’. Hall, by his own account, now became a marked man: he told the IGC that the IRA ambushed the train taking him and his colleagues to give evidence at William’s trial ‘solely for the purpose of taking my life’, and that a note had been found on IRA captain Seán Finn after his death in action at Ballyshannon in March 1921 instructing that he be shot on sight. Hall was moved to Limerick city ‘for [his] safety’ leaving his wife, Julia (a local woman, whose late father,Hugh, had also served as an RIC constable) ‘by herself in Foylins’. While he was being disbanded in Dublin in late April 1922 prior to his intended return home, ‘a party of armed men’ called to the house and ordered Julia to leave. Severely traumatised, she quickly disposed of the household effects and joined her husband in Dublin. They immediately departed for Britain and resettled in Chadwell Heath.

In what the judge, assessing their claim under the terms of the DPCA, described as ‘a very cruel case’, Patrick Courtney and his wife, Marion, were driven from Limerick in mid-May 1922. Born in county Kerry in 1857, Courtney had worked as a labourer before joining the RIC in 1881: he served sixteen years in south Tipperary, after which he transferred to Limerick in September 1897. Courtney retired on pension in July 1920 and settled down in Currahawneybeg, Loughill. However, in April 1921 ‘a band of armed and disguised men’ broke into his house, assaulted and threatened to shoot him. Worse was to follow. On 15 May 1922, ‘a large party of armed men attacked [his] house and smashed windows and doors, furniture and other articles, with stones’. They returned the following night ‘on military order and put a threatening letter through the window’:

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

Courtney was, he told the IGC:

Assaulted and beaten, booted, threatened notices posted on Sunday morning on Church gate warning persons not to talk to me, not to purchase my house which I had up for sale, under penalty of death, “Signed IRA”.

The assault on the Courtneys continued as they attempted to flee.

When I was leaving my house on 21 May [19]22, a local IRA men took forcible possession of house and held me up there for an hour and tried to prevent the carman from taking us to Foylins [railway] Station.

They finally made good their escape and went directly to London where they permanently resided. But their troubles were not as yet ended. As the IRA had warned prospective buyers away from the vacated property, ‘Any person who would buy the ex-Policeman’s mansion is warned against doing so; if he does he may be prepared for the consequences. By Order IRA 20/5/22’, Courtney felt he had little choice but to agree a sale at half the market value with a ‘local IRA leader’ who had still ‘not paid [him] a penny purchase money or rent’ by the time he submitted his IGC claim in 1927-28. Moreover, the week the Courtneys spent ‘under fear and terror of being murdered ... seriously affected [Marion’s] health ever since; she suffers from nervousness and insomnia.

John Regan recounted asking a local ‘IRA leader’ to ensure the safety of two of his policemen hospitalised in Limerick city after a serious traffic accident the day before the force withdrew; these men ‘could not be moved’ on account of their injuries and Regan ‘greatly feared that their lot might not be a pleasant one’. The ‘IRA leader’ (a member of the National Army) complied. But, by April, ex-RIC resident in or returning to Limerick city were being intimidated out. Patrick Sullivan was amongst them. A forty-three-year-old sergeant stationed in Limerick since 1907, he was accosted at Limerick station by ‘uniformed armed men who called themselves members of the [IRA]’ and who seized his luggage and gave him twenty-four hours to leave Ireland. Although Sullivan told the IGC that he immediately complied, he remained in the city until June when, after
'several midnight raids by armed men on [his] house in Wolfe Tone Terrace, he eventually fled, running from place to place like a wild animal ... and expecting to be hourly assassinated'\textsuperscript{21} Although Sullivan claimed that he was away for nine months, his RIC pension record demonstrates that he was back in Wolfe Tone Terrace by January 1923 and he was still living there in 1928, despite the fact he was unable to find employment 'amongst a hostile population', and that his eight children were 'looked down upon at school etc. as the children of an upholder of British tyranny'.\textsuperscript{22}

