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INTRODUCTION

BETWEEN 26 AND 29 April 1922 a series of killings in West Cork shocked Ireland. Over three consecutive days unidentified gunmen shot dead thirteen civilians, all of whom were Protestants. Ninety-two years after what has become known as the “Bandon Valley massacre,” historians still do not know precisely who carried out these killings or why. The identities of the perpetrators and their possible motivations remain hotly contested. The late Peter Hart’s pioneering work, *The IRA and Its Enemies: Violence and Community in Cork, 1916–1923*, advanced a sectarian explanation of the April 1922 violence. He concluded: “Behind the killings lay a jumble of individual histories and possible motives. In the end, however, the fact of the victims’ religion is inescapable. These men were shot because they were Protestants.” But he also noted, “Many of these men had been marked out as enemies [of the IRA] long before April 1922.”¹ This latter feature drives a republican counternarrative best articulated by Meda Ryan in her biography of West Cork IRA leader Tom Barry. She argues that the April victims were killed because they had provided information to British forces,

*This title comes from H. Kingsmill Moore, *Reminiscences and Reflections from Some Sixty Years of Life in Ireland* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1930), 278. Moore mistakenly located Ballygroman on a street, which belies its rural setting. The authors wish to acknowledge generous assistance from the following persons: Jayne Barry, Diarmuid Begley, Colum Cronin, Tim Crowley, Michael Galvin, Barry Keane, Niall Meehan, Gerry Milner, Jerry O’Callaghan, Mervyn O’Driscoll, Michelle O’Driscoll, and Don Wood.

1. Peter Hart, *The IRA and Its Enemies: Violence and Community in Cork, 1916–1923* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 286, 288.

not because of their religion.² These polarizing historical interpretations of the event have reproduced two long-standing popular perceptions.³ The homicides can be seen either as a sectarian killing spree or as acts of military necessity taken against civilian collaborators.

Closer investigation, however, shows that neither interpretation fully stands up to scrutiny or answers all the questions. This article draws on new evidence to reassess the circumstances in which the killings occurred. It will address the *modus operandi* of the Irish Republican Army (IRA) and the British army and consider the relations of both with the loyalist population of West Cork. The violence in the Bandon Valley will next be examined in its local components at Ballygroman, Dunmanway, Ballineen/Enniskeane, and Clonakilty. The backgrounds of the victims and intended victims will be explored along with the public reception of the “massacre.” The distinctiveness of social, political, and military conditions in West Cork during the Irish Revolution relative to those in the rest of the county will also be considered. Finally, we will explain why this episode has been so controversial in Irish historiography.

THE IRA AND THE LOYALIST POPULATION OF COUNTY CORK

IRA units were structured geographically; a number of “companies” formed a “battalion”; a number of battalions formed a “brigade.” During the War of Independence, County Cork was comprised of three brigades: Cork No. 1 Brigade (Mid-Cork and Cork city); Cork No. 2 Brigade (North Cork); and Cork No. 3 Brigade (West Cork). Just before the Truce of 11 July 1921, the Cork No. 3 Brigade was subdivided, with a new Cork No. 5 Brigade taking over units in the greater Beara peninsula and nearby coastal areas. The Cork No. 3 Brigade was now confined to the Bandon Valley and the Cork coast stretching from Kinsale to Clonakilty.⁴ The brigade fell within the

2. Meda Ryan, *Tom Barry: IRA Freedom Fighter* (Cork: Mercier Press, 2003). For a more sustained critique of Peter Hart, see Niall Meehan, “Examining Peter Hart,” *Field Day Review* 10 (2014): 103–47.

3. For a useful discussion of the terms and wider significance of the debate over the Bandon Valley killings, see Stephen Howe, “Killing in Cork and Historians,” *History Workshop Journal* (2014): 1–27.

4. For Cork No. 5 Brigade’s organization table, see MA-MSPC-RO/64–69, Military Service Pensions Collection (hereafter cited as MSPC) (Military Archives, Dublin [hereafter cited as MA]).

First Southern Division, which commanded all IRA units in West Limerick and counties Cork, Kerry, and Waterford. IRA brigades in Cork and elsewhere were autonomous and largely responsible for arming and financing their own operations. The geographical boundaries of unit areas were usually respected.

During the War of Independence County Cork was the most violent county in Ireland, suffering the highest number of deaths. The county saw the largest armed encounters of the conflict, with some guerrilla actions drawing hundreds of participants. More police and military could be found in County Cork, and they suffered more fatalities than their counterparts anywhere else in the country. British counterinsurgency in Cork was violent and intense, with numerous Cork IRA Volunteers dying in military or police custody. IRA brigades in the county enjoyed the highest membership in Ireland, enrolling some 18,000 Volunteers.⁵ The Cork IRA also seemed to have developed the most sophisticated guerrilla organization in the country.⁶ Cork brigades manufactured their weapons, developed reliable communication lines, fielded large-scale flying columns, maintained fleets of motorized transport, and levied taxes.⁷ They also created an elaborate and deadly intelligence service. Heavy emphasis on information-gathering distinguished the Cork IRA from its counterparts elsewhere.⁸ By late 1920 republican operatives were regularly intercepting crown-force communications and surveilling British personnel and posts as well as local civilian suspects. With

5. For brigade strengths, see RO/27–38a (Cork No. 1 Brigade); RO/39–45 (Cork No. 2 Brigade); RO/46–56a (Cork No. 3 Brigade); RO/57–63 (Cork No. 4 Brigade), MSPC (MA).

6. John Borgonovo, “The Guerrilla Infrastructure: IRA Special Services in the Cork Number One Brigade, 1917–1921,” *Irish Sword* 27:108 (Summer 2010): 205–16.

7. For details on IRA levies, see Maurice Donovan’s Witness Statement (hereafter WS) 1736, Bureau of Military History (hereafter cited as BMH), 4–5 (MA); James Moley’s WS 1720, 19–20; Cornelius Calnan’s WS 1317, 5; Denis Keohane’s WS 1426, 8; Daniel Holland’s WS 1341, 6; Dan O’Driscoll’s WS 1352, 8; William Crowley’s WS 1502, 8–9; Seán O’Driscoll’s WS 1518, 6–7; John J. Sullivan’s WS 1578, 15; Ted Hayes’s WS 1575, 7–8; Seán Murphy’s WS 1445, 8; Con Flynn’s WS 1621, 13; John Manning’s WS 1720, 19–20; William Powell’s WS 1699, 12; Richard Collins’s WS 1542, 4–5 (all BMH).

8. For a listing of IRA brigade and battalion intelligence officers for the country, see Contemporary Documents, 322 (BMH).

varying degrees of efficiency a network of IRA intelligence officers and centers searched for potential informants and screened the local loyalist population.

A recent study of killings during 1919–21 breaks down IRA executions of suspected civilian informers by county.⁹ In this category Cork far exceeded any other county in Ireland. This disparity can be explained partly by Cork's size (it was the largest county in Ireland) and partly by the high overall levels of violence experienced there. The extraordinary frequency of violent death almost certainly helped to create an environment where IRA units felt the need to execute suspected collaborators. The disparity cannot be attributed to the personalities or mindsets of IRA leaders alone, as all the Cork brigades demonstrated a higher proclivity for such killings than brigades in other parts of the country.¹⁰ In 1920–21 both the Cork No. 1 Brigade and the Cork No. 3 Brigade by themselves executed far more civilians than were killed in any other county in Ireland. While the Cork No. 2 Brigade lagged behind its neighbors, it still accounted for more civilian deaths by the Truce of July 1921 than those in all but three other counties in Ireland.¹¹ The Cork brigades' maintenance of an active intelligence service probably contributed to their high propensity for targeting civilian suspects.¹²

When monitoring hostile civilians, the IRA focused on both Protestants and Catholics. Suspicion generally seems to have been based on political rather than religious allegiances, though these were not always easy to disentangle. For example, a sample constructed from a 1921 IRA list of "loyalist households" in Cork city shows a rough balance of 32 Catholics and 41 Protestants.¹³ Hundreds of Protestants

9. Eunan O'Halpin, "Problematic Killing during the War of Independence and Its Aftermath: Civilian Spies and Informers," in *Death and Dying in Ireland, Britain, and Europe: Historical Perspectives*, ed. James Kelly and Mary Ann Lyons (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2013), 317–48.

10. *Ibid.*, 330.

11. *Ibid.*, 329.

12. For an example of the disparity within the First Southern Division, see the First Southern Division Intelligence Officer's Report, 15 Nov. 1921 (MS 31,207 (1), National Library of Ireland, Dublin [hereafter cited as NLI]). This document will hereafter be cited as First Southern Division Intelligence Officer's Report, 1921 (NLI).

13. IRA Intelligence Officer's Notebook, Compilation of Returns by Company Area, Second Battalion, Cork No. 1 Brigade, circa July 1921. A digital copy of this

living in these areas, however, were excluded from the list, indicating IRA selectivity in the classification of loyalists for intelligence purposes. Similar intelligence returns of civilian suspects from the First Southern Division likewise show a fair mix between Catholics and Protestants. Yet such a balance, given the heavy demographic preponderance of Catholics, indicates a disproportionate suspicion of Protestants.¹⁴ The IRA did try to separate “hostile” loyalists from the rest of the unionist population. In late April 1922 the First Southern Division instructed brigade intelligence officers to identify the political allegiance of all “unionist” households in their areas. Households were classified under three headings: “hostile,” “neutral,” and “friendly.” One North Cork battalion listed fifteen unionist households, which were all Protestant. The results show a discerning cross-section of four “hostile,” four “neutral,” and seven “friendly” households.¹⁵

Unionist identity was especially relevant in West Cork, since its population had a larger than average share of Protestants compared to the rest of the county. These West Cork Protestants created anxiety within the IRA, as seen in a November 1921 IRA brigade intelligence listing of “enemy institutions.” For most brigades in the First Southern Division, “enemy institutions” meant social, commercial, and sporting institutions catering to British military personnel. The Cork No. 3 Brigade, however, listed Masonic and Orange lodges, closely associated with Protestant loyalism. In the same report the

notebook is in the author John Boronovo’s possession, courtesy of the late Professor James Flavin, formerly Professor of Mathematical Physics at NUI Galway. This copy is hereafter cited as “Flavin Notebook.” The sample was constructed from the names of seventy-three persons whose religious identity could be traced in the 1911 Manuscript Census of Ireland.

14. Listings of thirty-eight “enemy agents” in the First Southern Division show a rough cross-religious balance. See First Southern Division Intelligence Officer’s Report, 1921 (NLI). Of the 41 suspects in County Cork whose religion can be ascertained in the 1911 manuscript census, 26 were Catholic and 15 Protestant. See “IRA Intelligence Reports on Civilians Accused of Giving Information to and Associating with British Forces during War of Independence in Counties Cork, Kerry, Waterford, and Limerick,” ca. 1921 (A/o 897, Lot 4, MA). This document will hereafter be cited as “IRA Intelligence Reports on [Accused] Civilians,” ca. 1921 (MA).

15. This particular listing of unionists seems to have been used to prepare an IRA levy to finance its operations. The information sought included livestock held and property values as measured by the poor-law valuation; the results were then used to calculate the amounts assigned to each household. See List of Unionist Households, Siobhan Lankford Papers, U.169 (5) (Cork City and County Archives).

First Southern Division Intelligence Officer Florrie O'Donoghue assessed intelligence operations in the division's ten IRA brigades. In nine out of ten brigade areas O'Donoghue largely ignored perceived threats from the Protestant population. But in the Cork No. 3 Brigade area he drew attention to "a strong, hostile civilian element organised in Freemason lodges."¹⁶ (The reference to Freemasons was consistent with the republicans' preoccupation with the Masonic order as a possible fifth column.) To senior IRA officers, loyal Cork residents were a special threat: they retained extensive knowledge of community personalities and geography, moved freely in areas hosting covert IRA activities, and often acted from patriotic motives that could make them determined foes.¹⁷

During the War of Independence the Cork No. 3 Brigade disproportionately executed Protestants suspected of providing assistance to the crown forces. According to one republican source, of the sixteen West Cork civilians executed by the IRA in the first six months of 1921, eleven were Protestant.¹⁸ Cork's two other IRA brigades showed little indication that religion factored into their targeting. A tally of suspected civilian spies killed by the Cork city IRA in 1920–21 included seven Protestants out of twenty-seven victims, or 26 percent of the total, while Protestants constituted only 15 percent of the city's population.¹⁹ In North Cork eight of the IRA's nine civilian fatalities can tentatively be identified as Catholic.²⁰

Within the Bandon Valley area of West Cork, republicans thought

16. First Southern Division Intelligence Officer's Report, 1921 (NLI).

17. Tom Barry's observations about this threat were echoed by Florrie O'Donoghue, who operated largely in Cork city, which also hosted a major Protestant population. See John Borgonovo, *Florence and Josephine O'Donoghue's War of Independence* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2006), 84; Tom Barry, *Guerilla Days in Ireland*, (Dublin: Anvil Books, 1989), 106.

18. Barry, *Guerilla Days*, 105–13. For more details on these killings, see Thomas Earls FitzGerald, "The Execution of 'Spies and Informers' in West Cork, 1921," in *Terror in Ireland, 1916–1923*, ed. David Fitzpatrick (Dublin: Lilliput Press, 2012), 181–93.

19. John Borgonovo, *Spies, Informers, and the "Anti-Sinn Féin Society": The Intelligence War in Cork City, 1920–1921* (Dublin and Portland, OR: Irish Academic Press, 2007), 91–93, 100.

20. These figures are based on a forthcoming book chapter. See Andy Bielenberg and James S. Donnelly, Jr., "Suspected Spies and Informers Killed in County Cork, 1919–1921," in *The Atlas of the Irish Revolution*, ed. John Crowley, Donal Ó Drisceoil, and Michael Murphy (Cork: Cork University Press, 2016).

that they faced an organized group of hostile Protestant civilians working in concert with crown forces. They called this group the “Anti-Sinn Féin Society” and believed it was led by a retired military officer, the decorated Lieutenant Colonel Warren Peacocke of Innishannon. Republicans claimed to have identified Peacocke in late 1920, when he accompanied police on a house raid and a mask he was wearing slipped from his face.²¹ They also reported that for several months he had taken up residence in the Bandon military barracks, though he was assassinated by the IRA at his Innishannon home (Skevanish House) at the end of May 1921.²² The existence of an “anti-Sinn Féin” group in West Cork has featured in explanations of the Bandon Valley killings.

British military authorities confirmed some IRA suspicions about assistance flowing from West Cork Protestants. Since 1918 the area had been a special focus for British military intelligence.²³ Posted to Bandon, Major Arthur Percival, the Essex Regiment (First Battalion) intelligence officer, would later describe the “Protestant element” in his area as “chiefly large farmers and shop-keepers. They were practically unanimously in favour of a continuation of English control in the South. . . . A few, but not many, were brave enough to assist crown forces with information.”²⁴ According to a British army assessment after the conflict, Protestants were more willing to assist the crown forces in West Cork than anywhere else in the South of Ireland:

In the South the Protestants and those who supported the government rarely gave much information because, except by chance, they had not got it to give. An exception to this rule was in the Bandon area, where there were many Protestant farmers who gave information. Although the intelligence officer of this area was exceptionally experienced, and although the troops were most active,

21. Barry, *Guerilla Days*, 110–11; Denis Lordan’s WS 470 (BMH), 14, 29; Richard Russell’s WS 1591 (BMH), 22–23, 25–26; James “Spud” Murphy’s WS 1684 (BMH), 22–24.

