**Gerard Murphy response to Regan with the following email discussion below**

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**[The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde](http://year-of-disappearances.blogspot.co.uk/2012/02/strange-case-of-dr-jekyll-and-mr-hyde.html)**

**The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde**

*John Regan, Peter Hart and the ‘Bandon Valley Massacre’*

By Gerard Murphy

I listened with interest recently to an interview with historian John M. Regan on Pat Kenny’s radio show in which he argued quite eloquently, it seemed to me, on the differences between academic and popular history. These arguments were further elucidated and expanded upon in a pair of articles, one in the *Journal of the Historical Society*, the other in *History Ireland*. Academic historians, according to Regan, are Dr Jekyll, using scientific methodology to sift and study the historical record, using evidence which must be verifiable, while public histories – Mr Hyde, if you like – ‘popularize the past, but are conditioned by the needs of the present’ and are not easily held to account.[[1]](file:///F:\\Website%20Material\\The%20Strange%20Case%20of%20Dr%20Jekyll%20and%20Mr%20Hyde.doc" \l "_ftn1" \o ")

I remember when I first got interested in Irish history in the 1990s – interested in the sense that I wanted to find out what *actually* happened during the revolutionary period – I was dismayed to find that many of the standard histories available, usually penned by academics, were beautifully-written, almost philosophical essays on socioeconomic issues with the dramatis personae and indeed the actual events themselves demoted to the footnotes. In other words, they were of little or no value if you wanted to find out what took place during those years. My reaction at the time was similar to that of Greil Marcus on the release of Bob Dylan’s *Self Portrait* album, a comment which I may add ‘would not be printable in a family newspaper’ to borrow a phrase. The alternatives were the older popular histories, written mostly in the 1950’s and then out of print which were often splendidly unreliable and inevitably one-sided. But at least their writers had engaged with the period – after all they had lived through it and many of them had fought in the conflict(s).

John Regan elucidated the drift to revisionism and the reasons for it, giving us a history of history, so to speak. But his scattergun approach was to open fire on everyone, from Roy Foster to Tom Garvan, from Dermot Keogh to Richard English. Clearly in John Regan’s view everybody in the Irish history academy is wrong. When you consider that many of the best writers that have come out of Ireland in the past thirty to forty years have been its historians – putting novelists and poets and indeed scientists to shame – you would expect John Regan would have some serious data to back him up.

Instead, he does a very odd thing: He turns his gun on Peter Hart and more specifically on Hart’s 1998 book *The IRA and its Enemies* and, more specifically again, on one chapter in that book, the one that deals with the Bandon valley murders of April 1922, sometimes referred  to as the Dunmanway massacre.[[2]](file:///F:\\Website%20Material\\The%20Strange%20Case%20of%20Dr%20Jekyll%20and%20Mr%20Hyde.doc" \l "_ftn2" \o ") This is strange because if Regan is right and the practice of Irish revisionism was to avoid writing too specifically about the revolutionary years for fear of ‘incitement to hatred’ and bluffing through with a combination of socioeconomic analysis and social history then Hart did the opposite. If the ‘revisionist’ thesis was to pretend that these events hardly happened at all, Hart went out among the people, interviewing Old IRA men and elderly Protestants. Indeed he got in just in time before that generation passed on to their eternal reward. I would take issue with some of his approach and some of his conclusions but if anodyne evasion was the sin of the revisionist generation then this was not something Hart could be accused of. Indeed, in those terms – and these are the terms Regan sets out – then *The IRA and its Enemies* was the least revisionist book to come out of the academy in a generation. Hart got down and dirty with the detail. But if you pat the dog of history and it turns around and bites you then it is the history that is at issue, not the historian.[[3]](file:///F:\\Website%20Material\\The%20Strange%20Case%20of%20Dr%20Jekyll%20and%20Mr%20Hyde.doc" \l "_ftn3" \o ")

However, be all that as it may, what if Dr Regan is correct? His basic argument is that Hart’s research is flawed because he was guilty of ‘elision’, that is to say of ‘ignoring problematic evidence’ when it did not suit his thesis – his thesis according to Regan being that the Bandon valley massacre was primarily motivated by sectarianism. ‘Others said that the killing had nothing to do with religion and everything to do with spying against the IRA. Hart dismissed this,’ Regan states.[[4]](file:///F:\\Website%20Material\\The%20Strange%20Case%20of%20Dr%20Jekyll%20and%20Mr%20Hyde.doc" \l "_ftn4" \o ") Now if this is true it is a very serious allegation. If Hart ignored evidence that those shot were ‘spies’ or ‘informers’ then he would indeed be guilty of ‘elision’ and worse than that, he would be guilty of gross manipulation of data.

So what does John Regan say about the killings in the chapter of his book that deals with them? Broadly speaking, he claims that those killed – they were all Protestants – were simple reprisals for the shooting dead of Commandant Michael O’Neill of the IRA by an ex-British army officer Herbert Woods. O’Neill was part of an IRA group who broke into the home of Thomas Hornibrook, a Cork Protestant and loyalist, and Woods’s father-in-law, on the night of 25/26 April 1922. This was nine months after the cessation of hostilities between the IRA and British forces and four months after the Treaty. It was also several months before the start of the Civil War. Hart claimed the IRA was out for revenge for O’Neill’s death and that the victims were picked almost at random and shot.[[5]](file:///F:\\Website%20Material\\The%20Strange%20Case%20of%20Dr%20Jekyll%20and%20Mr%20Hyde.doc" \l "_ftn5" \o ")  Regan writes that Hart ‘vehemently argued that the massacre was bourne [sic] of sectarian hatred directed against the religious minority by Roman Catholics in the IRA’.[[6]](file:///F:\\Website%20Material\\The%20Strange%20Case%20of%20Dr%20Jekyll%20and%20Mr%20Hyde.doc" \l "_ftn6" \o ") But there was nothing ‘vehement’ in the suggestion that these people were killed as reprisals for the killing of an IRA man by a loyalist. It was merely an obvious deduction based on the evidence available. I don’t think Hart even claimed in that chapter that the massacre was born out of sectarian hatred. Indeed ‘vehement’ is hardly a word that could be applied to Hart who was the mildest of men.

Regan writes that in 2010 his interest in the case was piqued when he came across references to three British intelligence officers being kidnapped and murdered near Macroom, especially when he discovered that this event ‘coincided exactly with the ‘Bandon Valley massacre’. He goes on to point out what he believes is a discrepancy between Hart’s PhD thesis, upon which his book is based and the actual published version which appeared some years later. In his PhD thesis (TCD 1992), according to Regan, Hart ‘accepted’ that Frank Busteed, a well-known gunman and member of the Cork No 1 Brigade, who had carried out many killings during the War of Independence and the Civil War, was involved in the massacre. When the book came out, ‘references to Busteed’s involvement were deleted’. Regan goes on to accuse Hart of deliberately leaving out any references to Busteed’s alleged involvement in the massacre on the basis that, because Busteed was an atheist and his father a Protestant, the charge of sectarian killing would not stick if Busteed was one of the killers.