While some of Sullivan's claims were undoubtedly exaggerated, their essence was true and he was just one of many city-resident ex-RIC targeted during this time.\textsuperscript{23} As Table 1 illustrates, almost 70 percent of city-stationed policemen left the Irish Free State in the wake of disbandment and relocated temporarily or permanently abroad, the majority in Great Britain, and several received compensation from the RIC Tribunal for property abandoned, destroyed or forcibly sold. For example, Constable John Harrington was compensated £185 for losses incurred on his furniture's sale after he was ordered out of his house by armed raiders, and similarly with Head Constable Michael P. Byrne, awarded £225 for 'loss on forced sale' and 'property seized' after he too was expelled; they relocated to Norfolk and Doncaster respectively. Fifty-seven-year-old Sergeant Patrick Curran, who moved into Limerick city on his disbandment from north Tipperary, was also run out. He relocated to Stamford and was compensated £120 for losses on the forced sale of his furniture.\textsuperscript{24}

Constable John Thomas Fails also left Limerick city at this time. The son of an RIC sergeant, Fails was born in Rathkeale in July 1899, but was raised in Catherine Street, Limerick, as a result of his father's transfer to the city. After war service with both the Royal Munster Fusiliers and the Royal Irish Regiment, he joined the RIC in December 1919 and was posted to Castlebar in February 1920 where he served until his disbandment on 28 March 1922.\textsuperscript{25} The following day he joined the British Section of the Palestine Gendarmerie, a 760-strong paramilitary policing force raised in spring 1922 for service in Britain's newly-acquired Palestine Mandate and overwhelmingly recruited from amongst disbanded RIC personnel. In December 1921, as Republican attacks on ex-RIC gained pace, the colonial secretary, Winston Churchill had expressed the hope that 'the Holy Land would afford [these men] shelter' from danger and, for many recruits, these attacks provided the catalyst for their enlistment in this British Gendarmerie.\textsuperscript{26}

Fails was, by his own account, amongst them:

On disbandment I couldn't go home then. When I was discharged they sent me home from Castlebar with all my old equipment; of course we had no guns or ammunition or anything. So to avoid trouble they got us off the train at a little station on the northern side of Limerick and I got a car to my home. I don't think anybody really knew whether I was there or not, but after I'd gone to Belfast to look for a job, there was some IRA people came wanting to know where I was.\textsuperscript{27}

Like many ex-RIC in similar situations, Fails was unsure as to the level of threat this visit represented: 'whether I'd have been in any trouble if I had been there I don't know. Some of these young fellows, you know, I think it was bravado'. But he was certain that he wouldn't get work in his home town again. For him, the British Gendarmerie presented a convenient route to removal from potential danger and to paid employment as well.\textsuperscript{28}

The relatives of Irish policemen also found themselves targeted in 1922: the RIC service of a father, husband, brother or son could taint entire families in the IRA's eyes. Some IGC applicants from Limerick cited such service as the cause of Republican animosity against them although there were clearly additional factors at play. For example, Michael O'Brien of Ashroe, Murroe identified the RIC service of two of his sons as the driving force behind the vicious campaign he endured. This began in 1920 when he and his family were subjected to a social boycott which 'consisted of being avoided and shunned by everybody with the exception of a few loyalist families living in the district'. But O'Brien, who had worked as a gamekeeper and chauffeur for John Beatty Barrington for thirty-five years, himself professed strong Loyalist views and he also acknowledged that his family was on friendly terms with the local Crown forces which they assisted 'in upholding the Govt. of [the] United Kingdom', either of which alone could have placed him in the IRA's crosshairs.\textsuperscript{29} In April 1922, the O'Briens were ordered 'to clear out of Ireland' and warned that 'failure to comply with this order would be at their own personal risk'. They stayed but received a similar order in May, after which Michael claimed, 'people used to jeer and shout passing our door and call out such remarks as "Are ye gone yet?" or "We'll put ye out of that" etc'. On 22 May the house was 'surrounded by armed men and about 11 shots fired in, forcing the family to vacate and turn over possession to the IRA.\textsuperscript{30} The family received an additional expulsion order on 26 May giving them forty-eight hours to leave Limerick on pain of death and, mindful that 'several men who had failed to leave were murdered', O'Brien, his wife, their son Maurice, and their four daughters, fled to Dublin where, according to Barrington's son-in-law, C. A. Campbell, they spent over a year practically in hiding. In September 1923 they emigrated to Sevenoaks, Kent where employment was organised for them at Campbell's home.\textsuperscript{31} Writing in 1926, Maurice O'Brien still saw no possibility
and then, with their characteristic chivalry, extended the hand of friendship to their former opponents.