22. *Freeman’s Journal* (hereafter cited as *Fj*), 2 June 1921; *Cork County Eagle and Munster Advertiser* (hereafter cited as *CCE*), 4 June 1921; Richard Russell’s WS 1591 (BMH), 22–23, 25–26.

23. William Sheehan, *A Hard Local War: The British Army and the Guerrilla War in Cork, 1919–1921* (Stroud, Gloucestershire: Spellmount, 2011), 71, 78.

24. William Sheehan, *British Voices from the Irish War of Independence, 1918–1921: The Words of British Servicemen Who Were There* (Cork: Collins Press, 2005), 98.

it proved almost impossible to protect these brave men, many of whom were murdered while almost all the remainder suffered grave material loss.²⁵

The “brave men” mentioned in this report almost certainly were those who were killed or fled in the first months of 1921, mainly in the Bandon Valley.²⁶ Already looked upon with suspicion, Protestant loyalists in West Cork had validated the worst republican fears about enemies in their midst. Beyond those few who constituted a military threat to the IRA, other West Cork unionists broke republican boycotts on the police and military or refused to pay an IRA “arms levy” inaugurated in the autumn of 1920 (based on property valuations and numbers of livestock owned).²⁷ When payment was not forthcoming, the IRA confiscated cattle that were then sold to pay off the tax debt, thereby increasing tensions between republicans and the more recalcitrant loyalists.²⁸

The Bandon Valley was the main operating area for the Cork No. 3 Brigade’s flying column, which fielded more fighters than any other IRA unit in Ireland. The contraction of RIC barracks in West Cork in 1920 had freed large tracts of the countryside from crown forces.²⁹ One of these relatively open areas was the countryside around Dunmanway and Ballineen/Enniskeane, which provided critical logistical

25. Peter Hart, ed., *British Intelligence in Ireland, 1920–1921: The Final Reports* (Cork: Cork University Press, 2002), 49.

26. John Regan, “West Cork and the Writing of History,” *Dublin Review of Books* 58 (16 June 2014).

27. For examples, see Applications to the Irish Grants Committee [hereafter cited as IGC] of the following persons: Thomas Henry Smith, Enniskeane (Colonial Office Papers [hereafter cited as CO], 762/44/13, The National Archives, Kew [hereafter cited as TNA]); James Kingston, Chetwynd (CO 762/62/4); Thomas Grattan, Dunmanway (CO 762/67/24); William Henry Frost, Bandon (CO 762/149/18); James Good, Bandon (CO 762/149/20); William Pope Good, Bandon (CO 762/184/12).

28. William Desmond’s WS 832, 18–19; Daniel Holland’s WS 1341, 6; Cornelius O’Sullivan’s WS 1740, 12–13; Richard Russell’s WS 1591, 13–14; Charlie O’Donoghue’s WS 1607, 5; Patrick O’Sullivan’s WS 1481, 7; Ted Hayes’s WS 1575, 7–8; Michael Dineen’s WS 1583, 8–9; Daniel Canty’s WS 1619, 19; James Doyle’s WS 1640, 13; Jeremiah Deasy’s WS 1738, 15, 18; Samuel Kingston’s WS 620, 3; John O’Driscoll’s WS 1250, 6 (all BMH).

29. By the Truce of 11 July 1921 the number of occupied RIC barracks had been reduced from forty to only fourteen. See Diarmuid Kingston, *Beleaguered: A History of the RIC in West Cork during the War of Independence* (Cork: self-published, 2013), 194.

support to the brigade flying column. Police remained concentrated in large West Cork towns such as Bandon, Clonakilty, Macroom, and Dunmanway. The last town hosted “K” Company (subsequently “O” Company) of the RIC Auxiliary Division, the dreaded “Auxies.” The IRA also faced determined civilian opposition in Dunmanway, which likely contributed to the establishment there of an effective British intelligence system that mapped the allegiance of local households.³⁰ IRA intelligence in turn had penetrated the police headquarters in Dunmanway, which helped the IRA to identify civilians in the area who were assisting the crown forces.³¹

The situation for local loyalists in the Bandon Valley worsened following the ratification of the Anglo-Irish Treaty in January 1922. British forces evacuated most of County Cork by the end of February, with troops remaining only in Ballincollig and Cork Military Barracks (figure 1) and in the two Cork “Treaty ports” of Cobh and Berehaven. Small IRA contingents quickly occupied former police posts in Bandon, Clonakilty, Ballineen, and Dunmanway. In March these IRA units repudiated Dáil Éireann and the new Irish Free State Provisional Government. By April 1922 IRA leaders faced a possible civil war with the Provisional Government or a military re-intervention by the British government. During this month the First Southern Division ordered subordinate units to submit a number of regular intelligence reports, including the “unionist” census of homes previously mentioned.³² The ramping up of IRA intelligence efforts was symptomatic of concerns about potential threats from hostile civilians in any impending conflict. With the IRA now in clear control of the Bandon Valley, units could deal with hostile loyalists with impunity.

30. Sheehan, *Hard Local War*, 73.

31. Patrick O’Brien’s WS 812 (BMH), 19.

32. “Division Intelligence Memo No. 1,” 7 April 1922, from First Southern Division Intelligence Officer to All Brigade Commanders; Order to List All Members in Area Who Have Joined the Free State Army or Civic Guards, 15 April 1922, from First Southern Division Intelligence Officer to All Brigade Intelligence Officers (Ernie O’Malley Papers, P17a/91, University College Dublin Archives [hereafter cited as UCDA]).



FIGURE 1. During the Irish War of Independence, Victoria Barracks (also called Cork Military Barracks) on Patrick's Hill in Cork city served as the headquarters of the British Army's 6th Division under the command of Major General Sir Edward Peter Stickland. Prayer services were held on its huge parade ground for many of the British soldiers and police killed by the IRA in the city or elsewhere in the county before their bodies were returned to Britain for burial. Quite a number of executions of captured and condemned IRA men (thirteen in 1921) were also carried out in Cork Military Detention Barracks, which formed part of these military facilities (at the rear of Victoria Barracks). On 18 May 1922, however, less than five months after the ratification of the Anglo-Irish Treaty by Dáil Éireann, British soldiers lowered the Union flag at the barracks for the last time, and some two hundred members of the Cork No. 1 Brigade of Óglaigh na hÉireann under the command of Seán O'Hegarty occupied the barracks in the name of the Provisional Government. This transfer of control marked a major step in the general evacuation of British military and police posts throughout County Cork and southern Ireland in the early months of 1922. Courtesy of the National Library of Ireland.

BALLYGROMAN

The first episode in a series of events that constituted “the Bandon Valley massacre” occurred in the early hours of 26 April 1922 at the home of a unionist family named Hornibrook. They lived at Ballygroman House, located on a 100-acre farm near Killumney, about 15 kilometers west of Cork city. Around 2 a.m., four IRA Volunteers called to the front door. Hailing from the Cork No. 3 Brigade headquarters in Bandon, Stephen O’Neill, Charles O’Donoghue, and Michael Hurley were mid-level battalion staff officers led by the Acting First (Bandon) Battalion Commandant Michael O’Neill (no relation to Stephen). A native of Kilbrittain, Commandant O’Neill came from one of West Cork’s most prominent republican families. He knocked on the front door, and when a man’s voice answered, O’Neill asked to see “Mr.” Hornibrook “on business.” The door remained shut, and after fifteen minutes O’Neill knocked again. A man appearing at an open window again refused the visitors admittance. This time O’Neill threatened to force the door. He subsequently found an open window on the ground floor through which he led Stephen O’Neill and Charlie O’Donoghue. Moving forward with an electric torch, O’Neill proceeded from the dining room up the main stairway. A shot rang out, and O’Neill collapsed on the stairs. His two colleagues carried him back out the window and down to the farm gate. Charlie O’Donoghue went for a priest, but by the time he had returned, O’Neill was dead (figure 2).³³

Charlie O’Donoghue testified that he had then motored to Bandon to report the incident and returned with “four military men.”³⁴ Three of the reinforcements can be tentatively identified. One was reportedly Michael O’Neill’s brother Daniel, head of the Republican Police of the First Battalion, Cork No. 3 Brigade, stationed at Bandon barracks.³⁵ Two others, Jeremiah O’Connor of Lissanisky near Up-

33. *Evening Echo*, 29 April 1922; *Southern Star* (hereafter cited as *SS*), 29 April 1922.

34. *SS*, 29 April 1922.

35. *Ibid.*; *Morning Post*, 28 April, 1 June 1922; *Evening Echo*, 29 April 1922. Newspaper accounts gave O’Neill’s title as District Inspector, Irish Republican Police. See *Evening Echo*, 28 April 1922. In 1925 the National Army’s Director of Intelligence alleged that Daniel O’Neill was a former member of the RIC and had been present at “the murder of several Protestants in West Cork in May 1922. A brother of his was



FIGURE 2. The killing of Michael O'Neill, acting commandant of the Bandon Battalion of the Cork No. 3 Brigade, at Ballygroman House near Kilmumney in the early hours of 26 April 1922 sparked the series of murders that became known as the Bandon Valley "massacre." A Kilbrittain native, O'Neill had distinguished himself in the War of Independence. His death was commemorated by a Mass card with his picture and pleas for prayers to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. The Mass card gives an incorrect date of death. His remains were brought to St. Patrick's Church in Bandon on Wednesday evening, 26 April; the funeral procession to Kilbrittain started at 1 p.m. on

Friday, 28 April. Parading behind O'Neill's coffin as the cortege made its way to Kilbrittain were "thousands of Volunteers in military formation" and countless civilians. A local journalist observed, "No funeral in living recollection was so large and representative"; "everyone who could possibly be present assembled to pay their last tribute to his memory." See *Cork Examiner*, 29 April 1922. Courtesy of Timothy Crowley.

ton and Timothy Collins of Upton, were both more junior Volunteers from Crosspound Company of the First Battalion.³⁶ Following a gun battle during the late morning of 26 April, three occupants of Ballygroman House surrendered: Thomas Hornibrook, his son Samuel Hornibrook, and a relative, Captain Herbert Woods.³⁷

For unknown reasons the IRA party did not take their captives

shot dead by two of the latter-named, Woods and Hornbrooke [sic], who were subsequently murdered." See Eunan O'Halpin, "The Military Service Pensions Project and Irish History: A Personal Perspective," in *Guide to the Military Service (1916–1923) Pensions Collection*, ed. Catriona Crowe (Dublin: Ógligh na hÉireann, 2012), 159.

36. Preparatory Material Relating to Pensions for Members of the West Cork Brigade (in the possession of Diarmuid Begley, Courtmacsherry, Co. Cork).

37. *Irish Times* (hereafter cited as *IT*), 14 April 1923.

back to their base in Bandon but instead moved westward to the remote townland of Scarriff in Templemartin parish and held them there for a night.³⁸ The next day the men were secretly executed and buried. Thomas Hornibrook's daughter appealed repeatedly for news from Michael Collins, Eamon de Valera, and other senior republicans. Within two weeks the republican leadership privately assumed that the three men were dead.³⁹ Ballygroman House and some additional farm buildings were subsequently burned down by the IRA.⁴⁰ Over ninety-two years later, the three bodies have still not been recovered.

The three surviving IRA officers who had visited Ballygroman testified that they had come on official business under orders from the Cork No. 3 Brigade quartermaster stationed in Bandon barracks. They arrived at Ballygroman at an unusually late hour. For official business, moreover, the house was located outside Michael O'Neill's operating area, falling within the bounds of Aherla Company of the Ovens Battalion in the Cork No. 1 Brigade area.⁴¹ The Volunteers' need for reinforcements following O'Neill's death indicates that they did not possess enough firepower to seize Ballygroman House. This deficiency makes it less likely that the visitors set out with malicious intentions. The most likely explanation for their visit was to take Thomas Hornibrook's car, a Darracq.⁴² IRA units were commandeering vehicles across County Cork at this time, and the need of

38. Sean Crowley, *From Newce to Truce: A Story of Newcestown and Its Hinterland from Earliest Times to the Troubled Birth of Our New State* (Newcestown, Co. Cork: self-published, 2005), 464. Patrick Donovan of Templemartin, a member of the Quarry's Cross Company, testified that he had guarded the prisoners at Scarriff; this evidence supports Crowley's account up to this point. See also Preparatory Material Relating to Pensions for Members of the West Cork Brigade. For a conflicting version of the final burial spot of these three victims, see Donal O'Flynn, "They Missed the Train and Lost Their Lives," *Times Past* 9 (2010–11), 64. O'Flynn also places their incarceration at Scarriff but suggests that the execution and burial sites were east of this location rather than west.

39. "C. G." to Art Ó Briain, 8 May 1922; Ó Briain to Miss B. Woods, 13 May 1922; Ó Briain to Domhnall Ó Ceallachain (Lord Mayor of Cork), 13 May 1922 (Art Ó Briain Papers, MS 8432/20, NLI).

40. Criminal Injury Book, Cork East Riding, 1920–22 (Claim ID 37/167, National Archives of Ireland, Dublin [hereafter cited as NAI]); *IT*, 14 April 1923.

41. See Tim Herlihy's WS 810, 2–3, 6, 39 (for a map and comments on the company areas of this battalion); Michael O'Regan's WS 1524, 1; Patrick Cronin's WS 710, 3; Michael Foley's WS 1534, 2–3 (all BMH).

42. Criminal Injury Book, Cork East Riding, 1920–22, Claim ID 37/165 (NAI).

O'Neill and his comrades for a car was mentioned by republicans well after the fact.⁴³

It is easy to understand Thomas Hornibrook's reluctance to open the door in the dead of night. Since 1919 the Hornibrook family had experienced continued agrarian harassment. As a later compensation claim explained, "His crops were destroyed, his cattle injured, his farm implements broken and stolen, his motor car was badly disabled, he was from time to time severely boycotted, no person would thresh his corn. . . ." Between 1920 and 1922 the family lodged numerous damage claims under the Criminal Injuries Act.⁴⁴ Thomas Hornibrook's service as a Justice of the Peace under the British crown and his identity as a "loyalist" may have led to some of the trouble.⁴⁵ Thomas Hornibrook had already demonstrated his readiness to protect his home with lethal force, although it was Woods who fired the fatal shot at O'Neill with a Bulldog .45 revolver. One IRA veteran recalled somewhat admiringly Hornibrook's brazen response when the Volunteers arrived at Ballygroman House in 1919 to seize Hornibrook's arms:

He spoke out of a window to them and said he would resist. In the course of his declarations he quoted Mr. Gladstone as having once said that every man's house was his castle. And so he was going to defend his. And so he did, and defended it well. He was a good shot, but after half an hour's fight the Volunteers forced their way in and compelled his surrender. No one was hurt on either side, but three revolvers with about 300 rounds of ammunition and two shotguns were secured.⁴⁶

Fearing further attacks two years later, Hornibrook sought assistance from Woods, a war veteran and former officer in the British army. Woods had been living in Cork city with his uncle Edward

43. *Cork Weekly News* (hereafter cited as *CWN*), 6 May 1922; León Ó Broin, *Protestant Nationalists in Revolutionary Ireland: The Stopford Connection* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1985), 177; Michael O'Donoghue's WS 1741, Part 2, 227 (BMH). According to Michael O'Donoghue, they were looking for help after their vehicle had broken down.