Regan goes on to claim that it was very odd that Hart did not link the massacre in the Bandon valley with the kidnapping and execution of the three British IOs especially since they took place during the same week and since one of the officers, Robert [*sic*] Hendy ‘was Major (later Field Marshall) Bernard Montgomery’s battalion intelligence officer and among the most senior ranking intelligence officers killed in the period’. While Hart acknowledges that Busteed was involved in their murder, ‘nowhere in this massacre chapter does Hart discuss the possibility that events along the Bandon Valley were connected by Busteed to those around Macroom... It was this “elision” that allowed Hart to publish his unambiguous narrative of sectarian massacre.’ Regan’s essential thesis is that it is likely that it was information extracted from the three officers at Macroom that led to the killings in the Bandon valley and that a list of ‘informers’ was extracted from the officers and that those killed in Dunmanway, Ballineen, Bandon and Clonakilty were on that list. In other words, the Protestant men and boys shot during the last week of April 1922 were shot because they were spies. Hart is accused of deliberately ignoring this connection.

He also accused Hart of a an even graver ‘elision’ when he claims that he also deliberately left out a paragraph from the British army’s intelligence report, published and distributed internally after the conflict was over as part of ‘A Record of the Rebellion in 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 was in the Bandon valley 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 it proved almost impossible to protect those brave men, many of whom were murdered while almost all suffered grave material loss.[[7]](file:///F:\\Website%20Material\\The%20Strange%20Case%20of%20Dr%20Jekyll%20and%20Mr%20Hyde.doc" \l "_ftn7" \o ")

Regan states that this is a direct reference to the Bandon valley killings[[8]](file:///F:\\Website%20Material\\The%20Strange%20Case%20of%20Dr%20Jekyll%20and%20Mr%20Hyde.doc" \l "_ftn8" \o ") and since this is widely regarded as the most reliable source from the British side of the intelligence war Hart is accused of again ‘ignoring problematic evidence’ by failing to quote this in the context of the events of 25-29 April 1922 – especially since he quotes it elsewhere. (He edited the publication of the report in 2002.) All in all, when taken at face value, Regan’s arguments might appear to add up to a serious claim against Hart’s objectivity. But then Regan goes on to broaden his argument, suggesting that there is in effect a conspiracy among academic historians to support Hart’s ‘dubious’ analysis, while ignoring his own alternative view. Regan claimed, in an interview with Justine McCarthy last September, that academic historians turn a blind eye to Hart’s ‘elisions’ because it suits them to promote a so-called ‘sectarian’ view of the conflict.[[9]](file:///F:\\Website%20Material\\The%20Strange%20Case%20of%20Dr%20Jekyll%20and%20Mr%20Hyde.doc" \l "_ftn9" \o ") ‘The evidence’, he said later, ‘is like a big bowl of alphabet soup from which we only choose letters spelling the words we want – the rest we leave behind. If nobody notices, or notices and stays dumb, we are free to write as we please.’[[10]](file:///F:\\Website%20Material\\The%20Strange%20Case%20of%20Dr%20Jekyll%20and%20Mr%20Hyde.doc" \l "_ftn10" \o ") In other words, almost the entire academic community are part of a quiet conspiracy silently backing Hart’s analysis and ignoring any alternative viewpoint.

So how does Regan’s alternative analysis stand up to scrutiny?

Well, let’s begin with the last point. Regan claims that Hart deliberately neglected to quote the British army intelligence report in connection with the Bandon valley murders because if he had done so it would have effectively stated that they were ‘informers’. Yet the report states that it was Protestant farmers who gave information, while all but three of the victims of the massacre were townspeople or villagers. But is the intelligence report a veiled reference to the killings of April 1922 and why did Hart not quote it in the context of the killings? Well, the answer to that is very simple: the intelligence report could not have referred to the Bandon valley massacre because it was written *before* these events took place.[[11]](file:///F:\\Website%20Material\\The%20Strange%20Case%20of%20Dr%20Jekyll%20and%20Mr%20Hyde.doc" \l "_ftn11" \o ") The reference to Protestant farmers in the intelligence report refers to people such as Warren Peacocke and others who were shot during the War of Independence or shortly afterwards for helping the British. It is Regan who is guilty of ‘elision’ in this regard for ignoring Hart’s statement that the report was written in early 1922 and for failing to check up the date of its publication. In other words, the report is a red herring as far as the events of late April 1922 are concerned, other than to tar those murdered in April 1922 with the same brush. On the matter of ‘informers’, the IRA in early 1922 had compiled a list of people they believed to have given information locally. None of the victims of the April 1922 killings were on that list, while the four spies named on the notorious Auxiliary document (including one Protestant) found in Dunmanway workhouse after the Auxiliaries departed were never touched.[[12]](file:///F:\\Website%20Material\\The%20Strange%20Case%20of%20Dr%20Jekyll%20and%20Mr%20Hyde.doc" \l "_ftn12" \o ")

So what about the connection to Frank Busteed? If Hart ‘accepted’ that Busteed had been involved in the killings when he wrote his PhD in 1992 why did he change his mind by the time the book came out in 1998? The answer to that, I’m afraid, is also pretty simple: Hart learned a lot about the conflict in West Cork in the intervening years. Busteed’s alleged involvement comes from his statement to Ernie O’Malley that ‘we shot 5 to 6 loyalists, Protestant farmers, as reprisals’.[[13]](file:///F:\\Website%20Material\\The%20Strange%20Case%20of%20Dr%20Jekyll%20and%20Mr%20Hyde.doc" \l "_ftn13" \o ") Yet it is clear from the context that Busteed was referring in this instance to executions carried out in Rylane, (in the 1st Brigade area in mid-Cork), not in the Bandon valley. Local historians in the Donoghmore/Rylane area are well aware that these men were shot and buried in their area. My view is that Hart only became aware of this in the intervening years.[[14]](file:///F:\\Website%20Material\\The%20Strange%20Case%20of%20Dr%20Jekyll%20and%20Mr%20Hyde.doc" \l "_ftn14" \o ") Between 1992 and 1998 Hart carried out a number of interviews in West Cork. In those he almost certainly discovered the real identity of the killers. Also Busteed, who gave a substantial account of his activities to Sean O’Callaghan, and a shorter account to Ernie O’Malley, does not mention that he ever carried out any activities in the 3rd Brigade area, though he detailed almost everything else.[[15]](file:///F:\\Website%20Material\\The%20Strange%20Case%20of%20Dr%20Jekyll%20and%20Mr%20Hyde.doc" \l "_ftn15" \o ")