"Why", he continued, could "not other counties follow this lead and give protection when we visit an aged parent?"

Whether his ire was directed at Limerick is not entirely clear; the possibility that the 'Co. Limerick' address that the paper provided referred to the location from where the policeman was writing, rather than the site of his parental home, cannot be excluded. Either way, the question of how Limerick compared to other counties in respect of ex RIC victimisation in 1922-23 requires a great deal of further research. Within Limerick, the evidence suggests, this victimisation, while general, was not completely 'county wide'. Certain areas (such as Rathkeale and Foynes/Glin,) clearly provided very cold houses for ex-RIC. Yet in other areas these men and/or their families lived entirely unmolested throughout even the worst of the Civil War period. The experience of Mary Agnes Morton in Kilmallock is a case in point: she and her children lived untroubled in the town, despite the fact that her husband, Joseph, and three of her sons had served in the RIC. (There was possibly some sympathy for her situation: Joseph, a forty-eight-year-old father of eight one month off retirement after thirty years' service, had been burnt to death in an IRA attack on Kilmallock barracks in May 1920 and his sons, John (20) and Alfred (18) had joined the RIC two weeks later, followed by their brother, Joseph (19), at the end of July.) Moreover, Alfred returned home to Kilmallock immediately after his disbandment and lived his life there undisturbed and, while John initially relocated to Dublin, he too soon returned to the town. And although Joseph moved permanently to Britain he did so, not on account of IRA intimidation or attack, but for love, having met his future wife (who was touring Ireland with her Yorkshire family's travelling cinema) while on RIC service in county Kerry in 1921. That said, he always felt unable to return to Ireland, despite missing it very much.

That some ex-RIC were effectively expelled from certain areas of Limerick in 1922 was, perhaps, to be expected. The county was one of the flashpoints of the War of Independence; the RIC and its auxiliaries were, in consequence,
very active, and their counterinsurgency was punctuated by episodes of ‘Black and Tannery’, including the above-mentioned Curfew Murders, one of the most infamous crimes of the entire revolutionary period. Therefore, resentment against policemen ran high, even after hostilities had officially ceased. But as one newspaper noted in May 1922, attacks on disbanded policemen served only to ‘emphasise the vindictive spirit that [was] abroad’ across Ireland towards all perceived enemies of ‘the Republic’ at the time. They formed part of a wider campaign against socio-political ‘outgroups’ such as British ex-servicemen, and Loyalists (overwhelmingly Protestant, but by no means exclusively so). The same was true of Limerick where, as Clark has documented, these ‘outgroups’ were intimidated and attacked during the Civil War period, in what constituted a squad of shameful postscript to the so-called ‘four glorious years’.

Endnotes


2 Constabulary Gazette, Jan. 21, 1917; British National Archives (TNA), Cabinet papers [CAB 24/134], Greenwood to Treasury, 26 Feb. 1912.

3 National Archives of Ireland (NAI), Dept. Taoiseach, TSC/3/5/1842, Cape to Michael Collins, 22 June 1912.

4 TNA, CAB 24/134, Tudor to Cape, 6 Feb. 1912.

5 Ibid., ‘Summary of Proceedings of Interview of Representative Bodies with Chief Secretary’, 4 Feb. 1912, p. 5.

6 The wanted RIC, when found, having been already court-martialed by the IRA, are dragged off and murdered at once, and many of them have also suffered unmentionable outrages. Imperial Reports, 27 April 1922.