44. Criminal Injuries Book, Cork East Riding, April 1918–Dec. 1920 (Claim ID 37/163, NAI); Criminal Injuries Book, Cork East Riding, Feb.–Oct. 1921 (Claim ID 37/165, NAI).

45. RIC County Inspector's Monthly Report for Cork City and East Riding, June 1921 (CO 904/115, TNA).

46. WS 810 of Tim Herlihy et al., 4 (BMH).

Woods, who was married to Thomas Hornibrook's daughter Matilda. Edward Woods later claimed that in 1921 he had fled to England after the IRA sent him a threatening letter accusing him of spying.⁴⁷ The family may have fallen afoul of the IRA, for Herbert Woods was later described by one IRA veteran as "a British secret service agent."⁴⁸ Yet the Woods family was absent from a 1921 IRA intelligence report that identified scores of "loyalists" in their Cork city district.⁴⁹ Edward Woods in 1927 sought compensation for IRA victimization, including the destruction of his business premises. In that case, however, the culprits were RIC Auxiliary cadets, who had set the fire while burning down a large section of the Cork city center on the night of 11–12 December 1920.⁵⁰ Thus it is unclear whether all the persecution claimed by Woods's family actually occurred.

Despite unanswered questions surrounding the events at Ballygroman House, some elements of the episode seem beyond dispute. Whereas the four IRA Volunteers do not appear to have anticipated any violence, Woods and the Hornibrooks had much reason to fear late-night visitors. They ultimately paid for Michael O'Neill's death with their lives.

DUNMANWAY

On Wednesday evening, 26 April, Michael O'Neill's remains arrived in Bandon, where his body was laid out in St. Patrick's Church before family, friends, and IRA comrades.⁵¹ Later that night (now 27 April), at about 12:15 a.m., a series of killings began around the Bandon Valley.⁵² Over three days and nights ten civilians were assassinated,

47. Application of Edward Woods to IGC, 31 Jan. 1927 (CO 762/133/4, TNA).

48. Michael O'Donoghue's WS 1741, Part 2, 227 (BMH). In his statement O'Donoghue mentioned the hanging of victims. On the loyalist side, see the letter quoted in Tim Pat Coogan, *Michael Collins: A Biography* (London: Arrow Books, 1991), 359, and Moore, *Reminiscences and Reflections*, 279. Both of these sources mentioned the hanging of Wood specifically.

49. "Flavin Notebook."

50. Application of Edward Woods to IGC, 31 Jan. 1927 (CO 762/133/4, TNA). We are indebted to Don Wood for this reference. See also Gerry White and Brendan O'Shea, *The Burning of Cork* (Cork: Mercier Press, 2006), 208.

51. *CE*, 27 April 1922; *CCE*, 29 April 1922.

52. According to the inquest, the shooting of Francis Fitzmaurice occurred shortly after 12:15 a.m. on 27 April. See *CWN*, 6 May 1922.

and another dozen or more claimed that they had been targeted for death but had escaped. Additional residents received death threats that drove them from the area. Following Ballygroman, killings were carried out in at least four separate episodes in different localities. There may have been a fifth event in Skibbereen.

At this time the IRA's Third (Dunmanway) Battalion maintained a post in the vacated RIC barracks on Main Street, Dunmanway (figures 3 and 4).⁵³ That night so much shooting and commotion occurred around the barracks that some townspeople mistakenly believed that the building had been attacked "by rival forces."⁵⁴ The firing lasted from one to four hours (sources differed on the length of time), with targets struck on both Main Street and Sackville Street.⁵⁵ Three residents were killed: the retired draper James Buttimer, the chemist David Gray, and the elderly land agent and solicitor Francis Fitzmaurice. Another three civilians evaded their assailants and escaped into the night.⁵⁶ The only revealing utterance recorded occurred during the killing of Gray, when his assailant shouted, "Take that, you Free Stater," implying that the attackers were anti-Treaty republicans.⁵⁷

The first shots of the night were fired into a Catholic-owned pub, McCarthy's on Main Street. Crown forces had frequented the establishment, with the result that a strict IRA boycott had been placed on it.⁵⁸ Like the publican James McCarthy, other targets that same night had aroused IRA suspicion by maintaining social or professional relations with members of the crown forces. In some cases such misgivings were not without foundation. William Fitzmaurice, whose

53. SS, 21 Jan., 18 Feb. 1922.

54. CCE, 29 April 1922. For an unverified witness account of the event, see Tony Brehony, *West Cork: A Sort of History Like* (Dublin: Kestrel Books, 1997), 34.

55. *Evening Echo*, 28 April 1922; *IT*, 28 April 1922; *SS*, 29 April 1922; *CWN*, 6 May 1922.

56. Those who escaped were George Appelbe Bryan, William Jagoe, and Thomas Sullivan. In addition, the Catholic publican James McCarthy had shots fired into his premises. It is unclear whether this shooting was a deliberate attempt at assassination or a form of intimidation. For the purposes of this article McCarthy will be considered a victim target. David Fitzpatrick erroneously reported four Protestant fatalities in Dunmanway. See David Fitzpatrick, "The Spectre of 'Ethnic Cleansing' in Revolutionary Ireland," *Bulletin of the Methodist Historical Society of Ireland* 18:32 (2013): 44.

57. SS, 29 April 1921.

58. Application of James McCarthy to IGC, 27 Oct. 1926 (CO 762/13/5, TNA).



FIGURES 3 AND 4. Main Street in Dunmanway (figure 3, at top, in the distance), host to a vacated RIC barracks in 1922, was the scene of protracted gunfire after midnight on 27 April. Three Protestant civilians, two of them quite elderly, were killed nearby that night, and attacks were made on other residents in this town of about 1,500 people—a small urban space lying at the geographical heart of the West Cork region. The town center, typified by the Square (figure 4, above), was constructed around two tributaries of the River Bandon, into which they flow as the larger river passes by at the eastern end of the town. Courtesy of the National Library of Ireland.

brother Francis was killed, freely admitted, “My brother and I were well known loyalists and helped the police and military.”⁵⁹ The assailants also called to the home of his neighbor, the merchant George Appelbe Bryan. He was saved by his fast-thinking wife, who barred the front door while Bryan fled out the back. Bryan later declared that he had “rendered considerable assistance and gave information to the crown forces in Ireland prior to the Truce.”⁶⁰ Another Dunmanway resident, William Jagoe, also escaped. In 1921 the IRA had posted a “Spies beware” notice on his house after he had entertained members of the crown forces. He had also assisted the RIC, and he believed that the IRA had learned of a visit to his home by a police intelligence officer. After the events of April 1922 Jagoe reported that his IRA assailants had moved about the area openly, with one of them vowing that “they would get Jagoe yet.”⁶¹ This testimony strongly suggests local IRA involvement. Dunmanway was the only place where some of the perpetrators were recognized.

Survivor testimony indicates that at least ten armed men were involved in the Dunmanway town attacks.⁶² Five of the seven intended victims were Protestant. One of the two Catholics visited, Thomas Sullivan, was a recently disbanded member of the RIC.⁶³ The next day Sullivan fled the town. Many unionist residents of Dunmanway were left unmolested, as were the two Protestant churches (one Church of Ireland, the other Methodist) and the local YMCA branch.⁶⁴ This outcome is consistent with the attackers’ selectivity in choosing their victims. Essentially, they targeted those townspeople whom they suspected of having provided material assistance to the crown forces during and after the War of Independence.

59. Application of William Fitzmaurice to IGC, 17 Dec. 1926 (CO 762/12/4, TNA).

60. Application of George Appelbe Bryan to IGC, 20 Oct. 1926 (CO 762/3/10, TNA).

61. Application of William Jagoe to IGC, 11 June 1927 (CO 762/4/1, TNA).

62. Application of George Appelbe Bryan to IGC, 20 Oct. 1926 (CO 762/3/10, TNA).

63. Application of Thomas Sullivan to IGC, undated file (CO 762/175/19, TNA).

64. For details, see *Guy’s Cork Almanac and Directory, 1921* (Cork: Guy’s, 1921). A digital copy of this directory, held at the Department of Local Studies, Cork City Libraries, is available online at http://www.corkpastandpresent.ie/places/streetandtrade-directories/guyscorkalmanac1921_OCR.pdf (accessed 7 July 2014).

BALLINEEN/ENNISKEANE, CLONAKILTY, AND POSSIBLY SKIBBEREEN

The killing continued on the following night (27–28 April) but moved to the greater Ballineen/Enniskeane district, roughly 12 kilometers east of Dunmanway. The first killing occurred at about 10:30 p.m. in the farmhouse of Robert Howe at Ballaghanure, 4 kilometers north of Enniskeane.⁶⁵ Two armed men called to the front door and asked Howe to come outside and harness a horse for their use. He refused to do so and retreated into his bedroom, but the men followed him and shot him dead.⁶⁶ One of Howe's employees sought medical assistance from a neighbor, Philip Chambers, captain of the Cork No. 3 Brigade's Coppeen Company. Chambers later claimed that he was on friendly terms with Howe, who had helped him during the 1920–21 conflict.⁶⁷ Unlike the other victims, Howe was a nationalist who had formerly been associated with William O'Brien's All-for-Ireland League, which preached cross-religious tolerance.⁶⁸ His political stance and his cordial association with Chambers make it very unlikely that Howe was an actively hostile loyalist. Howe's killers were not recognized, and Chambers appears to have had no prior knowledge of the attacks; his pro-Treaty affiliation, in contrast to the anti-Treaty views of the faction who carried out the attacks, would explain his ignorance.⁶⁹

Not long after this, down the road in the adjacent townland of Castletown near Enniskeane, the young farmer John Chinnery opened his door to an armed party whose members instructed him "to yoke

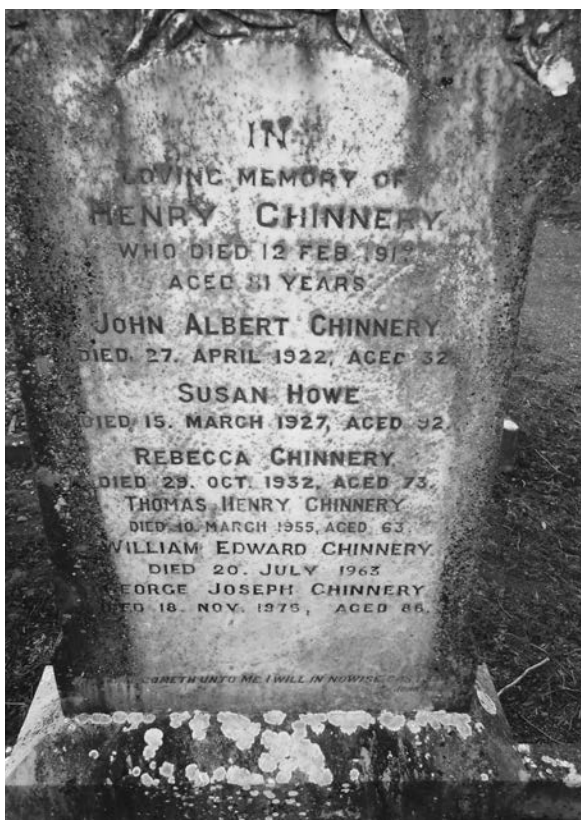
65. *CWN*, 6 May 1922.

66. *IT*, 2 May 1922.

67. Philip Chambers's Account of the Murder of Robert Howe (in the possession of Sean Crowley, Garranes, Templemartin, Co. Cork).

68. Barry Keane and Peter Hart have also identified the Dunmanway victim James Buttimer as a pro-Home Rule member of the All-for-Ireland League. But David Fitzpatrick convincingly argues that James Buttimer has been confused with John Buttimer, who was a local nationalist. This is consistent with the statement in the compensation claim of James Buttimer's widow that her husband "never meddled in politics." See Fitzpatrick, "Spectre of 'Ethnic Cleansing,'" 45–47. See also Barry Keane, *Massacre in West Cork: The Dunmanway and Ballygroman Killings* (Cork: Mercier Press, 2014), 155; Hart, *IRA and Its Enemies*, 286.

69. Barry Keane has advanced the possibility that the assailants misidentified Howe; Keane notes that a captured Auxiliary-police intelligence diary mentions "Rushfield House" in Castletown-Kinneigh, which was owned by William Howe in the same townland where Robert Howe lived. See Keane, *Massacre*, 158.



FIGURES 5 AND 6. Farmer John Albert Chinnery, whose name appears in the center of the gravestone (figure 5, left), was interred in the cemetery of St. Bartholomew's Church of Ireland, Kinneigh (figure 6, below), near the townland of Castletown, where he was killed on the night of 27 April 1922. Rebecca Chinnery stated in June 1923 that she had been "maintained solely" on the family farm by her murdered son John, who had "worked, managed, and controlled it and all the attendant farming operations." Photo of Chinnery gravestone by James S. Donnelly, Jr. Photo of Kinneigh church courtesy of the National Library of Ireland.



a horse to a cart in the shed.” While he was doing so, they shot him dead (figures 5 and 6).⁷⁰ This horse-harnessing ruse was played out a number of times that night, which suggests that the same small group of gunmen carried out these particular shootings. Additional targets escaped their assailants. William Daunt of Derrygra House, Ballineen, failed to comply when armed visitors voiced their demand that he harness a pony. When they threatened to shoot him for declining, Daunt coolly declared that “he had arms also and that two could play at that game.” Seemingly unwilling for a gunfight with less than certain odds, the men left after they had “fired about ten shots into the house.” The next morning Daunt decamped to Wales, where he remained until the end of the year.⁷¹

In the village of Ballineen that same night Alexander Gerald McKinley was shot dead in bed just after 1 a.m. The teenager was staying in the house of his aunt, dressmaker Frances Peyton and her family, who subsequently slept out in their fields seeking safety. When they returned home, they were told to “clear out,” otherwise they would be murdered.⁷² About an hour after McKinley’s killing, another household was attacked in Caher townland, west of Ballineen. There the 59-year-old farmer John Buttimer was shot dead, along with his live-in farm laborer James Greenfield, “said to be of weak intellect” and an unlikely informer.⁷³ Two other attacks occurred nearby this same night, one of which was abortive. First, in Ballineen “a gang of armed men” visited the home of the two Bennett brothers, James and Robert, with the intention of shooting them. Fortuitously,

70. *Belfast Newsletter*, 29 April 1922. Chinnery’s death probably occurred late on the night of 27 April. (Niall Meehan gives the date as 28 April in “Distorting Irish History Two: The Road from Dunmanway: Peter Hart’s Treatment of the 1922 ‘April Killings’ in West Cork,” *Spinwatch* [online publication], 17 Sept. 2010 [accessed 3 March 2014].) Chinnery’s gravestone in the churchyard of St. Bartholomew’s parish near Castletown-Kinneigh indicates that he died on 27 April, and that is also the date recorded on his death certificate. See also Application of Rebecca Chinnery to IGC, 1 Nov. 1926 (CO 762/31/3, TNA).