But Regan’s most important point is the suggestion that it was information extracted from the three intelligence officers who were captured and executed in Macroom on the same week that led to the killings. How does this perfectly plausible thesis stand up to scrutiny and why will academic historians not accept it? What about Robert [*sic*] Hendy, who according to Regan was one of Montgomery’s battalion intelligence officer and ‘among the most senior ranking intelligence officers killed in the period’? Surely someone of such prominence might indeed know the names of informants in Co Cork? In his talk in Trinity in September 2011 Regan referred to him as a Captain Hendy. Yet Hendy was a mere lieutenant with a temporary appointment as captain. Far from being ‘among the most senior ranking intelligence officers killed in the period’ and ‘one of the most important enemies of the IRA in Co Cork during the War of Independence’   Hendy was of the same rank as most of the other officers who were shot for intelligence work. He was not even the most senior ranking I/O killed in that part of Co Cork.[[16]](file:///F:\\Website%20Material\\The%20Strange%20Case%20of%20Dr%20Jekyll%20and%20Mr%20Hyde.doc" \l "_ftn16" \o ") And his name was not Robert Hendy but Ronald Alexander Hendy, something Regan could have discovered simply by googling him.[[17]](file:///F:\\Website%20Material\\The%20Strange%20Case%20of%20Dr%20Jekyll%20and%20Mr%20Hyde.doc" \l "_ftn17" \o ")

But these are relatively minor issues. What is the likelihood that it was information extracted from the three that led to the West Cork killings? The timeline here is important. The entire massacre began on the night of 25/26 April when an IRA raiding party had one of its members, Michael O’Neill, shot dead while breaking into the home of Thomas Hornibrook near Ovens in the Lee valley. Hornibrook, his son and son-in-law (who pulled the trigger) were subsequently executed. The next night, April 26/27, the first of the Dunmanway murders took place, when James Buttimer, Francis Fitzmaurice and David Gray, were shot dead on their doorsteps. The shootings started just after midnight. The party who shot these men were also went looking for several other Protestant men who lived in the town would have shot another, George ‘Appy’ Bryan, only that he managed to escape. The remainder of the 13 killings took place over the following nights further east along the Bandon valley and in Clonakilty. For good measure, the IRA also came looking for former Crown solicitor Jasper Travers Wolfe and his cousin William Wood in Skibbereen on the evening of 27 April but, lucky for them, they were not at home.[[18]](file:///F:\\Website%20Material\\The%20Strange%20Case%20of%20Dr%20Jekyll%20and%20Mr%20Hyde.doc" \l "_ftn18" \o ") William Perrott and Arthur Travers of Clonakilty were also to have been shot that night but managed to escape.[[19]](file:///F:\\Website%20Material\\The%20Strange%20Case%20of%20Dr%20Jekyll%20and%20Mr%20Hyde.doc" \l "_ftn19" \o ")

The British IOs were captured in Macroom on Wednesday, April 26, the day *after* the events at Ovens. It appears they arrived in Macroom around 1.00 pm, went to a local hotel for lunch and were captured at some stage after 4.00-4.30 pm.[[20]](file:///F:\\Website%20Material\\The%20Strange%20Case%20of%20Dr%20Jekyll%20and%20Mr%20Hyde.doc" \l "_ftn20" \o ") Accounts vary as to why they were in the town: in one, they were on a fishing trip, in another they were on their way to Bantry and had dropped into Macroom for lunch. There is no question though from the British army inquiry onto the killings that they were on an intelligence-gathering mission.[[21]](file:///F:\\Website%20Material\\The%20Strange%20Case%20of%20Dr%20Jekyll%20and%20Mr%20Hyde.doc" \l "_ftn21" \o ")

John Regan’s contention is that information was extracted from the three under interrogation and that this led to the killings that began in Dunmanway that night. This means that the city IRA would have to get their interrogation team out to Macroom from Cork after 4.00pm, capture the officers, grill them by whatever means necessary.[[22]](file:///F:\\Website%20Material\\The%20Strange%20Case%20of%20Dr%20Jekyll%20and%20Mr%20Hyde.doc" \l "_ftn22" \o ") The officers would then have to reveal the names within a couple of hours of being caught. Presumably this would have had to have been relayed back to IRA headquarters in Cork where a decision would then have to be taken to shoot those whose names were so gathered. Those who would carry out the killings would then have to get to Dunmanway, find the homes of the victims in the middle of the night – as well as those of the other would-be victims – and begin the shooting. And all before 12.15am when the first murder took place.

It is possible of course that members of the 1st Brigade got the information from the British officers, drove directly to Dunmanway – which according to Regan is only ten miles away – try driving it; it is twice as far – identified the homes of the victims and had them shot. So we have to look at it in a little more detail. There are three versions of the Macroom episode in circulation. The first came from Frank Busteed in which he claimed the officers were shot by himself (accompanied by the Gray brothers and ‘Sandow’ Donovan) because one of them was believed to have been Lieut. Vining, the intelligence officer of the Manchester Regiment based at Ballincollig whom Busteed blamed for throwing his mother down the stairs during a raid in 1921 thereby causing her death. According to Busteed, his own brother Bill, who was stationed in the British army at Ballincollig barracks, saw the officers head off with fishing gear, contacted Frank who in turn contacted’ Sandow’ and the Grays who then set off in search of the officers. They were discovered drinking in a pub near Macroom. In this version of events, the IRA men joined the Englishmen for a few drinks – Busteed believing he had Vining cornered – before they took them into the countryside and executed them immediately along with their driver - and their dog.[[23]](file:///F:\\Website%20Material\\The%20Strange%20Case%20of%20Dr%20Jekyll%20and%20Mr%20Hyde.doc" \l "_ftn23" \o ")

The second version comes from Charlie Browne, adjutant of the Macroom IRA. Browne said that it was his own men who first noticed the army motor car parked at Williams’s Hotel in Macroom and established that there were officers drinking inside. The Macroom battalion then contacted Brigade HQ in Cork by telephone. HQ sent out a party to take the men into custody. The men were found ‘making their way amongst the townspeople’ and arrested sometime ‘after 4.00 or 4.30’. After another phone call, HQ sent out a ‘firing squad’ – consisting, presumably, of the Grays, Donovan and Busteed who ‘promptly’ executed them. ‘We sent out a firing squad because the Macroom lads had cold feet,’ was how ‘Sandow’ Donovan put it.[[24]](file:///F:\\Website%20Material\\The%20Strange%20Case%20of%20Dr%20Jekyll%20and%20Mr%20Hyde.doc" \l "_ftn24" \o ") Since most of the Cork IRA leadership were in Dublin that week attending a conference, Donovan was the effective leader on the ground.