7 Cape to Collins, 22 June 1922, op. cit.

8 Irish Independent, 26 May 1922.

9 Brian Hughes, ‘As good a Free State citizen as they had’: the RIC after disbandment (paper presented to Outsiders in Independent Ireland, 1922-49 conference, Maynooth University, 5 Sept. 2014). I am grateful to Dr. Hughes for providing me with a copy of his paper.

10 The IRA also killed more than thirty members of the Ulster Special Constabulary during this period. Figures abstracted from Richard Abbott, Police casualties in Ireland. (1919-1922) (Cork, 2000).

11 Elizabeth Haldane, The Irish policeman, 1822-1922: a life (Dublin, 2006), p. 220. In May 1922, Greenwood told the House of Commons that over two thousand Irish ex-RIC had lived in Ireland while, one month later, the Southern Irish Loyalist Relief Association in London stated that it had assisted three thousand such men. Preliminary research by this author based on a 10 percent sample of 8,000 Irish ex-RIC indicates that the final figure was significantly higher. Harland, House of Commons debates, 10 May 1922, vol. 153, p. 2298.


13 ‘...I dare say some of the men who are ordering out the ... RIC were under the bed when the trouble was over, and now ...’, Collins and his followers are for peace ..., they make up an ex-RIC police but when the RIC and Black and Tans were in Ireland armed to the teeth, the warriors of today were on the hitherto held at others’ expense’. P. D. McDonnell, Manchester, Letter to the Editor, Irish Independent, 19 June 1922.


15 TNA, Colonial Office papers (CO) 762/126/1, Stack to Daly, 23 June 1922.


18 TNA, CO 904/154/878, 882-3, 886-9, RIC reports: criminal offences and breaches of the Truce, Limerick; Limerick Leader, 1 Feb. 1922.

19 Killingworth workhouse was being used as a temporary police barracks at the time. Limerick Chronicle, 11 Feb. 1922. See also Limerick Chronicle, 13 Apr. 1922.

20 Military Archives, Dublin, Bureau of Military History Witness Statements [BMAH, WS, no. 891], Maurice Meade, 23 Sept. 1953, p. 44. For reports of Enright’s alleged misconduct, see BMAH, WS no. 110, John Sharkey, 16 Feb. 1955, p. 17 & BMAH, WS no. 1454, James Leech, 11 July 1956, p. 73. The hostility felt towards the RIC by the IRA’s Limerick Brigade in the post-Truce period was laid bare in July 1922 by veterans who had joined the Civil Guard in the uprising. They were at the forefront of those threatening to resign over the recruitment of ex-RIC into the new force with one, John O’Neira, warning that he and his former comrades ‘were not going to serve under [ex-RIC] ... he could not respect them as officers, and that for one would not salute them, and that the hard word would not off [him] first’. Quoted in Brian McCarthy, The Civil Guard mutiny (Cork, 2012), p. 67. Quoted in BMAH, WS no. 1763, Dan Brown, 13 Feb. 1922.

21 Limerick Chronicle, 18 Feb. 1922. RIC registers of service, no. 81157. A copy of his wife’s application for compensation for his loss is held by the Jim Kemmy Regional Museum (http://museum.limerick.ie/index.php/Detail/ Object/Show/object_id/53244).

22 Freeman’s Journal, 29 May 1922.


24 Limerick Chronicle, 4 Nov. 1929; Limerick Leader, 5 Nov. 1929; RIC registers of service, no. 70634. My thanks to Des Ryan for alerting me to this case and for providing me with copies of the relevant newspaper reports from which the above quotations are taken. This notice appears to have been first posted on a telegraph pole in Rathkeale. It was subsequently posted near the Catholic churches in Newcastle West, Dromocollogher and Abbeyfeale, and versions also went up in Ballyingarry and throughout Thomond and Glen. TNA, CO 904/148/121; 140 CW, RIC weekly summaries of outrages against the police, 1920.