71. Application of William H. Daunt to IGC, 25 Jan. 1927 (CO 762/100/26, TNA).

72. *CWN*, 6 May 1922. The newspaper reported that “this young man, a native of the district, had been away for some years and returned around last July.” See also Home Office Papers, 45/11992, c. 397863 (TNA).

73. Application of Frances Buttimer to IGC, 27 Dec. 1926 (CO 762/129/7, TNA).

they were not home.⁷⁴ Second, at Murragh (4 kilometers east of Ballineen) the Rev. Ralph Harbord, a son of the local Church of Ireland rector Rev. Richard Harbord, was shot and seriously wounded. He and one of his brothers, a serving British soldier, came under heavy rifle fire outside the front door of the Murragh rectory. Their father the rector attributed the attack to his “well known loyalty to the crown” and to the service of four of his sons in the British army during the First World War.⁷⁵ Overall, that night at least six homes were visited in the Ballineen/Enniskeane district, with four men shot dead and one wounded. All the victims were Protestant. The IRA garrison at the former RIC station in Ballineen village does not seem to have interfered with the attacks (figures 7 and 8).⁷⁶

A number of victims were clear targets for the IRA. The Volunteers had already threatened John Buttimer in late 1920 after he had refused to pay the arms levy to the Cork No. 3 Brigade. According to his family, the IRA kidnapped his son William in May 1921 and held him until the Buttimers paid as much as £200—a sum far beyond the usual levy.⁷⁷ The Bennett brothers had also aroused the ire of the IRA. One worked in the Cotter-family bakery business in Ballineen, which republicans had boycotted since 1920. Its owner Alfred Cotter was shot dead in late February 1921 in Ballineen. He had supplied bread and apparently information to the police and military; he was also accused of accompanying police and soldiers on their raids.⁷⁸ Beyond the Bennetts’ association with Cotter, IRA

74. “A List of Cases Which Have Been Brought to the Notice of the Distress Committee,” undated (Lloyd George Papers, F/10/2/72(b), House of Lords Record Office, London [hereafter cited “List of Cases” (HLRO)]). We thank Barry Keane for this reference.

75. Application of Rev. Richard Harbord to IGC, 7 Nov. 1927 (CO 762/155/18, TNA); Application of Rev. Ralph Harbord to IGC, 8 Nov. 1926 (CO 762/58/15, TNA). See also Niall Meehan’s Harbord material in “Distorting Irish History Two.”

76. *CWN*, 6 May 1922.

77. Application of Frances Buttimer to IGC, 27 Dec. 1926 (CO 762/129/7, TNA). Since the IRA generally did not kidnap citizens for ransom, this exaction may have been part of the fining of a number of Ballineen and Enniskeane residents who had been enrolled in a British-sponsored “civil guard” in the area. See William Desmond’s WS 832, 36–37 (BMH).

78. “List of Cases” (HLRO). This document indicates that the elder of the Bennett brothers worked for Alfred Cotter as a master baker. For the boycott of the Cotters and the killing of Alfred Cotter, see Jack Hennessy’s WS 1234, 2, 12; Timothy J. Warren’s WS 1275, 2–4, 9; Patrick O’Brien’s WS 812, 9 (BMH).



FIGURES 7 AND 8. IRA gunmen grievously wounded the Rev. Ralph Harbord, the second surviving son of the Church of Ireland rector Rev. Richard Harbord, in the early morning hours of 28 April 1922. The father Richard, who had occupied the rectory (figure 7, at top) since 1904, declared that the attack on his sons Ralph and Oscar (a British soldier who escaped injury) stemmed solely from his own “well known loyalty to the crown” and from the fact that four of his five sons had “served in the army during the war.” Ralph Harbord “was dangerously ill for nine weeks,” according to his father, but eventually recovered. The IRA gunmen who directed rifle fire at Ralph and Oscar Harbord as they were about to enter the front door of the rectory had hidden in the excellent cover provided by the trees and shrubs lining the entrance drive to the rectory (figure 8, above). Bullet marks on the exterior front of the house can still be seen today. Remarkably in view of his near-death on 28 April 1922, the Rev. Ralph Harbord succeeded his father as rector of Murragh in 1931 and served until 1936. Photos by Jane Barry and James S. Donnelly, Jr.

officers believed incorrectly that the brothers had warned police about an IRA ambush during the autumn of 1920. This assumption stemmed from a misunderstood remark made by the commander of the IRA ambush rather than to any malevolence on the part of the Bennetts.⁷⁹ The shadow of Alfred Cotter's killing also fell on Alexander McKinley, who was included on a list of IRA civilian suspects. The IRA file merely noted that McKinley had fled the area following the shooting of Cotter but had later returned.⁸⁰

The other cases remain somewhat unclear, but the perpetrators showed a willingness to shoot a victim whom they had not sought (the farm laborer Greenfield). It was highly untypical of the Cork IRA to shoot a secondary civilian target in lieu of someone they sought by name. Moreover, the shooting at the Rev. Richard Harbord's rectory broke an unspoken IRA taboo against targeting clergymen.⁸¹ There is no evidence that Robert Howe was a loyalist, much less an informant. The imprecise and transgressive nature of these shootings differentiates them from scores of IRA assassinations of civilians in County Cork during 1920 and 1921.

A second eruption occurred on the night of 27–28 April in Clonakilty, a town about 13 kilometers south of Ballineen and in the Second Battalion area of the West Cork Brigade. (Dunmanway and Ballineen/Enniskeane were both in the Third Battalion area.) Starting at about 11 p.m., unidentified gunmen visited at least four homes around Clonakilty, killing a male teenager who was probably not their intended victim. An IRA garrison in the former Clonakilty RIC barracks did not interfere with the attackers, which may minimally indicate tacit support, similar to the conduct of the garrisons stationed at Dunmanway and Ballineen.⁸² The timing of the Clonakilty

79. History of Behagh Company by Captain Thomas O'Donovan, Oct. 1934, MS 31,332 (NLI). See also Material Gathered on West Cork Ambushes, MS 31, 301(2) (NLI).

80. "IRA Intelligence Reports on [Accused] Civilians," ca. 1921 (MA).

81. Hart, *British Intelligence*, 47.

82. Owen Sheridan has offered a theory that the killings were perpetrated by British agents. There is no evidence for this suggestion. See Owen Sheridan, *Propaganda as Anti-History: Peter Hart's The IRA and Its Enemies Examined* (Millstreet: Aubane Historical Society, 2008), chap. 6. See also Brendan Clifford and Jack Lane, *The Dunmanway Killings—Curiouser and Curiouser* (Millstreet: Aubane Historical Society, 2012), 27.

shooting overlapped with that of the killings in the Ballineen/Enniskeneane area, which suggests that at least two separate groups of gunmen were operating that night. The sole Clonakilty fatality was 16-year-old Robert Nagle. His father Thomas appears to have been the primary target, but he evaded the gunmen by hiding behind a kitchen cupboard. IRA records from 1921 list Thomas Nagle as a suspected informer; one such report indicated that “the police were visiting his house frequently.”⁸³ Thomas Nagle was a process server and a “sheriff’s officer” as well as the secretary and caretaker of the Clonakilty Masonic Lodge.⁸⁴ As previously noted, the Cork No. 3 Brigade had listed that specific lodge as an “enemy institution” in July 1921. It was one of only two Freemason institutions so classified in County Cork; the other, in Bandon, was also located in the Cork No. 3 Brigade area. The Clonakilty lodge was burned down shortly after Nagle’s death.⁸⁵ Robert Nagle had also worked in the local post office, which was a concern of IRA intelligence and possibly factored into his assassination.⁸⁶

Earlier the same night in Clonakilty, two gunmen picked up Richard Helen in Donovan’s Hotel and insisted that he come with them to the end of the town. He believed that they intended to shoot him and ran away. IRA intelligence in 1921 had classified Helen as an “enemy agent.” He had certainly provided information to the RIC, foiled an IRA ambush, and during the 1916 Easter Rising had helped to defend the local RIC barracks against possible attack.⁸⁷ One of his colleagues on that occasion was John Fitzpatrick.⁸⁸ A Justice of the Peace, Fitzpatrick was one of four West Cork magistrates held hostage by the IRA in late June and early July 1921 and threatened with death should any more IRA prisoners be executed.⁸⁹ One of his

83. “IRA Intelligence Reports on [Accused] Civilians,” ca. 1921 (MA).

84. *Irish Independent* (hereafter cited as *II*), 29 April 1922.

85. Monthly Report Filed on 2 Aug. 1921 by HQ, Third Cork Brigade, to Intelligence Officer, 1st Southern Division (Richard Mulcahy Papers, P7/a/7, UCDA); *CWN*, 6 May 1922; Application of Thomas Nagle to IGC, 1 Dec. 1926 (CO 762/3/6, TNA); Hart, *IRA and Its Enemies*, 286. There were a total of ten Masonic lodges in County Cork. See *Guy’s Cork Almanac and Directory*, 1921.

86. *IT*, 1 May 1922.

87. Application of Richard James Helen to IGC, 7 Dec. 1926 (CO 762/33/497, TNA); First Southern Division Intelligence Returns, July 1921 (MS 31,214, NLI).

88. Application of John Fitzpatrick to IGC, 31 Dec. 1926 (CO 762/80/17, TNA).

89. *SS*, 25 June 1921.

fellow hostages was Clonakilty Justice of the Peace John St. Leger Gillman, who claimed that he had also received prior warning on 27 April 1922 of an impending attack against him.⁹⁰ Another Clonakilty resident, Henry Hoskin, went to ground that night after getting word that his life was in danger. He later recorded that he had given “constant assistance to British forces” and had guarded the Clonakilty post office at the request of British military intelligence.⁹¹ All those who were targeted or warned of their potential targeting in Clonakilty were Protestant.

Prior warnings to the victims were a distinctive feature of the Clonakilty episode. One victim, John Fitzpatrick, in his Irish Grants Committee (IGC) claim, reported having received a warning on 24 April that his life was in danger, which leaves open the possibility of a premeditated plan that preceded Michael O’Neill’s death at Ballygroman. The remaining tip-offs, however, occurred after Ballygroman, which makes it more likely that Fitzpatrick provided the incorrect date in his compensation claim.⁹² Other warnings to intended victims in Clonakilty arrived just prior to the outbreak of shootings in the town, which suggests reluctance within the Clonakilty IRA to carry through these attacks to their grim conclusion.

The Clonakilty killing of Robert Nagle was also unique in that it ultimately resulted in a murder charge against a local IRA member. This is the only known instance in which a person faced criminal charges in connection with any of the Bandon Valley killings. In Feb-

90. Application of John St. Leger Gillman to IGC, 6 Nov. 1926 (CO 762/33/12, TNA).

91. Application of Henry Hoskin to IGC, 7 Dec. 1926 (CO 762/66/10, TNA).

92. Application of John Fitzpatrick to IGC, 31 Dec. 1926 (CO 762/80/17, TNA). John Bradfield of Ballygroman claimed that he had received a warning that “the IRA intended shooting Protestants,” but his address in Ballygroman and his decision to leave the country after the shooting of Protestants in Dunmanway make it more likely that he was warned after O’Neill’s death. See Application of John Bradfield to IGC, 10 Jan. 1927 (CO 762/89/6, TNA). Prior warning was also reported much earlier (in August 1921) by loyalist William Jagoe in Dunmanway. He claimed that a drunken tailor in the town named Denis Barry, who called himself an IRA intelligence officer, had told him that “Truce or no Truce, seven persons in Dunmanway were to be shot, and added that his, applicant’s name [William Jagoe’s] was under discussion as being one of the number marked down for assassination.” The inebriated state of the informant and the many intervening months place question marks over this testimony. See Application of William Jagoe to IGC, 7 April 1927 (CO 762/4/1, TNA). See also Application of Mary T. Cronin to IGC, 28 Jan. 1927 (CO 762/92/2, TNA).

ruary 1924 National Army troops arrested Clonakilty Volunteer Tom Lane and John “Flyer” Nyhan, a senior figure in the West Cork flying column. Nyhan was charged in the Clonakilty district court with three counts of murder, and Tom Lane with four counts of murder, relating to killings that had occurred in 1922 and 1923. One of the murder charges facing Lane was for the April 1922 shooting death of Robert Nagle. The issue in this court was whether either or both of the two men should be indicted and tried in a higher court. The case collapsed, however, when police were unable to produce witnesses willing to testify in relation to any of the charges. Lane was released by the Clonakilty district court, but he was immediately rearrested along with Nyhan by the National Army and interned. Tom Lane was the younger brother of Jim Lane, the Clonakilty Battalion engineering officer and an active member of the Cork No. 3 Brigade.⁹³

The day following the Clonakilty and Ballineen shootings, the Bandon headquarters of the Cork No. 3 Brigade instructed all its units to stand down. The order was subsequently issued to the press under the name of brigade commander Tom Hales. The press statement read:

On Friday, 28th April, I issued a definite military order to all battalion commandants in this brigade for transmission to all men under their command that ANY SOLDIER IN THE AREA WAS NEITHER TO INTERFERE WITH OR INSULT ANY PERSON. If said order will not be rigidly adhered to by all units, those concerned will be dealt with in a manner not alone upholding the rigid discipline of a military force, but in justice to the glorious traditions of the officers and men of the brigade. EVEN CAPITAL PUNISHMENT WILL BE METED OUT IF FOUND NECESSARY. In the case of civilians all such offenders will be vigorously hunted down and handed over by us to the constituted tribunals acting under Dáil Éireann. I promise to give all citizens in this area, irrespective of creed or class, every protection within my power.⁹⁴

Remarkably, in defiance of brigade commander Tom Hales’s orders, a final killing occurred the next day, Saturday, 29 April. At about

93. *CE*, 25 Feb., 7 March, 4, 18 April, 2 May 1924; *Weekly Irish Times*, 19 April 1924. There are discrepancies in certain news reports that attributed the Robert Nagle murder charge to “Flyer” Nyhan rather than to Tom Lane. The *Cork Examiner* seems to offer the original and more reliable reportage. See also *SS*, 23 Feb., 1, 8 March, 3 May 1924; James “Spud” Murphy’s *WS* 1684, 23–26; Dan Breen’s *WS* 1763, 125; Michael Dineen’s *WS* 1563, 8; Ted Hayes’s *WS* 1575, 8 (BMH).

94. *CWN*, 6 May 1922.