The military sent a search party to Macroom the following day, when the IRA denied that the abduction took place. They returned the following day (28 April) and established that the men had in fact been kidnapped in the town. They were given a tour of Macroom Castle to find that the men were not being held there – though three other prisoners were.[[25]](file:///F:\\Website%20Material\\The%20Strange%20Case%20of%20Dr%20Jekyll%20and%20Mr%20Hyde.doc" \l "_ftn25" \o ") A prolonged stand-off took place over the following week when the British military returned with four armoured cars and eight Crossley tenders.[[26]](file:///F:\\Website%20Material\\The%20Strange%20Case%20of%20Dr%20Jekyll%20and%20Mr%20Hyde.doc" \l "_ftn26" \o ") This is famous in IRA lore when Donovan faced down a furious Brigadier (later Field Marshal) Montgomery at Macroom castle. Montgomery, believing the men were still alive, demanded their release. The British even picked up known IRA men in the city either as hostages or because they thought they might have information.[[27]](file:///F:\\Website%20Material\\The%20Strange%20Case%20of%20Dr%20Jekyll%20and%20Mr%20Hyde.doc" \l "_ftn27" \o ") Ultimately the IRA gave the British to believe that the three men had been shot as spies on 28th April and their bodies buried. The British evacuation of Cork was held up for three weeks as a result.[[28]](file:///F:\\Website%20Material\\The%20Strange%20Case%20of%20Dr%20Jekyll%20and%20Mr%20Hyde.doc" \l "_ftn28" \o ") A few years later the bodies were recovered from the lands of a farmer at Kilgobinet, Clondrohid some four miles west from Macroom where it seems the execution took place.[[29]](file:///F:\\Website%20Material\\The%20Strange%20Case%20of%20Dr%20Jekyll%20and%20Mr%20Hyde.doc" \l "_ftn29" \o ")All the British reports on the incident claim the men were held for two days before being shot.

So which version is correct? This is important because if either of the IRA’s own accounts of the story is correct, the four, Lieuts Henderson, Hendy and Dove, and their driver, a Private Brooks, were shot out of hand with only the most cursory interrogation and were unlikely to have given any list of informants. Regan states that they were held for 48 hours before being executed – which is to accept what the British were told rather than the accounts of the IRA men themselves.[[30]](file:///F:\\Website%20Material\\The%20Strange%20Case%20of%20Dr%20Jekyll%20and%20Mr%20Hyde.doc" \l "_ftn30" \o ") Yet the British admitted that they had no proof of this.[[31]](file:///F:\\Website%20Material\\The%20Strange%20Case%20of%20Dr%20Jekyll%20and%20Mr%20Hyde.doc" \l "_ftn31" \o ") If they were held for several days as the IRA told the British, they could have had such information extracted from them. But even if this was the case it is difficult to see how men from the 1st Brigade could have got down to Macroom from Cork, in the late afternoon of the 26th, carried out the necessary interrogations, made their way to Dunmanway and identify the homes of those they wanted to shoot in the middle of the night in a town they would have been unfamiliar with. But perhaps they were responsible for the killings that took place on the later nights, in Kinneagh, Ballineen, Clonakilty and near Bandon? Perhaps. But the Kinneagh assassins at least were travelling around by horse and trap, so they were moving slowly, suggesting the killers were locals.[[32]](file:///F:\\Website%20Material\\The%20Strange%20Case%20of%20Dr%20Jekyll%20and%20Mr%20Hyde.doc" \l "_ftn32" \o ")

Either way, if the IRA had interrogated the men they did not make a very good job of it. Because among the men they captured was Lieut. G. R. Dove, the IO responsible for identifying the IRA hideout in Clonmult in East Cork where an entire flying column was wiped out in February 1921. Dove was one of the men Busteed believed had thrown his mother down the stairs. Yet he does not seem to have realized he had caught Dove, insisting instead that Vining was the principal target. Since his account was first published in the early 1970s, while the men involved were still alive, it can hardly be dismissed as wholly inaccurate.[[33]](file:///F:\\Website%20Material\\The%20Strange%20Case%20of%20Dr%20Jekyll%20and%20Mr%20Hyde.doc" \l "_ftn33" \o ") The only way that information extracted from the three was what led to the murders in West Cork would be to use one British version of events and ignore others and also ignore local accounts and, since ‘Sandow’ was effectively bluffing Montgomery, the value of this is questionable to say the least. If the IRA men had extracted valuable information from the three then you would have expected that either the garrulous Busteed or the more reticent Sandow would have at least hinted at it in their accounts to Sean O’Callaghan and Eoin Neeson, respectively. It is hard to imagine that if Busteed and his fellow executioners had extracted the names of a whole ‘spy’ circle out of the three officers that they would not have said so at some point.

This brings us to the troubling point of the identity of the killers. This is a matter of some sensitivity in West Cork. But their identity is known locally and they are believed to have been locals – admittedly with connections to the 1st Cork Brigade. Peter Hart did not name them and I am not going to do so either because nobody has admitted on paper that they did it. It is quite clear, however, that in some cases their identity was known to the families of the victims – which would have been highly unlikely if they had come directly from Cork or Macroom.[[34]](file:///F:\\Website%20Material\\The%20Strange%20Case%20of%20Dr%20Jekyll%20and%20Mr%20Hyde.doc" \l "_ftn34" \o ") There is nothing to suggest that Frank Busteed was one of them.

John Regan makes a big case out of the fact that Hendy was the chief intelligence officer in Cork at the time. But this has to be seen in perspective. He was brigade I/O of an intelligence operation that had been wound down since the end of January. The British army was on the eve of departure. There was no effective intelligence presence in the South by the middle of April – something which is perfectly plain from the military reports from Cork emerging from General Macready’s office from mid-February onwards which are little better than an amalgamation of newspaper cuttings. Hendy might in charge of a skeletal staff at that stage. But most of the intelligence office in Cork had been disbanded. Major Percival who ran the intelligence office in Bandon had by now also departed. Besides, would these men have known anything about the Bandon valley? The Bandon valley was controlled by the Essex Regiment during the conflict and these were also gone. These three had served with other regiments in and around the city. (Henderson and Dove would have known the Macroom area, which was why they were picked to go that day.) Then there is the little question that, if most of the most important ‘spies’ that the British used were Catholics and often members of the IRA and their families, then why was it that only Protestant names were extracted from the captured officers?

In this scenario it is unlikely that the captured British officers, none of whom had served with the Essex Regiment who operated in West Cork, divulged the names of supposed ‘informers’. If the IRA men were not even sure of the identity of the men they had captured, how likely is it that they had managed to extract a list of their informants within hours of capturing them? And even if they had extracted a list of informants from the officers then all the evidence suggests that they would have been quietly lifted and shot rather than being the victims of an undisciplined bloodbath like the one that took place in the Bandon valley that week.[[35]](file:///F:\\Website%20Material\\The%20Strange%20Case%20of%20Dr%20Jekyll%20and%20Mr%20Hyde.doc" \l "_ftn35" \o ") Only one of those targeted during the week of the massacre claimed to have given information but he was being taken away, presumably to be executed, when he managed to escape.[[36]](file:///F:\\Website%20Material\\The%20Strange%20Case%20of%20Dr%20Jekyll%20and%20Mr%20Hyde.doc" \l "_ftn36" \o ") We don’t know if he would simply have disappeared. What we do know is that he was not shot down on his own doorstep like most of the others.