27 By mid-May, the female servants in Pallisgreen and Newcastle West barracks had resigned, the latter having been threatened with a woman’s doom if they did not withdraw their ‘services’. TNA, CO 904/148/197, 189, 209.

28 TNA, CO 904/148/57, 60.

29 TNA, CO 904/148/44.

30 TNA, CO 904/148/220.

31 TNA, CO 904/148/314; TNA, CO 904/149/111.

32 See, for example, RIC registers of service nos. 70667, 70741, 70830, 70851.

33 TNA, CO 904/148/27; BMAH records and census returns suggest that these men were actually from Killaloe. Condon evidently complied with his pledge as there is no Michael Condon listed on the RIC registers of service for 1920-41. However, O’Brien eventually enlisted in June 1921. RIC registers of service, no. B-1296.

34 TNA, CO 904/148/71/583. See also NAI, Department of Finance: Compensation Files [FIN/COMP], 2/13/570.

35 Limerick Chronicle, 20 Apr. 1922.

36 Limerick Chronicle, 25 Apr. 1922. The seizure of RIC luggage was a common occurrence across Ireland at the time. See, for example, Irish Independent, 20 Apr. 1922, and the report on an incident in Milltown Malbay in Limerick Chronicle, 20 Apr. 1922.

37 The Greens’ murders, which resulted in an exodus of ex-RIC from the Boyle area, were condemned by the National Army executive.
Ironically, Thomas's brother, Martin, was one of three RIC constables shot dead in Dublin in February 1921. In another case of mistaken identity, the IRA believed him to be members of the notorious Igoe Gang when they were in fact merely dishele

38 Some of those who returned to their native counties received IRA permission to do so. For example, Sergeant Florence Donnelly and Constable Denis Harrington, both of whom had served in Tullamore, were allowed to return to their native homes in County Offaly after disbandment. Enquires were made into their war records by the local intelligence officer; although he noted that it was 'quite possible' that these men might have been active against the IRA, he found no evidence. 'In the case of Michael Carty, Thomas Stapleton and Patrick Courtney discussed below.

39 The information on individual awards which follows is abstracted from schedules of payments by the RIC. A number of the awards were made in TNA, Home Office files (HO) 315/197 & 315/100. Information on the location to which individuals initially fled is abstracted from TNA, Royal Irish Constabulary pension registers, Paymaster General's series, PMG 48.

40 TNA PMG 48/66/2026/1-2; 48/65/19750. As a result, many ex-RC settle for a time in the Chester area. The RIC pension registers indicate that the identities of these men and their families are recorded in a small number of other English towns such as Sheffield, Scarborough, Wirral and Balloch in Scotland.

41 TNA PMG 48/66/2027/1-20599. Horan was one of 165 ex-RC regarded by the British Home Office as 'being liable to risk by reason of their police service in Ireland' and for whom special precautions were required. The Home Office file on these men is restricted until 2035. TNA, HO 144/24600, Home Office to Office of the Paymaster General, 10 Sept. 1931.


43 RIC registers of service, no. 54008.

44 O/C 4th Western Division, East Connaught Brigade to Phoenix Park on 30 April 1921 (copy in TNA, CO 762/144/11, Maurice Reidy, IGC application, 24 Nov. 1926).

45 For details of what was destroyed see NAI, FIN/COM/2/13/442.

46 Reidy, IGC application, op. cit. The initials are those of Jack 'Suicide' O'Connor, formerly commandant of the IRP's 5th West Limerick Battalion.

47 Ibid.

48 TNA, CO 762/144/11, Reedy to Secretary for the Dominions, 1 Feb. 1928. Reedy died in 1942 and was buried with his wife in Kilmurry graveyard, 515

51 TNA, CO 762/173/1, Reidy-Snahan & Co.

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