11 p.m. John Bradfield, an elderly and disabled farmer, was shot dead by armed men at Killowen, 8 kilometers west of Bandon. His brother William Bradfield was their original target; William later reported that the IRA had suspected him of spying for the British government.⁹⁵ As in the Ballineen/Enniskeane slayings, the gunmen once again used the pony-harnessing ruse to draw their victim out of the house and shoot dead someone in lieu of their primary target.⁹⁶ This was the only killing to occur within the boundaries of the Bandon Battalion area of the Cork No. 3 Brigade, an additional act of defiance against Hales. The ten killings that followed those of the three Ballygroman House occupants seemingly took place within the precincts of three West Cork Brigade battalions (Dunmanway, Clonakilty, and Bandon).⁹⁷

There may have been two additional attempted killings in Skibbereen, outside the Cork No. 3 Brigade area, though some doubts remain about these events. The recent biographer of Jasper Wolfe, a prominent Methodist solicitor in Skibbereen, has reported that armed men had searched for Wolfe at his Skibbereen home on the night of 27 April. They did not find him (he was in Cork city on business), but they took Wolfe's motorcar.⁹⁸ But although Wolfe later applied for compensation for damage to his legal business, he never mentioned an attempted assassination or seizure of his car by the IRA on that night. Wolfe reported that he had been "compelled to leave the country" for some weeks after the Bandon Valley killings, yet he appeared in a Cork city courtroom a few days later, on 2 May.⁹⁹ This throws a question mark over his purported exile, which may have been construed to extract compensation, an art in which he was undoubtedly the unrivalled professional expert in West Cork. The IRA did regard Wolfe as a leading enemy owing to his past service as

95. Application of William and Elizabeth Bradfield to IGC, 5 Oct. 1926 (CO 762/37/3, TNA).

96. *CWN*, 6 May 1922; *IT*, 2 May 1922.

97. It is unclear whether the reconstituted Fourth Battalion of the Cork No. 3 Brigade was operating at this point. It was a new unit comprised of companies in Ballineen, Ballynacarriga, Coppeen, Kinneigh, Shanavoher, Belrose, Ahiohill, and Kilmeen. See RO 51, MSPC (MA).

98. Jasper Ungoed-Thomas, *Jasper Wolfe of Skibbereen* (Cork: Collins Press, 2008), 142.

99. Application of Jasper Wolfe to IGC, 24 Nov. 1926 (CO 762/54/17, TNA); *CWN*, 6 May 1922.

a crown prosecutor.¹⁰⁰ The compiler of Wolfe's IRA intelligence file asserted that "his own admissions in public and private all prove his guilt as a prominent spy and informer."¹⁰¹ At the outbreak of the Irish Civil War in July 1922 he was arrested in Skibbereen by anti-Treaty IRA forces, who "intended to shoot him."¹⁰² It remains unclear, however, whether he evaded assassination in late April 1922.

Wolfe's cousin William Good Wood reported that armed men had called at his front door on the night of 27 April. When Wood heard the visitors asking for him, he quickly slipped out the back. The men departed with his car.¹⁰³ The IRA had previously arrested Wood in April 1921 and accused him of "being a spy and giving information to the British army and the government."¹⁰⁴ Since IRA commandeering of cars was quite common at this time, it is possible that such a seizure was the purpose of the visits to the Wolfe and Wood homes. As these occurred the night after their business partner Fitzmaurice had been shot dead, the two men may have suspected more malicious intentions or altered their statements to maximize their compensation claims. Without conclusive evidence the question of whether or not this was an attempted homicide must remain open.

The attacks in the Bandon Valley were highly localized. Most Protestant communities in West Cork were untouched by the violence. These included congregations in Ballinadee, Upton, Drimoleague, Drinagh, Courtmacsherry, Timoleague, Rosscarbery, and Innishannon.¹⁰⁵ There was no violence toward unionists in Michael O'Neill's native Kilbrittain area. Perhaps most surprising in this regard was Bandon, the leading unionist community of West Cork. The town experienced no killings, though a brutal assault did occur there on

100. Intelligence Report from Cork [No.] 3 Brigade to 1st Southern Division, July 1921 (MS 31,215, NLI). See also HQ Cork No. 3 Brigade to I/O, 1st Southern Division, 2 Aug. 1921 (Richard Mulcahy Papers, MS P7/a/7, UCDA).

101. "IRA Intelligence Reports on [Accused] Civilians," ca. 1921 (MA).

102. Interview with Tadhg O'Sullivan (Ernie O'Malley Notebooks, P17b/108, UCDA).

103. Claim of William Good Wood, undated but ca. 1927 (FIN/COMP/2/4/780, NAI).

104. Application of William Good Wood to IGC, 11 Dec. 1926 (CO 762/64/5, TNA). Wood appears to have incurred the disfavor of both the pro-Treaty IRA leadership in Skibbereen and the anti-Treaty IRA leadership in Clonakilty. See Ungeod-Thomas, *Jasper Wolfe*, 139–40.

105. *Guy's Cork Almanac and Directory*, 1921.

one of the days that Michael O'Neill's body was lying in repose in the Catholic church. IRA members beat up a Trinity College student, telling him that "he was being thrashed because he was a Protestant and an ex-soldier," and ordering him out of Ireland.¹⁰⁶

The lack of gun attacks in Bandon can possibly be explained by the presence of the Cork No. 3 Brigade headquarters there. The brigade's commander Tom Hales and intelligence officer Seán Buckley both publicly condemned the violence; thus the relative quiet in Bandon can be interpreted as an assertion of their authority.¹⁰⁷ The location of the Bandon Battalion headquarters in the town could also explain the lack of attacks occurring in that battalion area (with one exception in Killowen), despite the fact that it included Michael O'Neill's hometown of Kilbrittain. All this is consistent with the thesis that the Bandon Valley killings were an unauthorized undertaking by battalion officers temporarily breaking away from the control of their superior officers. The other authority figure in the Cork No. 3 Brigade, Tom Barry, appears to have been in Dublin during the killings, thus further contributing to the vacuum.¹⁰⁸

REACTIONS

Though the killings had ended in West Cork, their ramifications continued to be felt for weeks thereafter. A number of Protestants in the region fled after receiving warning letters and visits purporting to be from the IRA, instructing them to leave. Threats were delivered to least seven households in Dunmanway as well as to homes in Enniskeane, Killowen, and Baurleigh near Kilbrittain.¹⁰⁹ Feeling

106. "List of Cases" (HLRO).

107. Buckley did so as chairman of the Bandon Town Council. See *CE*, 9 May 1922.

108. Ryan, *Tom Barry*, 215.

109. For the Dunmanway threats, see the Application of John Burchill to IGC, 26 Jan. 1927 (CO 762/80/5, TNA); "List of Cases" (HLRO); Application of John Deane to IGC, undated but stamped 1 Feb. 1927 (CO 762/106/19, TNA); Application of William Farrar to IGC, 24 Jan. 1927 (CO 762/99/11, TNA); Application of William Jagoe Salter to IGC, undated but stamped 2 July 1928 (CO 762/182/8, TNA); Application of Jeremiah and Ellen Sullivan to IGC, 13 Jan. 1927 (CO 762/76/4, TNA). For the remainder, see Application of Joseph Moore to IGC, 11 Jan. 1927 (CO 762/139/7, TNA); Application of Joseph Northridge to IGC, 19 Nov. 1926 (CO 762/37/2, TNA); Application of Thomas Bradfield to IGC, 1 Nov. 1927 (CO 762/19/16, TNA).

vulnerable, some loyalists left voluntarily.¹¹⁰ An East Cork resident named Bennett described himself as “greatly shocked” by the killings, which he attributed to “reprisals for shooting of R.C.’s in Belfast” and “greed for land.” Like some other Protestants, he temporarily departed, taking a steamer from Cork to England.¹¹¹ Further west, the *Cork Weekly News* described an “exodus” from Dunmanway, Ballineen, and Bandon “on a large scale,” with several shops hastily closing.¹¹² Writing to the Admiralty on 29 April, the Royal Navy commander in Queenstown (now Cobh) reported “what looks like the beginning of a pogrom against Protestants in the South,” and made plans for contingencies should sea evacuation be necessary.¹¹³ The Royal Navy estimated that two hundred persons had left the Dunmanway district.¹¹⁴ The *Irish Times* quantified the departures at “over one hundred persons from Dunmanway, Ballineen, and Bandon.”¹¹⁵ Much of this migration was temporary, but some residents decided to emigrate permanently, thus contributing to the substantial Protestant exodus from southern Ireland in these years.¹¹⁶

Condemnations of the killings and expressions of sympathy for the Protestant community were immediate and widespread. Protests often commented on the victims’ religion, which implied a sectarian explanation. On 28 April 1922 the cabinet of Dáil Éireann denounced the killings and declared, “Dáil Éireann regards itself as the protector of Irishmen of every creed and class, and they appeal to all good citizens to help constituted authority to grapple with this new menace to the public safety.”¹¹⁷ A number of anti-Treaty TDs quickly associated themselves with these sentiments, including Eamon de Valera, who “expressed horror at the Dunmanway murders.”¹¹⁸ Numerous public

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

111. Diary of John Bennett, Entries of 27 and 28 April 1922 (B 609/9/A/42, Cork City and County Archives).

112. *CWN*, 6 May 1922.

113. Commander in Chief, Western Approaches, to Secretary of the Admiralty, 29 April 1922 (ADM 1/6652/253, TNA).

114. Fitzpatrick, “Spectre of ‘Ethnic Cleansing,’” 20; *IT*, 1 May 1922.

115. *IT*, 6 May 1922.

116. Andy Bielenberg, “Exodus: The Emigration of Southern Irish Protestants during the Irish War of Independence and the Civil War,” *Past & Present* 218 (Feb. 2013): 199–233.

117. *IT*, 29 April 1922.

118. *F7*, 1 May 1922; *Cork Constitution* (hereafter cited as *CC*), 29 April 1922.

bodies across County Cork passed motions of sympathy, often adopting the resolution approved by the Cork Corporation: “We hereby tender to our Protestant fellow-countrymen our sincere sympathy on the cruel and tragic deaths of their co-religionists, and we assure them of our anxiety for the continuance of the splendid spirit of toleration which has always been manifested in the South of Ireland.”¹¹⁹ Similar motions were carried by public bodies in the affected towns of Dunmanway, Clonakilty, and Bandon.¹²⁰

Many voices directly addressed the perceived religious implications of the killings. At a meeting of southern Irish Protestants in Dublin the chairman remarked that “until the recent tragedies in County Cork there was no suggestion of sectarian bitterness in their midst.”¹²¹ The Church of Ireland bishops of Dublin and Cashel met with Michael Collins and William Cosgrave, seeking assurances that “the government would protect its citizens and would ensure civil and religious liberty in Ireland.”¹²² Few public statements, however, were as trenchant as that of the hard-line anti-Treaty newspaper *Poblacht na h-Éireann* edited by Erskine Childers. It did not mince words in denouncing killings that it considered fundamentally sectarian. Under the headline “The Cork Murders” it noted: “Nothing, not the most terrible barbarity ever practised, can justify this horrible episode in a country where the bravery and chivalry of Irishmen has been so nobly proved during the war. Sectarian crime is the foulest crime, and it is regarded as such in the tradition of our people, for it violates not only every Christian principle but the very basis of nationality as well.”¹²³ The chairman of the Bandon Town Council, Seán Buckley, promised an end to the violence. He also declared that “many of the men who were most wanted in the strenuous time by the enemy were sheltered and supported by their Protestant neighbours.”¹²⁴ His words carried special weight, as he was a senior republican serving as Cork No. 3 Brigade intelligence officer.

Contemporary violence in Ulster certainly contributed to the

119. *CC*, 29 April 1922.

120. *CE*, 8, 9, 10, 11, 18 May 1922; *II*, 3, 4, 8, 10, 12 May 1922.

121. *Weekly Irish Times*, 12 May 1922.

122. *CE*, 13 May 1922.

123. *Poblacht na h-Éireann*, 4 May 1922.

124. *CE*, 9 May 1922.

sectarian interpretation of the Bandon Valley killings. During April 1922 alone the Provisional Government reported as many as thirty-five killings in Northern Ireland, with seventy-five Catholic homes “burned and looted.”¹²⁵ In March of that year Belfast residents were horrified by the “McMahon murders,” in which suspected police gunmen killed six Catholic civilians from a prominent nationalist (and nonrepublican) family as a reprisal for the recent deaths of two of their colleagues at the hands of the IRA.¹²⁶ Numerous Cork protests over the Bandon Valley shootings mentioned the sectarian turmoil in Ulster, which had also featured prominently in Cork and other southern newspapers.¹²⁷ The Skibbereen Rural District Council specifically warned that “it would be bad policy to be imitating Belfast.”¹²⁸ The pro-Treaty Skibbereen IRA condemned anonymous threatening letters sent to local Protestant residents and declared that “we have no sympathy with any pogrom,” with this term implying that one religious group was being deliberately targeted.¹²⁹

Heightened religious tensions or worrisome awareness of the sectarian conflict in the North could be seen elsewhere. IRA authorities in Tralee and mid-Limerick threatened drastic action against the authors of anonymous menacing letters to local Protestants.¹³⁰ The Protestant communities of Schull and Clonakilty publicly dissociated themselves from sectarian violence in Ulster, insisting that such tensions were absent in the South.¹³¹ The “Southern Protestant Appeal” organized by prominent southern unionists garnered six thousand signatures, including two hundred from Protestant clergymen. Its signatories denounced the violence in Northern Ireland and offered, “as members of religious minorities in southern Ireland, to put on record that the South of Ireland has been notably free from sectarian

125. *IT*, 29 April 1922.

126. Robert Lynch, *The Northern IRA and the Early Years of Partition, 1920–1922* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2006), 98; Tim Wilson, “‘The Most Terrible Assassination That Has Yet Stained the Name of Belfast’: The McMahon Murders in Context,” *Irish Historical Studies* 37:145 (May 2010): 83–106.

127. *CC*, 29 April 1922; *CE*, 5 May 1922; Edith Somerville’s Diary Entry of 2 May 1922, quoted in Hart, *IRA and Its Enemies*, 277, fn. 30.

128. *CE*, 11 May 1922.

129. *CWN*, 13 May 1922.

130. *CE*, 1 May, 20 June 1922. The units in question were aligned with anti-Treaty forces.

131. *CE*, 1 May 1922.

violence.”¹³² The opinion expressed by Serjeant-at-Law Henry Hanna at a Protestant Orphan Society meeting in Dublin at the height of the Bandon Valley killings appears understandable in retrospect: “The murders were obviously reprisals for the many murders of Catholics in Belfast.”¹³³ Such assertions, however, were largely speculative.

More significantly, in 1936 former Cork No. 3 Brigade commander Tom Hales resigned from the Fianna Fáil party following a government crackdown on the IRA. The editor of the *Irish Press* suggested that Hales’s resignation was curious given his laudable response to the “Dunmanway killings” in Cork in 1922. Defending his actions, Hales pointed out: “The execution of just and strong moral action by the forces of the 3rd Cork Brigade under my command was taken in the face of an epidemic of burnings and shootings in the North and the reprisals in the South.”¹³⁴ Hales’s association of Ulster sectarian violence with the Bandon Valley killings implies an anxiety about sectarian unrest in his area. Undoubtedly, the Northern situation heightened ethno-religious tensions in West Cork and other parts of Ireland. Nevertheless, no evidence has yet emerged that events in the North provided a primary motive for the West Cork killings.¹³⁵

CONTEXTS AND EXPLANATIONS

Another set of killings some distance from Dunmanway further ratcheted up the tension. On the same day that the Hornibrooks and Captain Woods were abducted, the IRA in Macroom secretly arrested three British army intelligence officers and their driver roughly 20 kilometers from Ballygroman. Captains Robert Hendy, George Dove, and Kenneth Henderson were taken along with Private J. R. Brooks to a bog in nearby Kilgobnet, where all four were executed

132. *F7*, 12 May 1922.