But even if the victims were all spies then why did local republicans, led by Seán Buckley, the upstanding local officer of the 3rd Brigade equate the midnight shootings with those of the Black and Tans and equivalent sectarian shootings of Catholics in Belfast? Why were nationalist and republican members of Bandon District Council able to pass resolutions to the effect that ‘it was up to every man, both civilian and soldier, to hunt down and trace those night murderers.’ Why did Tom Hales, the commandant of the 3rd Brigade threaten the perpetrators with summary execution if there was a repeat of the killings? At a meeting of the same Council, of which Michael O’Neill’s brother was a member, held a fortnight later, two votes of sympathy were passed: To the O’Neill family for the loss of their son, but also ‘to the relatives of those who lost their lives under such regrettable circumstances. The fact that they were Protestants is significant. During the recent troubles many of them had sheltered our brave men from the fury of British assassins.’ Seán Buckley went on to state that he could bear personal testimony to this: ‘many of the men who were most wanted in that strenuous time were sheltered and supported by their Protestant neighbours and he would like that to be generally known, because there was, he was sorry to say, a sort of tradition that because people were Protestant they are of necessity anti-national… he would like it known that if any of our people had still it in their minds any shadow of doubt as to the loyalty if those people to the Republic that they should disabuse themselves of it.’[[37]](file:///F:\\Website%20Material\\The%20Strange%20Case%20of%20Dr%20Jekyll%20and%20Mr%20Hyde.doc" \l "_ftn37" \o ") (It should also be pointed out, by the way, that Cork County Council offered its sympathies to the O’Neill family only and that the *Cork Examiner* never even reported the killings – which says quite a lot about attitudes in Cork at the time.)

It seems to me that Peter Hart’s thesis – which I also question by the way – that the Dunmanway killings were simple reprisals for the shooting of Michael O’Neill, is a lot more plausible than Regan’s above.[[38]](file:///F:\\Website%20Material\\The%20Strange%20Case%20of%20Dr%20Jekyll%20and%20Mr%20Hyde.doc" \l "_ftn38" \o ") After all, Michael O’Neill was the only Volunteer to be shot dead by a Cork unionist. In IRA eyes this amounted to an appalling outrage. Michael O’Neill’s colleagues in the 3rd Brigade were hardly going to sit back and do nothing about it. Jack Buttimer, who was close to those alleged to have carried out the killings said: ‘the Dunmanway people were against us, very strongly against us in the town, but there were certain families loyal, who were the truly good ones in the Tan war’.[[39]](file:///F:\\Website%20Material\\The%20Strange%20Case%20of%20Dr%20Jekyll%20and%20Mr%20Hyde.doc" \l "_ftn39" \o ") A disproportionately high number of Protestants were shot by the IRA across the country, most of whom were almost certainly innocent, though no doubt a minority did pass on information. I would argue that many were shot merely for being perceived as being ‘loyal’ or, in the months before the Truce, out of the need to put pressure on the British in the face of British military superiority. People like Seán Buckley and Tom Hales could not be described as sectarian. The Sinn Fein leadership always tried distance itself from the anti-Protestant sentiments associated with the AOH and elements within Home Rule nationalism. Richard Mulcahy refused to go along with 1st Southern Division demands that Freemasons and other loyalists be shot as reprisals for British execution of IRA men.[[40]](file:///F:\\Website%20Material\\The%20Strange%20Case%20of%20Dr%20Jekyll%20and%20Mr%20Hyde.doc" \l "_ftn40" \o ") Hales’s men released all their loyalist – mostly Protestant – hostages after the Truce. The gratitude of West Cork Protestants to Buckley was such that for many years afterwards they voted for him and, by extension, for Fianna Fáil. But describing Protestant victims of shootings as ‘spies’ without evidence to support it is itself a form of retrospective sectarianism, even if it is often disguised by reams of spurious erudition. There is something disturbing, if not malevolent, about the way Hart has been attacked since his death on the basis of a handful of footnote errors and the alleged ‘elisions’ outlined above. Reading some of the commentary that has come out on this subject – a veritable Tower of Babel of inaccurate and mendacious distortion - you would be forgiven for thinking that there is a lot more of this kind of thing going on now than was going on then and that the ‘sectarianism’ such commentators decry is, often as not, in the eye of the beholder.

It is hard to understand why a professional historian like John Regan would put his name to such an amalgam of bluffing and dissimulation. There is something terribly sad about this. Why would such an obviously intelligent man let himself wide open to refutation by failing to check even the simplest facts? It beggars belief that he did not at least get the details right before going on lecture tours and talking to journalists and attempting to carry out what is in effect a character assassination of Hart. Such are the resources now available online that he could have checked most of these points without ever even leaving his desk. Whether he let his inner Mr Hyde completely get the better of his Dr Jekyll is a moot point. It seems to me that he is merely a mouthpiece for the kind of politically-motivated historical distortion which in recent years has greeted every published account of the travails suffered by Southern Protestants during the revolutionary period. There is a lot of slippery footwork going on here: ‘Hart’s interpretation is of course valid, mostly it is factual, but what it in doubt now is whether it is historical.’ [[41]](file:///F:\\Website%20Material\\The%20Strange%20Case%20of%20Dr%20Jekyll%20and%20Mr%20Hyde.doc" \l "_ftn41" \o ") This statement of Regan’s, I’m afraid, says it all.

For this is the second attempt in the last few years to try to tar the victims of the Bandon massacre with the label of ‘spy’ – which they were not even labelled with at the time. (The first was based on equally spurious evidence – the suggestion that they were named on the Auxiliary dossier that was found in Dunmanway workhouse after the Auxiliaries who had occupied it left. The ‘spies’ named on the dossier were never harmed, while the Dunmanway victims were not named in it at all.) The past should be interpreted in its own terms. People should be innocent until proven guilty, not the other way round. Whatever about contemporary propagandists peddling this kind of nonsense, it is surprising to find a professional historian trying to do the same. Seán Buckley and Tom Hales were closer to the truth than many of those who would wish to overturn history. Hart’s interpretation of these events may need to be changed if new information becomes available. Until it does, however, it is still the best show in town.

[[1]](file:///F:\\Website%20Material\\The%20Strange%20Case%20of%20Dr%20Jekyll%20and%20Mr%20Hyde.doc" \l "_ftnref1" \o ") John M. Regan, ‘Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde: The Two Histories,’ *History Ireland*, January/February 2012.

[[2]](file:///F:\\Website%20Material\\The%20Strange%20Case%20of%20Dr%20Jekyll%20and%20Mr%20Hyde.doc" \l "_ftnref2" \o ") John M. Regan. ‘The Bandon Valley Massacre’ as a Historical Problem’ *History, The Journal of the Historical Society*, Vol 97 (1), pp70-98.

[[3]](file:///F:\\Website%20Material\\The%20Strange%20Case%20of%20Dr%20Jekyll%20and%20Mr%20Hyde.doc" \l "_ftnref3" \o ") Peter Hart, *The IRA and its Enemies, Violence and Community in Cork 1916-1923*, (Oxford, 1998).

[[4]](file:///F:\\Website%20Material\\The%20Strange%20Case%20of%20Dr%20Jekyll%20and%20Mr%20Hyde.doc" \l "_ftnref4" \o ") Regan, ‘Dr Jekyll’ *op cit.*

[[5]](file:///F:\\Website%20Material\\The%20Strange%20Case%20of%20Dr%20Jekyll%20and%20Mr%20Hyde.doc" \l "_ftnref5" \o ") Hart, *op cit.*

[[6]](file:///F:\\Website%20Material\\The%20Strange%20Case%20of%20Dr%20Jekyll%20and%20Mr%20Hyde.doc" \l "_ftnref6" \o ") Regan, ‘The Bandon Valley Massacre.’

[[7]](file:///F:\\Website%20Material\\The%20Strange%20Case%20of%20Dr%20Jekyll%20and%20Mr%20Hyde.doc" \l "_ftnref7" \o ") A Record of the Rebellion in Ireland (Intelligence Report). Published as *British Intelligence in Ireland 1920-21*, ed. Peter Hart (2002)

[[8]](file:///F:\\Website%20Material\\The%20Strange%20Case%20of%20Dr%20Jekyll%20and%20Mr%20Hyde.doc" \l "_ftnref8" \o ") Or at least he says that ‘it is difficult to identify any event other than the April massacre for which the Record’s description applies’. Regan, ‘The Bandon Valley Massacre’.

[[9]](file:///F:\\Website%20Material\\The%20Strange%20Case%20of%20Dr%20Jekyll%20and%20Mr%20Hyde.doc" \l "_ftnref9" \o ") *Sunday Times*, 9/10/2011.

[[10]](file:///F:\\Website%20Material\\The%20Strange%20Case%20of%20Dr%20Jekyll%20and%20Mr%20Hyde.doc" \l "_ftnref10" \o ") Regan, ‘Dr Jekyll’, *op cit*.

[[11]](file:///F:\\Website%20Material\\The%20Strange%20Case%20of%20Dr%20Jekyll%20and%20Mr%20Hyde.doc" \l "_ftnref11" \o ") It went to the printers on April 13, two weeks before these events. WO 141/93.

[[12]](file:///F:\\Website%20Material\\The%20Strange%20Case%20of%20Dr%20Jekyll%20and%20Mr%20Hyde.doc" \l "_ftnref12" \o ") Hart, *The IRA and its Enemies.*

[[13]](file:///F:\\Website%20Material\\The%20Strange%20Case%20of%20Dr%20Jekyll%20and%20Mr%20Hyde.doc" \l "_ftnref13" \o ") Frank Busteed, O’Malley, P17b/112.

[[14]](file:///F:\\Website%20Material\\The%20Strange%20Case%20of%20Dr%20Jekyll%20and%20Mr%20Hyde.doc" \l "_ftnref14" \o ") See PJ Feeney, *Glory O, Glory O, Ye Bold Fenian Men*  (1996), Tim Sheehan, *Execute* (1993).

[[15]](file:///F:\\Website%20Material\\The%20Strange%20Case%20of%20Dr%20Jekyll%20and%20Mr%20Hyde.doc" \l "_ftnref15" \o ") Sean O’Callaghan, *Execute,* (London 1974), Frank Busteed, O’Malley P17b/112.

[[16]](file:///F:\\Website%20Material\\The%20Strange%20Case%20of%20Dr%20Jekyll%20and%20Mr%20Hyde.doc" \l "_ftnref16" \o ") That distinction goes to a Captain Thompson of the Manchester Regiment who was killed by the IRA in late 1920 near Ballincollig.

[[17]](file:///F:\\Website%20Material\\The%20Strange%20Case%20of%20Dr%20Jekyll%20and%20Mr%20Hyde.doc" \l "_ftnref17" \o ") cairogang.com even has a photograph of Hendy, along with much information on his disappearance. He was given a temporary appointment as I/O to the 17 Infantry Brigade on 28 January 1922. Dove and Henderson were battalion I/Os. War Office to PGI, 29/9/1922, CO/739/11.  He was also listed as Lieut R.A. Hendy in the British army’s commemoration services held in late 1922 in Kilmainham hospital.

[[18]](file:///F:\\Website%20Material\\The%20Strange%20Case%20of%20Dr%20Jekyll%20and%20Mr%20Hyde.doc" \l "_ftnref18" \o ") Jasper Ungoed-Thomas, *Jasper Wolfe of Skibbereen*, pp141-144. (Cork 2008).

[[19]](file:///F:\\Website%20Material\\The%20Strange%20Case%20of%20Dr%20Jekyll%20and%20Mr%20Hyde.doc" \l "_ftnref19" \o ") ArthurTravers CO 762/121 and William Perrott, CO 762/121.

[[20]](file:///F:\\Website%20Material\\The%20Strange%20Case%20of%20Dr%20Jekyll%20and%20Mr%20Hyde.doc" \l "_ftnref20" \o ") Eoin Neeson, *The Civil War in Ireland* p59.

[[21]](file:///F:\\Website%20Material\\The%20Strange%20Case%20of%20Dr%20Jekyll%20and%20Mr%20Hyde.doc" \l "_ftnref21" \o ") For fishing trip see O’Callaghan, for Bantry see Hart, p280 and the *Irish Times* 1/5/1922, for an insinuation of intelligence gathering Patrick J. Twohig, *Green Tears for Hecuba*, pp334-344 (Cork 1994). The British command in Cork publicly stated they had no idea that they had gone to Macroom, though General Strickland thought otherwise. War Office to PGI, 29/9/1922, CO/739/11. Strickland Diary, 26/4/1922, Strickland Papers, IWM. The British army inquiry into the event can be found in WO 35/180C

[[22]](file:///F:\\Website%20Material\\The%20Strange%20Case%20of%20Dr%20Jekyll%20and%20Mr%20Hyde.doc" \l "_ftnref22" \o ") ‘Sandow’ Donovan, one of the men involved in the execution, told his nephew Donal O’Donovan that he refused to go to New York to capture and torture ‘Cruxy ‘Connors, a well-known informer in Cork. ‘Ask me to shoot a man but not to torture him’ Donovan is reported to have told Sean O’Hegarty.

[[23]](file:///F:\\Website%20Material\\The%20Strange%20Case%20of%20Dr%20Jekyll%20and%20Mr%20Hyde.doc" \l "_ftnref23" \o ") Sean O’Callaghan, *Execute,* (Cork 1974).

[[24]](file:///F:\\Website%20Material\\The%20Strange%20Case%20of%20Dr%20Jekyll%20and%20Mr%20Hyde.doc" \l "_ftnref24" \o ") Patrick J. Twohig, *Green Tears for Hecuba*, p137-141 (Cork 1994), Eoin Neeson, *The Civil War in Ireland* p59.