133. *II*, 29 April 1922.

134. *Irish Press*, 6 July 1936. See also *ibid.*, 26, 30 June 1936, for the context of his response.

135. Professor Brian Walker is currently investigating this possible linkage. See Brian Walker, “Darkest Nights: Mystery of the Dunmanway Massacre,” *II*, 31 May 2014. Meda Ryan reported that a West Cork IRA veteran specifically denied any such connection. She wrote: “In conversation with Dan Cahalane it was obvious that the IRA ‘did not really know much’ about the pogroms of Catholics in the north of Ireland. ‘We had our own concerns.’” See Ryan, *Tom Barry*, 449, fn. 60.

and buried that night. Historian John Regan has clearly established that the men had been gathering intelligence that day.¹³⁶ The Seventh (Macroom) Battalion of the Cork No. 1 Brigade received telephone instructions from the brigade commander to execute the officers, two of whom were wanted for having tortured and shot republican prisoners before the Truce.¹³⁷

In contrast to Peter Hart, Regan suggests that the timing of this Macroom event may connect it with the ten Bandon Valley killings. He also assesses the possible involvement in both sets of killings of Frank Busted, the vice-commandant of the Sixth (Blarney/Donoughmore) Battalion of the Cork No. 1 Brigade.¹³⁸ Regan notes that Busted had claimed to have organized the capture of the three British intelligence officers in his account given to historian Seán O’Callaghan for the 1971 book *Execution*. That narrative erroneously locates the abduction outside Macroom and correctly names only one of the three officers.¹³⁹ There are additional question marks over this book’s reliability concerning this episode. Macroom IRA veterans do not mention Busted’s involvement or that of anyone in his battalion, and Irish Republican Police records place Busted at a court hearing in Blarney on the same day, 27 kilometers from Macroom.¹⁴⁰ Moreover, in contrast to local IRA evidence, *Execution* implies that Busted killed these officers because two of them had thrown his mother down her stairs a year earlier, resulting in her death. Yet her death certificate (with Frank Busted listed as “informant”) states that she died of chronic pneumonia and heart disease.¹⁴¹ Busted’s battalion flying column was mobilized a few days later around Macroom, but it seems unlikely that he had directly participated in the officers’ arrest or their execution.¹⁴²

136. Regan, “Bandon Valley Massacre,” 81–88.

137. Daniel Corkery’s WS 1719, 29 (BMH); James Murphy’s WS 1633, 15 (BMH); Dónal Ó hÉalaithe, ed., *Memoirs of an Old Warrior: Jamie Moynihán’s Fight for Irish Freedom, 1916–1923* (Cork: Mercier Press, 2014), 314–16.

138. Regan, “Bandon Valley Massacre,” 83–85. Stephen Howe also makes this assertion. See Howe, “Killing in Cork,” 13.

139. Sean O’Callaghan, *Execution* (London: Muller, 1974), 189–92.

140. Proceedings of Irish Republican Police Courts, Blarney, 1 Sept. 1921–22 June 1922 (Cork County Library, Cork City).

141. Death Certificate for Hanora Busted, 15 March 1921, Registered in Blarney District, Births, Deaths, and Marriages Office, Cork.

142. John Borgonovo, *The Battle for Cork: July–August 1922* (Cork: Mercier Press, 2011), 39.

Regan entertains the possibility that the captured British army officers may have implicated as informants those civilians subsequently targeted by the IRA in the Bandon Valley.¹⁴³ It should be emphasized that no available documentary evidence clearly links the Macroom and Bandon Valley killings. Most of the Bandon Valley victims were already known to the IRA. Republican testimony mentions neither cross-brigade collaboration nor incriminating information emanating from the Macroom prisoners. Seized documents would have been channelled through the IRA chain of command, from the Cork No. 1 Brigade to the Cork No. 3 Brigade, a process that would have taken far longer than the few hours that passed between the capture of the officers and the first killings in Dunmanway. More probably, events at Ballygroman early that morning (not far from the British officers' base at Ballincollig barracks) could have led to a subsequent investigation of the area by British intelligence officers. Their abduction in Macroom is unlikely to have directly influenced the subsequent ten killings, other than to increase anxiety within the IRA.

The Bandon Valley killings occurred during one of most tense times of the entire revolutionary period, as the republican movement splintered in the run-up to the Irish Civil War. During March and April 1922 the IRA fractured into three elements: first, those members supporting the Anglo-Irish Treaty and the newly established Irish Free State; second, members opposing the Treaty and against negotiating with the Free State; and third, those opposed to the Treaty but open to negotiations. Officers from the IRA's most powerful formation, the First Southern Division, led the last group, which included most but not all of County Cork's senior guerrilla fighters.¹⁴⁴

Representatives of anti-Treaty IRA units attended two conventions in the Mansion House in Dublin on 26 March and 9 April 1922 respectively. They repudiated Dáil Éireann, elected their own governing Executive, and created a new command structure headed by Chief of Staff Liam Lynch, the commander of the First Southern Division. The IRA Executive was comprised of six moderate officers from County Cork and ten militant leaders from elsewhere in the

143. Regan, "Bandon Valley Massacre," 86–88.

144. Michael Hopkinson, *Green against Green: The Irish Civil War* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1984), 93–104, 115.

country.¹⁴⁵ The Cork faction opposed proposals that might have accelerated the slide toward civil war, such as the establishment of an IRA military dictatorship.¹⁴⁶ On 14 April the IRA Executive seized the Four Courts in Dublin to house its new headquarters, and issued ultimatums to all TDs setting forth the strict conditions upon which the IRA would enter negotiations to avert civil war.¹⁴⁷ These included suspending the operations of the new Provisional Government, acknowledging military rather than civilian control of the IRA, and banning elections “while the threat of war with England exists.”¹⁴⁸ The Executive dispatched a second set of letters to TDs on 25 April, describing its offer as “an opportunity, probably the last,” of “saving the country from civil war.”¹⁴⁹ Armed clashes between National Army soldiers and IRA troops broke out that same week in Mullingar and Kilkenny.¹⁵⁰ The unevenly observed truce with crown forces was beginning to break down.

In this crisis atmosphere peace negotiations were unilaterally opened by three of the Cork moderates on the IRA Executive: Florrie O’Donoghue (adjutant general of the anti-Treaty headquarters), Seán O’Hegarty (O/C, Cork No. 1 Brigade), and Tom Hales (O/C, Cork No. 3 Brigade). On Tuesday, 25 April (the day before Ballygroman), talks began with National Army commanders, including Michael

145. The IRA Executive members from County Cork were Liam Lynch, Seán Moylan, Liam Deasy, Tom Hales, Seán O’Hegarty, and Florrie O’Donoghue. The remaining members were Liam Mellows, Rory O’Connor, Joseph McKelvey, Ernie O’Malley, Frank Barrett, Michael Kilroy, Peadar O’Donnell, P. J. Rutledge, Seamus Robinson, and Joseph O’Connor. The new headquarters staff consisted of Liam Lynch as chief of staff and Florrie O’Donoghue as adjutant-general, with the remaining seven posts filled by militant officers. See Dorothy Macardle, *The Irish Republic* (London: Corgi Books, 1968), 694–95.

146. Florence O’Donoghue, *No Other Law: The Story of Liam Lynch and the Irish Republican Army, 1916–1923* (Dublin: Anvil Books, 1986), 250. Officially, this gathering on 9 April was a continuation of the 26 March convention that had been adjourned rather than closed.

147. Macardle, *Irish Republic*, 693; O’Donoghue, *No Other Law*, 227–28. Cork No. 1 Brigade commander Seán O’Hegarty offered to resign from the Executive over the matter, but his resignation was not accepted. For details, see Florrie O’Donoghue’s Notes, MS 31,186 (NLI).

148. Macardle, *Irish Republic*, 694–95.

149. *Ibid.*, 695.

150. *IT*, 27 April 1922, 1, 3 May 1922.

Collins and Richard Mulcahy.¹⁵¹ These negotiations continued for the next week and coincided with the killing spree in West Cork. On Monday, 1 May (two days after the last killing), six senior anti-Treaty officers (including Hales, O’Hegarty, and O’Donoghue) called on the IRA to recognize the Treaty and to serve under a coalition government representing both sides of the divide.¹⁵² Three days later, IRA Chief of Staff Liam Lynch signed a truce with National Army Chief of Staff Eoin O’Duffy.¹⁵³ In mid-May Michael Collins and Eamon de Valera negotiated their “election pact,” which promised a cross-party coalition government following the June general election. More secretly, both sides of the military divide agreed to a joint invasion of Northern Ireland, to be spearheaded by Cork officers.¹⁵⁴

Opposition to the peace strategy on the IRA Executive, however, caused the three moderates Seán O’Hegarty, Florrie O’Donoghue, and Tom Hales to resign their Executive positions in May. They were replaced by three hardliners, one of whom was Tom Barry.¹⁵⁵ The “Army Unification Agreement” signed on 26 May split the anti-Treaty IRA along moderate and militant lines at its third convention on 14 June. Tom Barry and two unnamed Cork No. 3 Brigade delegates were the only representatives from the First Southern Division to oppose the peace initiative. The hardliners formed a new IRA command headquarters to rival Liam Lynch’s, as the anti-Treaty IRA briefly split in two.¹⁵⁶ The Bandon Valley killings thus occurred at a crucial time when senior moderate officers were desperate to avoid a major fracture within the anti-Treaty IRA. Such divisions also threatened the precarious consensus nearly achieved with their pro-Treaty counterparts. Any punishment of the Bandon Valley killers had the

151. For contemporary details of the negotiations, see Florrie O’Donoghue’s Notes, MS 31,186 and MS 31,187 (NLI).

152. See “The National Situation—Army Officers’ Deputation,” in *Dáil Éireann Debates*, vol. 2, no. 7 (3 May 1922), col. 8.

153. O’Donoghue, *No Other Law*, 236–37.

154. For details, see Ernie O’Malley Notebooks for interviews with Stephen O’Neill, P17b/112; Billy Sullivan, P17b/111; Jack Fitzgerald, P17B/112; and “Moss” (Maurice) Donegan, P17b/108 (UCDA). See also List of Cork IRA Officers Sent to Ulster in 1922, MS 31,427 (1) (NLI).

155. O’Donoghue, *No Other Law*, 227–28.

156. Seán O’Hegarty’s Notes of June 1922 IRA Convention Vote, MS 31,249 (3) (NLI); Tom Barry to Military Service Registration Board, 29 Dec. 1939 (MSP 34-REF 57456, MSPC, MA).

potential to wreck a national agreement at the precise moment of its implementation. This consideration possibly explains the overwhelming silence within the Cork IRA surrounding the April killings, as well as the lack of any known IRA punishment for what appeared to be highly questionable actions taken without brigade sanction.

The high turnover of the Cork No. 3 Brigade leadership almost certainly contributed to the egregious disciplinary breakdown of April 1922. By then a series of personnel changes had disrupted the established military hierarchy. Brigade commander Liam Deasy had been promoted in July 1921 to vice-commander of the First Southern Division. His successor Seán Lehane remained in the position until January 1922, when Tom Hales, the original brigade commander, was released from prison. (Seán Lehane appears to have left West Cork prior to the April killings.)¹⁵⁷ Though Tom Hales had helped to establish the Irish Volunteers in West Cork, he could no longer rely on the support of his brother Seán Hales, a pro-Treaty TD who had commanded the First (Bandon) Battalion. Owing to his Treaty stance, Seán Hales seems to have been replaced by Michael O'Neill as the Bandon Battalion commander prior to the latter's death at Ballygro-man.¹⁵⁸ Seán Hales apparently brought with him the pro-Treaty Ballinadee Company, which had earlier been a power base for both him and his brother Tom.¹⁵⁹ Thus at the time of the Bandon Valley episode Tom Hales's leadership position had been considerably weakened. The Cork No. 3 leadership cadre was further diluted by the expansion of the First Southern Division headquarters at Mallow, the creation of a new Cork No. 5 Brigade (centered around the greater Beara peninsula area), and the selection of half a dozen senior West Cork officers to participate in the joint invasion of Ulster that May.¹⁶⁰

157. *II*, 10 May 1922; British Intelligence File on John Lehane, ca. 1922, WO 35/207 (TNA); Seán Lehane to Military Service Pension Board, 7 March 1935 (MS 31,340, NLI).

158. The designation of O'Neill as "Acting Commandant" suggests that his appointment was contingent on whether or not Seán Hales returned to the anti-Treaty republican fold.

159. First Battalion Strength on the Outbreak of the Civil War, RO 47, MSPC (MA). For a list of company strengths in the First Battalion, Cork No. 3 Brigade, that includes 1 January and 1 June 1922, see Cork No. 3 Brigade Organiser's Report, ca. Aug. 1922 (Captured Documents, CW/CAPT/003/2/01, MA).

160. Ernie O'Malley Notebook, Interviews with Stephen O'Neill, Billy Sullivan, Jack Fitzgerald, and "Moss" Donegan, MS 31,427 (1) (NLI); Intelligence File on

Furthermore, a new power center had emerged in the Cork No. 3 Brigade, formed by young mid-level officers who had graduated through the ranks of the brigade flying column. Possessing impressive fighting records and closely associated with Tom Barry, their number included Pete Kearney (Dunmanway), Mick Crowley (Kilbritten), Jack Hennessy (Ballineen), and the Clonakilty trio Stephen O'Neill, John "Flyer" Nyhan, and Jim "Spud" Murphy. They fit into historian Joost Augusteijn's description of IRA members who had left their work and home lives and embraced full-time service, which he argues increased their militancy.¹⁶¹ Most of these IRA officers were personally affected by the harsh British counterinsurgency campaign waged in West Cork. For example, in Kilbritten police had fired into the bedroom of Mick Crowley's parents, demolished their shop, and set fire to the Crowley home, allegedly with the family locked inside. Soldiers had savagely beaten his brother, Denis "Sonny" Crowley, and shot dead an elderly uncle-in-law.¹⁶² Similar violence had been inflicted on IRA officers and their families in Dunmanway and Ballineen.¹⁶³ Crown-force lorries often carried as hostages republicans and their family members.¹⁶⁴ The Auxiliary Division's "K" Company was transferred to Dunmanway after its infamous "burning of Cork" in December 1920 (figure 9), and one of its members almost immediately killed the elderly parish priest of Dunmanway, Canon Thomas Magner, and a young parishioner named Tadhg Crowley. The members of this company had one of the worst reputations for ill-discipline within the RIC Auxiliary Division in Ireland and made

John Lehane, WO 35/207 (TNA). By July 1922 only five members of the fifteen-man brigade staff held the same positions that they had occupied in July 1921. See the Brigade Staff Lists of First Critical Date (11 July 1921) and Second Critical Date (1 June 1922), Cork III Brigade GHQ, RO 46, MSPC (MA).