[[25]](file:///F:\\Website%20Material\\The%20Strange%20Case%20of%20Dr%20Jekyll%20and%20Mr%20Hyde.doc" \l "_ftnref25" \o ") Draft Statement on the Macroom Incident (nd), WO35/180C.

[[26]](file:///F:\\Website%20Material\\The%20Strange%20Case%20of%20Dr%20Jekyll%20and%20Mr%20Hyde.doc" \l "_ftnref26" \o ") Ibid

[[27]](file:///F:\\Website%20Material\\The%20Strange%20Case%20of%20Dr%20Jekyll%20and%20Mr%20Hyde.doc" \l "_ftnref27" \o ") *Freeman’s Journal*, 8/5/1922.

[[28]](file:///F:\\Website%20Material\\The%20Strange%20Case%20of%20Dr%20Jekyll%20and%20Mr%20Hyde.doc" \l "_ftnref28" \o ") Paul McMahon, *British Spies and Irish Rebels* p67 (Woodbridge 2008).

[[29]](file:///F:\\Website%20Material\\The%20Strange%20Case%20of%20Dr%20Jekyll%20and%20Mr%20Hyde.doc" \l "_ftnref29" \o ") See cairogang.com for details of the disinterment. Some locals believed the men had been forced to dig their own graves, though this may just have been lurid rumour. R.W.Williams CO 762/152.

[[30]](file:///F:\\Website%20Material\\The%20Strange%20Case%20of%20Dr%20Jekyll%20and%20Mr%20Hyde.doc" \l "_ftnref30" \o ") General Macready told Hendy’s father that they had been executed two days after being captured and that they had been ‘drugged in the inn’. F.J.R. Hendy to Churchill, 30/5/1922, CO739/15.

[[31]](file:///F:\\Website%20Material\\The%20Strange%20Case%20of%20Dr%20Jekyll%20and%20Mr%20Hyde.doc" \l "_ftnref31" \o ") CoC Ireland to Chief Imperial Staff, 7/7/1922. WO35/180C.

[[32]](file:///F:\\Website%20Material\\The%20Strange%20Case%20of%20Dr%20Jekyll%20and%20Mr%20Hyde.doc" \l "_ftnref32" \o ") Hart *op cit.*

[[33]](file:///F:\\Website%20Material\\The%20Strange%20Case%20of%20Dr%20Jekyll%20and%20Mr%20Hyde.doc" \l "_ftnref33" \o ") O’Callaghan *op.cit*. Busteed’s account of the killing, whatever its drawbacks, was the one accepted in Cork city by anyone with an interest in the affair, even before O’Callaghan published his book.

[[34]](file:///F:\\Website%20Material\\The%20Strange%20Case%20of%20Dr%20Jekyll%20and%20Mr%20Hyde.doc" \l "_ftnref34" \o ") William Jagoe, CO 762/4, Hart, p273-274.

[[35]](file:///F:\\Website%20Material\\The%20Strange%20Case%20of%20Dr%20Jekyll%20and%20Mr%20Hyde.doc" \l "_ftnref35" \o ") There were many instances of disappearances during this period, some of whom are reported in my book *The Year of Disappearances.* On at least two occasions for instance in early July the Fishguard-bound mailboat was boarded in Cork Harbour and ‘some of the passengers kidnapped, taken ashore and removed in motor cars to an unknown destination.’ Who were these men? What happened to them? We will almost certainly never know: Snr Officer, Haulbowline to Admiralty, 4/7/1922, ADM 116/2135. *Southern Star,* 19/8/1922.

[[36]](file:///F:\\Website%20Material\\The%20Strange%20Case%20of%20Dr%20Jekyll%20and%20Mr%20Hyde.doc" \l "_ftnref36" \o ") Richard Helen, CO762/33.

[[37]](file:///F:\\Website%20Material\\The%20Strange%20Case%20of%20Dr%20Jekyll%20and%20Mr%20Hyde.doc" \l "_ftnref37" \o ") *Southern Star* 13/5/1922.

[[38]](file:///F:\\Website%20Material\\The%20Strange%20Case%20of%20Dr%20Jekyll%20and%20Mr%20Hyde.doc" \l "_ftnref38" \o ") I believed at the time of writing *The Year of Disappearances* that some of the killings, in particularly those of the two teenagers assassinated in their beds may have been connected to events in the city and to the capture and torture and execution of another teenager Edward Parsons a month earlier.

[[39]](file:///F:\\Website%20Material\\The%20Strange%20Case%20of%20Dr%20Jekyll%20and%20Mr%20Hyde.doc" \l "_ftnref39" \o ") Jack Buttimer, O’Malley P17b/112.

[[40]](file:///F:\\Website%20Material\\The%20Strange%20Case%20of%20Dr%20Jekyll%20and%20Mr%20Hyde.doc" \l "_ftnref40" \o ") Murphy, *The Year of Disappearances*, Chapters 55 and 56.

[[41]](file:///F:\\Website%20Material\\The%20Strange%20Case%20of%20Dr%20Jekyll%20and%20Mr%20Hyde.doc" \l "_ftnref41" \o ") Regan, ‘The Bandon Valley Massacre’.

Posted by Gerard Murphy at [Tuesday, February 14, 2012](http://year-of-disappearances.blogspot.co.uk/2012/02/strange-case-of-dr-jekyll-and-mr-hyde.html)

**Tuesday, 17 January 2012**

**[Response to Niall Meehan and Padraig Og O'Ruairc in History Ireland](http://year-of-disappearances.blogspot.co.uk/2012/01/responses-to-niall-meehan-and-padraig.html)**

Hereunder is my response to the letter of Niall Meehan and Pádraig Óg Ó Ruairc in History Ireland concerning the 2nd edition of The Year of Disappearances (HI Nov/Dec 2011). This was published on the online edition of HI (Jan/Feb 2012), though not in the print edition.

Sir

I am glad to be in a position to let Niall Meehan and Pádraig Óg Ó’Ruairc (*HI*, November/December 2011) know that any errors – mostly minor transcriptional and/or typographical errors – that they found in the first edition of *The Year of Disappearances* have been corrected as part of the process of bringing out a 2nd edition. Any other issues raised by academics in the wake of the book coming out originally have also been addressed as a matter of course.  The main reason, however, for bringing out a 2nd edition so soon was that I had found significant new material just after the original book went to print when it was too late to include it and felt that this should go out as soon as was practicable.

However, let us look again at the issues raised by Messrs Meehan and O’Ruairc lest there be any confusion about them. The first concerns the various transcriptions of a line from Connie Neenan’s account to Ernie O’Malley of the execution of alleged teenage ‘spies’ by the Cork city IRA. Pádraig Óg Ó’Ruairc took me to task for mistranscribing one word from this passage in January of this year. In Mr. Ó’Ruairc’s reading the passage goes:

‘*We did not know then that the British had organized the youngsters of the YMCA to track our men. They were mostly from good families. It was then only 15 months after the murder of Tomas MacCurtain that we learned that a kid of 15 had tracked him home that night. Both kids* [??] *confessed their trackings and they were killed. We thought that this had stopped their YMCA org*.’