161. Joost Augusteijn, *From Public Defiance to Guerrilla Warfare: The Experience of Ordinary Volunteers in the Irish War of Independence, 1916–1921* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1996), 340.

162. Mary Walsh's WS 556, 5; Mick Crowley's WS 1603, 9, 14–16 (BMH); Barry, *Guerrilla Days*, 212.

163. Patrick O'Brien's WS 812, 27; Ned Young's WS 1402, 21 (BMH).

164. For examples, see Denis Lordan's WS 470, 22; Denny Mullane's WS 789, 20; Annie O'Brien's WS 805, 23; William Desmond's WS 832, 41–43, 50; Ned Young's WS 1402, 21; Michael Burke's WS 1424, 28–29; John Kelleher's WS 1456, 28–29; Peter Kearney's WS 444, 6; Daniel Daly's WS 743, 8 (all BMH).



FIGURE 9. In the most destructive British reprisal of the entire War of Irish Independence, crown forces retaliated on the night of 11–12 December 1920 for a murderous IRA ambush hours earlier at Dillon’s Cross near Victoria Barracks, carrying out what became known as “the burning of Cork.” The photograph of the smoldering ruins shows gutted sections of Patrick Street, the commercial heart of Cork. The main culprits were members of “K” Company of the Auxiliary Division of the RIC (ADRIC), which had taken heavy casualties in the ambush. In the ensuing controversy British officials promptly transferred “K” Company to the workhouse at Dunmanway. There its members alienated nationalist residents of the town by further displays of violence (including murder), intimidation, and repression against both republican activists and civilians. The unit was disbanded in March 1921 and replaced by “O” Company of the ADRIC, which occupied the town until February 1922. Courtesy of the National Library of Ireland.

themselves especially hated by Dunmanway-area republicans.¹⁶⁵ Further down the Bandon Valley, the Essex Regiment prosecuted the counterinsurgency campaign in a more systematic and brutal way than their counterparts stationed to the west.¹⁶⁶ The Essex headquarters in Bandon earned a particular reputation for the grievous mistreatment of republican prisoners, including numerous murders of captured Volunteers.¹⁶⁷

In 1921, County Cork IRA officers used counterreprisals to discourage such attacks on Volunteers and their supporters. In this regard Cork republicans distinguished themselves from those of other counties by the sheer number and intensity of counterreprisals. All three IRA brigades burned loyalist homes in response to arson reprisals against their own supporters, typically targeting mansions owned by members of the Protestant gentry, who frequently had links to the British military and political elite.¹⁶⁸ This strategy, pioneered in West Cork, ultimately contributed to the suspension of

165. Patrick O'Brien's WS 812, 19, 28; Ned Young's WS 1402, 21; Ted O'Sullivan's WS 1478, 28; Seán Healy's WS 1479, 55 (all BMH). See also *II*, 16, 17, 18, 24 Dec. 1920; *CC*, 8, 12 Feb. 1921. Eight members of "K" Company were courtmartialled for assault or robbery, including one who was found guilty of murder. See *F7*, 11 March 1921; 138 Parl. Deb., H.C. (5th ser.) (28 Feb. 1921) 1406. The first anniversary of the killings of Canon Magner and Tadhg Crowley were commemorated with an anniversary Mass on Thursday, 15 December 1921, at the Catholic church in Dunmanway, where "there was a very large attendance." In addition, "the day was a strict holiday in town, all business being suspended." One local journalist observed: "Many things connected with the terror will be softened by the healing hand of time, but time shall never dull the horror and indignation that all Irishmen and Catholics, and indeed all civilised men, have felt at the dreadful murder enacted at Dunmanway on Dec. 15th, 1920." See *SS*, 31 Dec. 1921. Some four months earlier, "a very large and representative meeting of the parishioners of Dunmanway" had convened after the 12 noon Sunday Mass and formed a committee to raise funds for a memorial to the locally beloved Canon Magner. See *CCE*, 27 Aug. 1921; *SS*, 27 Aug. 1921. For reports of tensions and conflicts in the months after the Truce between the Auxiliaries in Dunmanway and its citizens or the IRA, see *II*, 7 Sept. 1921; *SS*, 8, 15 Oct. 1921.

166. Barry, *Guerilla Days*, 99; Interviews with "Moss" Donegan, P17b/108, and Tadhg O'Sullivan, P17b/108, O'Malley Notebooks (UCDA); Denis Lordan's WS 470, 19; Stephen O'Brien's WS 603, 3; William Norris's WS 595, 9 (BMH).

167. Denis Lordan's WS 470, 21; Tadhg O'Sullivan's WS 792, 7; Patrick O'Brien's WS 812, 11; Willie Desmond's WS 832, 46; Ted Hayes's WS 1575, 7; Con Flynn's WS 1621, 20; Jeremiah Deasy's WS 1738, 9 (all BMH), 9; Barry, *Guerilla Days*, 61–62, 103–4.

168. James S. Donnelly, Jr., "Big House Burnings in County Cork during the Irish Revolution, 1920–21," *Éire-Ireland* 47: 3–4 (Fall/Winter 2012): 177–80.

“official reprisals” by British forces in Cork by July 1921.¹⁶⁹ The West Cork Brigade invested more heavily in counterreprisals than parallel IRA units in other parts of the county.¹⁷⁰ Tom Barry responded to unofficial executions of IRA prisoners by the Essex Regiment with a written notification that the IRA would shoot on sight soldiers from that unit.¹⁷¹ When the British military stepped up its execution or threatened execution (through numerous death sentences) of IRA prisoners, the Cork No. 3 Brigade shot members of the crown forces out of hand and in late June seized as hostages four prominent unionists who were also government magistrates. (The Earl of Bandon was the best known).¹⁷² These prisoners were saved by the suspension of British executions and the advent of the Truce in July 1921. Thus it is clear that reprisals against the loyalist community were an established tactic within the Cork No. 3 Brigade. This unit also targeted loyalists for financial and logistical support. For example, during 1922 IRA fighters were billeted in Bandon Valley loyalist homes much more frequently than anywhere else in County Cork.¹⁷³

A reprisal explanation for the Bandon Valley killings came from one of the few IRA veterans to provide testimony about these events. Michael O’Donoghue, an engineering student at University College Cork (UCC), was attached to the “College Company” of the Cork No. 1 Brigade. He reported that he had eventually joined the Cork No. 3 Brigade engineering section under the command of his class-

169. Kara Hanley, “The IRA House Burning Campaign against the Cork Upper Classes, 1920–23” (forthcoming Ph.D. Dissertation, UCC).

170. Barry, *Guerilla Days*, 116.

171. Con Flynn’s WS 1621, 19–20; Tim Warren’s WS 1275, 13; William McCarthy’s WS 1255, 8; Denis O’Brien’s WS 1353, 10–11; Jack Hennessey’s WS 1234, 12; Daniel Canty’s WS 1619, 25 (all BMH).

172. The IRA kidnapped Lord Bandon and fellow magistrates John St. Leger Gillman of The Retreat, Clonakilty; John James Fitzpatrick of Clonakilty town; and Charles Sealy King of Richmount, Bandon. All were taken into IRA custody early on Tuesday morning, 21 June 1921. See *CE*, 23 June 1921; *IT*, 22 June, 9, 14 July, 8 Oct. 1921, 21 Jan., 6, 8 March 1922. See also James O’Mahony’s WS 560, 21; John O’Driscoll’s WS 1250, 51; Ted O’Sullivan’s WS 1478, 42; William Foley’s WS 1560, 9; Daniel Canty’s WS 1619, 34 (all BMH).

173. From a sample of IGC claims of forced billeting of IRA men in civilian homes in 1922, it has been possible to identify fifty-seven such claims as arising in County Cork. Twenty-five of those billeting claims emanated from the Bandon Valley area.

mate Mick Crowley. Though not in County Cork at the time of the killings, he described the episode as follows:

Several prominent loyalists—all active members of the Anti-Sinn Féin Society in West Cork and blacklisted as such in I.R.A. intelligence records—in Bandon, Clonakilty, Ballineen, and Dunmanway, were seized at night by armed men, taken out, and killed. Some were hung, most were shot. All were Protestants. This gave the slaughter a sectarian appearance. Religious animosity had nothing whatever to do with it. These people were done to death as a savage, wholesale, murderous reprisal for the murder of Mick O'Neill. They were doomed to die because they were listed as aiders and abettors of the British secret service, one of whom, Captain Woods, had confessed to shooting dead treacherously and in cold blood Vice-Commandant Michael O'Neill. . . .¹⁷⁴

O'Donoghue firmly dismissed a sectarian explanation of the Bandon Valley killings. He saw them firstly as a reprisal for Michael O'Neill's death and secondly as a legitimate elimination of "Anti-Sinn Féin Society" members active in 1921 and still perceived as a threat to anti-Treaty republicans. But there is reason to question O'Donoghue's understanding of the event. His Bureau of Military History testimony should be viewed critically. Untypically long and overly embroidered, it also includes fanciful stories about meeting "evil spirits" at Charlesfort in Kinsale requiring exorcism. On another occasion he reported "making love to several young ladies" in a West Cork convent.¹⁷⁵ Despite these unholy tales of the unexpected, the future Gaelic Athletic Association president claimed relatively senior IRA service in County Cork and Ulster. Yet his name is missing from all (bar one) BMH witness statements and contemporary IRA records. Though he was awarded an IRA pension, further judgment on his reliability as a witness should be postponed until the complete release of all IRA military-service pension material.¹⁷⁶ It can be confirmed, however, that O'Donoghue was indeed a member of "College Company" at UCC, which included a number of officers

174. Michael O'Donoghue's WS 174I, Part 2, 227 (BMH); Coogan, *Michael Collins*, 359; Moore, *Reminiscences and Reflections*, 279.

175. Michael O'Donoghue's WS, Part 2, 210, 216–17 (BMH).

176. Keane, *Massacre*, 256, fn. 69.

who later served in West Cork.¹⁷⁷ All that can be said with assurance is that Michael O'Donoghue was an IRA Volunteer who claimed special knowledge of the massacre.

A second rare piece of IRA testimony about this set of events could support a contrasting sectarian-reprisal explanation. This evidence comes from Denis Lordan, a senior First Battalion officer from Kilbrittain, who was closely associated with the O'Neill family and had been prominent in the Cork No. 3 Brigade flying column.¹⁷⁸ He later explained to Dr. Dorothy Stopford (a republican physician working near Kilbrittain) that following an incident during the Civil War in which IRA men had gone to seize a motorcar, one of them was killed and "our fellows took it out on the Protestants."¹⁷⁹ Peter Hart's identification of this episode as referring to the Ballygroman and Bandon Valley killings has been contested by historian Brian Murphy on the basis that these events occurred two months prior to the start of the Civil War.¹⁸⁰ While this is factually correct, contemporary definitions of when the Civil War began may have been more elastic than those now used by historians. Bureau of Military History witness statements abundantly illustrate that there is frequently a wide margin of error in the identification of dates. Moreover, an examination of Civil War republican fatalities in West Cork in 1922–23 does not reveal any IRA deaths resulting from an altercation with Protestant civilians over the seizure of a motorcar, nor any consequent vehicle-related reprisals or punishments against Protestants.¹⁸¹ The onus should now lie on those who argue against Hart's interpretation to offer a specific alternative episode to which they believe Lordan was referring. It remains unclear whether Lordan's reference extended to the three Ballygroman victims alone or to the other ten fatalities as well when he stated that his comrades "took it

177. "Flavin Notebook."

178. Denis Lordan's WS 470; William Desmond's WS 832, 14, 16; Denis Murphy's WS 1318, 10; Ted O'Sullivan's WS 1478, 36, 55; Michael Riordan's WS 1638, 6, 8, 20, 23; Seán Murphy's WS 1445, 17; Richard Russell's WS 1591, 27; Michael Crowley's WS 1603, 20–21; James Doyle's WS 1640, 3, 18, 25 (all BMH).

179. Ó Broin, *Protestant Nationalists*, 177.

180. Brian Murphy, Review of *The IRA and Its Enemies* by Peter Hart, in *The Month* (Sept.–Oct. 1998), 381–83.

181. Séamus Mac Ciarnáin, ed., *The Last Post: The Details and Stories of Republican Dead, 1913–1975*, 2nd ed. (Dublin: Cumann na n-Uaigheann Náisiúnta, 1976), 93–110.

out on the Protestants.” The use of the term Protestant rather than loyalist is noteworthy.

Michael O’Donoghue’s identification of the Bandon Valley victims as “active members of the Anti-Sinn Féin Society” supports Meda Ryan’s thesis about the event.¹⁸² Ryan suggests that seven of these ten victims (those from the Ballineen/Enniskeane district) were affiliated to the “Anti-Sinn Féin Society.” She reports that this group had been involved in the February 1921 killings of the brothers James and Timothy Coffey, both IRA Volunteers residing near Enniskeane.¹⁸³ This theory essentially maintains that the Bandon Valley civilians were killed in 1922 for their activities in the “Anti-Sinn Féin Society” during 1921. Indeed, IRA records link certain Bandon Valley loyalists to the deaths of the Coffey brothers. So were those killed in April 1922 involved in this “anti-Sinn Féin” group, as Ryan suggests?

Ryan’s theory is problematic. She cites as her primary evidence two sets of documents left by the Auxiliaries in the Dunmanway workhouse after they evacuated it early in 1922: (1) a police intelligence officer’s notebook, now referred to as the “Black and Tan Diary,” and (2) a group of documents to which she refers as “separate dossiers.” The Black and Tan diary listed four local informants, two IRA Volunteers and two civilians. Writing in 1972, local historian Florence Crowley reported that none of those named in the diary “was ever suspected in 1920 and 1921 or ever since.”¹⁸⁴ If correct, this means that no informant in the diary was a victim or intended victim in 1922.¹⁸⁵ A close analysis of the diary reveals that much of the information on IRA members came from captured IRA documents and from two tortured republican prisoners, while information from

182. Meda Ryan lists the Rev. Ralph Harbord as a fatality when in fact he was only wounded, though grievously. See Ryan, *Tom Barry*, 212; Application of Rev. Richard Harbord to IGC, 7 Nov. 1927 (CO 762/155/18, TNA); Application of Rev. Ralph Harbord to IGC, 8 Nov. 1926 (CO 762/58/15, TNA). Niall Meehan has identified errors in the contemporary newspaper reporting that likely caused the confusion. See Meehan, “Distorting Irish History Two,” 5–6.

183. Ryan, *Tom Barry*, 209–13.

184. Flor Crowley, *SS*, 23 Oct. 1971.

185. Barry Keane, however, notes that one of the four informant entries states, “Sun Lodge—information Buttimer Manch—by Blackwater Bridge.” This surname is shared with the 1922 victim John Buttimer of Caher, located two kilometers from Sun Lodge, which, he argues, may have resulted in a case of mistaken identification. While possibly correct, this theory is tenuous. See Keane, *Massacre*, 159.

loyalists was less sensational than generally supposed. At best, only one Bandon Valley victim can be linked to the Black and Tan diary (Buttimer near Ballineen), and even this case is unproven. It is clear that the Black and Tan diary was irrelevant to all the other 1922 attacks, except that its exposure may have further heightened IRA anxiety about the danger from local loyalists.

That leaves as Ryan's evidence the "separate dossiers" also found in the Dunmanway workhouse. She has stated that she viewed the dossiers in 1981 while they were temporarily held by an IRA veteran living in Dunmanway.¹⁸⁶ The documents named "helpful citizens" in the locale, and among them were those shot dead in the Bandon Valley killings. Yet even if we assume that Ryan's memory of the "dossiers" is accurate, serious questions remain. What does the phrase "helpful citizens" mean? Did it apply only to persons providing information to the crown forces, or did it extend to those who were friendly but did not give information? Which of the many homes visited by the IRA in 1922 were on this list? What other names were on the list, and what was their religious composition? Ryan has implied that those sought by the IRA were "informers." We argue that some of those targeted were informers, but others could more accurately be classified as unsympathetic loyalists. There is a significant difference between those two classifications. In any case these documents are not publicly available. Unfortunately, if they cannot be reviewed, they cannot be considered as evidence in this debate.¹⁸⁷

The "Anti-Sinn Féin Society" explanation for the 1922 killings is also at variance with republican evidence. With the exception of Michael O'Donoghue's Bureau of Military History statement, IRA sources do not link the 1921 "anti-Sinn Féin" group with the civilians killed in 1922. No such counterintelligence justification emerged from the IRA at the time of the 1922 killings. A contemporary IRA intelligence file from 1921 named up to nine other Bandon Valley unionists associated with either the anti-Sinn Féin group, Lieutenant Colonel

186. See Meda Ryan's recent explanatory letter circa July 2014, in the "Dunmanway" section of *History Ireland's* online "Letters Extra": <http://www.historyireland.com/letters-extra/dunmanway-massacre/> (accessed 3 July 2014).

187. Ryan also refers to names mentioned in the "Tom Barry Private Papers," which also appear unavailable for public scrutiny. This evidence cannot be accepted in the debate until it is made generally available to scholars.

Peacocke, or the Valley killings of 1922; most had already fled the area by the Truce of 1921.¹⁸⁸ Indeed, it appears that senior IRA officers in the area believed that the “Anti-Sinn Féin Society” threat had been dealt with in 1921. Writing in November of that year, the First Southern Division intelligence officer Florrie O’Donoghue referred to the “strong, hostile civilian element organised in Freemason lodges” in the Cork No. 3 Brigade, but added, “Our men have a good grasp of the significance and danger of this, and so much attention has been devoted to it that its service to [the] enemy is now very slight.”¹⁸⁹ Reflecting on the conflict decades later, the former Cork No. 3 Brigade commander Liam Deasy expressed the belief that the IRA’s “vigorous action” taken against the group early in 1921 had “put an end to espionage in this valley and nipped in the bud an organisation that could have developed into a real menace.”¹⁹⁰ This evidence from Deasy, a far better informed source than Michael O’Donoghue, therefore challenges those who postulate a link between the 1921 “Anti-Sinn Féin Society” and the events in April 1922.

188. The First Southern Division intelligence list names the following persons as connected to Peacocke or to the “anti-Sinn Féin” group: George Stanley, farmer from Ballineen; John Jennings; Mr. Roycroft, manager of Farran Mills; J. H. Moren of Carrigmore; Mr. Dorman; Miss O’Neill Daunt; Captain Wilcox; Major Kirwood; Dorman Morten; and Joseph Hosford of Shanaway, Ballineen. See “IRA Intelligence Reports on [Accused] Civilians,” ca. 1921 (MA). This list contains a number of misspellings and perhaps some other inaccuracies. “J. H. Moren” was James H. Morton of Carrigmore, a nineteen-room mansion in the Ballineen district; he was a gentleman farmer and a member of the executive committee of the Cork branch of the Irish Unionist Alliance. See Donnelly, “Big House Burnings,” 156. One night in mid-October 1920 Volunteers “cast bombs into his garage and outhouses, completely destroying them by fire.” See *CE*, 20 Oct. 1920. “Major Kirwood” was probably Colonel S. F. Kirkwood of Cappoquin, Co. Waterford. He was the head land agent of the Dromana estate (the Villiers-Stuart property) in Waterford from 1908 to about 1921. “Miss O’Neill Daunt” was Dorothea O’Neill Daunt of Kilcaskin Castle in the Ballineen district. Her brother-in-law was Captain Francis Goring Wilmer—probably the “Captain Wilcox” named above. Kirkwood and Wilmer seem to have been guests at Kilcaskin Castle during an IRA arms raid there in 1920. See Patrick O’Brien’s *WS 812*, 12–13 (BMH).

189. First Southern Division Intelligence Officer’s Report, 1921 (NLI).

190. Liam Deasy, *Towards Ireland Free: The West Cork Brigade in the War of Independence, 1917–1921* (Cork: Royal Carbery Books, 1973), 200. Tom Barry also asserted that the IRA counterintelligence killings in 1921 “had succeeded.” See Barry, *Guerilla Days*, 111.

The majority of the 1922 Bandon Valley victims appear to have been loyalists outwardly hostile to the IRA, mostly coming from the Protestant urban and rural middle classes. Of twenty households visited by the IRA during the Bandon Valley episode (or warned of the intention of the IRA to visit), thirteen can be classified as hostile loyalists (65 percent).¹⁹¹ Three of the nine households where fatalities occurred were occupied by civilians who appeared on a 1921 IRA list of suspected civilian informers.¹⁹² Nonetheless, the 1922 killings do not appear to have been a clinical IRA purge of civilian spies active in 1921. Contemporary IRA intelligence reports of suspected civilian informants in Dunmanway, Clonakilty, and Ballineen/Enniskeneane include twelve such individuals who were not touched in 1922.¹⁹³ Easy classification of the 1922 victims is therefore difficult. It also must be restated that in a number of instances the gunmen expressly sought an individual deemed hostile to the IRA, yet shot another male found in the house, either in place of or in addition to their primary target. These untargeted killings occurred in three of the nine households where fatalities occurred.¹⁹⁴ This type of violence was highly unusual for republicans in County Cork and would be consistent with a reprisal action.

191. These were the households of the following persons: in Dunmanway—James Buttimer, David Gray, Francis Fitzmaurice, James McCarthy (publican), George A. Bryan, William Jagoe, and Thomas Sullivan; in Ballineen/Enniskeneane—Alexander McKinley, John Buttimer, and James and Robert Bennett; in Clonakilty—Thomas Nagle, Henry Hoskin, Richard James Helen, and John St. Leger Gillman; and in Killowen—William Bradfield.

192. These were Francis Fitzmaurice, Alexander McKinley, and Thomas Nagle (father of Robert). See “IRA Intelligence Reports on [Accused] Civilians,” ca. 1921 (MA).

193. These were the following persons: in Dunmanway—Hanora Crowley (listed as Nora Crowley in the 1911 census), Mrs. Beamish, John Elliott, John Lordan, and John Hurley; in Ballineen/Enniskeneane—occupant of “French Bungalow,” Pierce Cotter, John Shorten, John Hosford, and Joseph Hosford; and in Clonakilty—J. Buttimer and Annie O’Mahony. Three of those named were women, whose gender would likely have protected them from IRA assassination. See First Southern Division Intelligence Officer’s Report, 1921 (NLI); “IRA Intelligence Reports on [Accused] Civilians,” ca. 1921 (MA).

194. The three instances of such killings were Richard Nagle instead of his father Thomas (Clonakilty); farm laborer James Greenfield in addition to farmer John Buttimer (Ballineen/Enniskeneane); and John Bradfield in place of his brother William (Killowen).

CONCLUSION

Three dominant potential motives have been advanced to explain the Bandon Valley killings: revenge, sectarianism, and/or the elimination of informers. The respective significance of each of these potential factors is hard to establish with any degree of confidence because the perpetrators have not been precisely identified. The new evidence presented here, however, affirms a combination of these three primary motives. The clashes between representatives of the three different strands of the debate are therefore understandable, as each contains an element of truth.

The “Bandon Valley massacre” appears to have been carried out by a faction of the Cork No. 3 Brigade acting without the sanction of its anti-Treaty leadership. The area boasted a high Protestant population relative to the rest of County Cork. It had experienced a military conflict in 1920–21 in which harsh British practitioners of counterinsurgency faced highly militarized and militant IRA units, conditioned to protecting themselves by using reprisals and counterreprisals against civilian loyalists. The scale of these 1922 attacks against Protestant civilians was unprecedented and uncharacteristic of IRA actions in County Cork throughout the revolutionary period. Victims included persons who were not initial targets; a few were unlikely to have been enemies of the IRA. The killings were selective and primarily directed against Protestant loyalists suspected of having directly supported the crown forces. Twenty-four of the at least twenty-six civilians reportedly targeted were Protestant, including all thirteen who were killed (this includes the three Ballygroman victims). Although a few Methodists could be found either among the victims or among those who escaped, we attach no special significance to their presence; most were members of the Church of Ireland.¹⁹⁵ There was no general onslaught on Protestant institutions, but the attack on the Church of Ireland rectory at Murragh and the burning of the Clonakilty Masonic lodge added further sectarian elements. There is only a miniscule mathematical possibility that all of those killed would have been Protestant by random chance, given the mixed religious composition of civilian fatalities across County Cork between 1920 and 1922.

195. Fitzpatrick, “Spectre of ‘Ethnic Cleansing,’” 5–70.

The violence occurred in an area of the Bandon Valley that had been heavily contested between the IRA and crown forces, at a time when republicans anticipated a renewal of armed conflict. An element of the Protestant civilian population in the area had previously collaborated with the crown forces. Republicans may have interpreted the shooting of senior IRA commander Michael O'Neill as evidence of continued resistance to their rule by Protestant loyalists. Thus it is possible that the subsequent killings were an attempt by an element of the IRA to achieve social control over an internal enemy in the Bandon Valley in order to prevent further collaboration.¹⁹⁶

Pro-Treaty and anti-Treaty leaders immediately and vociferously condemned these attacks, indicating that those responsible were unrepresentative of the larger republican movement. Writing in 1937, the anti-Treaty historian Dorothy Macardle clearly articulated the shame felt by republicans in their aftermath; the socialist republican Jim Lane in 1972 described the West Cork event as “a pogrom every bit as vicious as any one in Belfast.”¹⁹⁷ In his 1990 biography of Michael Collins, Tim Pat Coogan characterized the Bandon Valley killings as one of the worst outbreaks of sectarian homicide in Ireland during this period. Peter Hart's conclusion that the killings were sectarian therefore echoed a perception that had been circulating among historians, republicans, and unionists since April 1922. This article has found no sound basis to alter that interpretation.

A key finding of this article is that the share of Protestant civilian fatalities in West Cork was far higher from 1920 to mid-July 1922 than in County Cork as a whole. Moreover, the Bandon Valley experience of April 1922 was unprecedented, exceptional, and highly localized. Hart's conclusion that it marked a culmination of sectarianism within the nationalist revolution in County Cork therefore requires considerable qualification.¹⁹⁸ The sectarian aspect of these events cannot be taken to characterize the revolution in County Cork or the wider experience nationally. Even within West Cork most of the killings

196. For a broader discussion of such dynamics, see Stathis Kalyvas, *The Logic of Violence in Civil Wars* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

197. Jim Lane, *On the IRA: Belfast Brigade Area* (Cork: Cork Workers' Club, 1972), 6. This pamphlet is available online on the Irish Left Archive at <http://www.clirishleftarchive.org>.

198. Peter Hart, *IRA and Its Enemies*, 292.

were confined to the Bandon Valley. The imbalance in Hart's analysis arises because the case studies in his book focus largely on one part of West Cork (even if a very important part). The unprecedented and singular nature of the "massacre" was best captured by Seán Buckley, the Cork No. 3 Brigade intelligence officer. He reassured his Protestant neighbors at the height of the crisis: "This wave of madness, which they all deplored, is over now, and there is no danger of its reoccurrence."¹⁹⁹ His comments were prescient because nothing like this spate of killings was attempted again, either in the Bandon Valley or elsewhere in the South of Ireland.

Not a single gunman was ever found guilty of participating in the killings, nor is there any evidence that the IRA disciplined anyone involved. Books written about the period by Cork IRA historians Tom Barry, Liam Deasy, and Florrie O'Donoghue entirely ignore the episode.²⁰⁰ These homicides did not find a place in the official chronology of events in the military-pension administrative files of the Cork No. 3 Brigade, nor were they discussed in Ernie O'Malley's interviews with IRA veterans or in the scores of West Cork BMH witness statements, with one notable and untypical exception already mentioned. This occlusion indicates a general (though not universal) reluctance among Cork republicans to record the grisly episode as part of the history of the revolution. Clearly, it was something to be forgotten.

Curiously, this amnesia can still be detected on the different sides of the historical divide in this debate. One recurring issue experienced during this investigation was the withholding or selective availability of relevant sources in both private and public collections. Historians' lack of access to pertinent evidence has inhibited and ultimately stultified this debate. Arguments that the descendants of victims or perpetrators should be protected from linkage to these painful events in order to ensure social harmony are unsatisfactory. At this point the names of most suspected informers are in the public domain, and this observation applies particularly to those who were shot dead. Since

199. *CE*, 9 May 1922.

200. Barry, *Guerilla Days*; Liam Deasy, *Brother against Brother* (Cork: Mercier Press, 1998); O'Donoghue, *No Other Law*. Senior Cork No. 1 Brigade officers also appear to have repressed any memories of the 1922 Macroom killings recounted above. See Patrick Twohig, *Green Tears for Hecuba: Ireland's Fight for Freedom* (Cork: Tower Books, 1994), 343.

these events are now three generations removed from us, establishing the unvarnished truth must remain the paramount objective of historians and of those whose responsibility it is to facilitate their work.

It may be asked why the “Bandon Valley massacre” has generated some of the stormiest debates in recent Irish historiography, given that it lies between two far more significant events: the Irish War of Independence and Civil War. On the one hand, the “massacre” was seen as a shameful and exceptional episode that tarnished the non-sectarian tradition of Irish republicanism. This may explain attempts to exclude it from the official history of the revolution. For many unionists, on the other hand, it was the exception that allowed them to argue that the IRA’s campaign in the Irish revolutionary period was as sectarian as the recent Northern Ireland troubles, thereby sullying the birth of independent Ireland. The “massacre” has therefore been viewed through the lens of recent ethno-religious and political conflict in Ulster, with its questions about sectarianism and the legitimacy of violence to achieve political ends. The polarization of the historiography of the “massacre” arises out of the long-standing political conflict between the two dominant ideologies on the island—nationalism and unionism. Far larger questions in Irish history about sectarianism and violence have overshadowed the intricate, localized circumstances of West Cork and moved the debate far beyond where the River Bandon flows.