In the first edition of *The Year of Disappearances* I transcribed the beginning of the second last sentence as ‘*3 were friends’*, on the basis that O’Malley usually wrote numerals as numbers and usually had a downstroke in his capital ‘B’s. As anybody who knows O’Malley’s handwriting will tell you, it is difficult to decipher at the best of times. On the basis of my own notes I believed I was correct at the time and let this be known. However, since this was a trap set for me by Mr. Ó’Ruairc with the aid of a *Sunday Tribune* journalist (presumably in an effort to discredit my book on the basis of minor textural errors), my response to it has to be seen in this context. If anyone doubts that this was the case all they need do is read the article in question.[[1]](#footnote-1)[1]

However, I took Mr Ó’Ruairc’s suggestion on board for the second edition on the basis that he had a better opportunity to study the text than I had and had consulted experts on O’Malley’s handwriting. So I changed my interpretation accordingly. I thought this was the end of the matter and am now surprised to see it being raised again. In fact this is my fourth time publically responding to this. If anyone wishes to read a more detailed response to this they can do so on my website.[[2]](#footnote-2)[2] I think though that Mr Ó’Ruairc is being more than a little disingenuous in suggesting that these ‘kids’ were of ‘no specified religion’. If they were members of the YMCA they were Protestants of one denomination or another. So Mr. O’Ruairc’s statement that ‘there is no possibility whatsoever that Neenan referred to the killing of three Protestant teenagers anywhere in his account with O’Malley’ may itself have to be reviewed. In fact in an interview he gave in the 1970s Neenan stated that the first YMCA boy ‘in his confession he implicated a few others’.[[3]](#footnote-3)[3] He also mentions these events in his memoir.[[4]](#footnote-4)[4] Would he have said ‘they mostly came from good families’ if the number was one or none? Mick Murphy also confirmed on several occasions that Protestant boys were executed.[[5]](#footnote-5)[5]) Either way, depending on how you interpret it, what the above account states is that either two, three or four teenage members of the YMCA were executed as ‘spies’ on the south side of Cork city.

In my book also I quote from a *Times* article entitled ‘Life in Cork’ published on 18 May 1921. This was written by an ex-officer and journalist Wilfrid Ewart, though he is unnamed as author in the newspaper account. A few years later he published a book on his travels in Ireland, which I was not aware of at the time at the time I went to print. In this he gives a somewhat more detailed account of a kidnapping by ‘a mysterious individual’ that took place on the Blackrock Road in Cork in the spring of 1921. Messrs Meehan and Ó’Ruairc state that ‘an Irish Times letter [of] 18 January 2011 informed Murphy that he had misinterpreted [this] article in the London *Times*’. In fact, the letter that ‘informed’ me was written by Niall Meehan himself and in it he misinterpreted the article a lot more spectacularly than I may have done. He claimed ‘that as Wilfrid Ewart passed an agitated group he overheard a description of Mr Murphy’s ‘mysterious individual’ as ‘some bastard of an Englishman’’. In fact, when quoted in full, it gives quite a different impression: On a ‘calm spring evening’ in May 1921, Ewart wrote, he was making his way back from Blackrock to Cork city: ‘Near to the city, at an open ground where children play, high commotion prevailed. Mothers, fathers, children and strangers were all jabbering away in a crowd, pointing in the direction of the town. Somebody’s child, it appeared, had been kidnapped by a mysterious individual in a motorcar.’ What Ewart actually overheard next was: ‘‘No Irishman did that,’ caught my ear as I passed; ‘it’s some bastard of an Englishman.’’ Which is not the same thing at all.

In other words the quotation fails to ascribe the kidnapping to one side or the other. In my book I look at the possibility that this ‘child’ may have been snatched by British forces before going on to suggest that it is more likely that he was taken by the IRA. As the evidence for this is far too long and detailed to be included here I suggest that readers consult *The Year of Disappearances* (2nd Ed), chapters 55 and 56. What is still at issue is the date on which the kidnapping took place. I suggested that it took place on 12 May because on that day Robert Parker, a near neighbour of Josephine O’Donoghue’s, who lived overlooking the piece of open ground where the kidnapping took place, was shot and wounded. Niall Meehan suggests, on the basis of Ewart’s extended account, that the kidnapping took place about two weeks earlier, on 23-26 April. Mr. Meehan is probably correct in this. But it doesn’t alter the fact that the kidnapping took place, or where it took place, or that it took place in the time period I was talking about. Indeed, all it does is increase the likelihood that Parker, a Methodist businessman, was shot because he was a loyalist and because of where he lived, rather than because he may have witnessed the abduction. (The context here is that three other Protestant near neighbours of Josephine O’Donoghues were either shot or kidnapped and executed by the IRA – and Josephine was certainly involved in at least two of these.) Mr. Meehan’s objections, bar the date, have already been dealt with – and effectively dismissed – in the new edition of *The Year of Disappearances* (see Chapter 55 and footnote 3 on page 389).

The other issue raised by Messrs Meehan and O’Ruairc concerns an error that I found myself in the original text. This was where I described the Cork city IRA as having executed a schoolboy called Edward Kenny. I discovered just before Christmas that he had in fact been shot in West Cork. I resolved to correct the error as soon as possible, so I removed all references to him from the text. Since this is clearly flagged in the 2nd edition – as a footnote to Chapter 28 (footnote 20, p 370), there can be no confusion about it. The important point is that these issues – minor and all as they are in the overall context of the book – have now been corrected or addressed in the text, which renders them redundant. Describing, as Messrs Meehan and Ó’Ruairc have done, a book as ‘valueless’ and suggesting that ‘it should not be treated seriously as history’ and haranguing my publisher, as they have done on numerous occasions, on the basis of hair-splitting errors that have already been corrected must surely constitute some kind of literary (if not historical) record.

Posted by Gerard Murphy at [Tuesday, January 17, 2012](http://year-of-disappearances.blogspot.co.uk/2012/01/responses-to-niall-meehan-and-padraig.html)

**Tuesday, 8 November 2011**

**[Reply to Manus O'Riordan](http://year-of-disappearances.blogspot.co.uk/2011/11/reply-to-manus-oriordan.html)**

The background to this letter is an article that Manus O’Riordan wrote for the Irish Political Review in which he suggested that I subscribe to the view that the IRA carried out ‘ethnic cleansing’ of Protestants out of Cork. This was to link me to the work of the late Peter Hart in the hope that, because some inconsistencies were allegedly found in the latter's work, that I could be tarred with the same brush. I was accused of not replying to David Fitzpatrick’s review of my book on the basis that I agreed with it. Mr.O’Riordan also produced some private correspondence I had with him a few years back when I was looking for information on a Jewish JP who lived in Cork in the early 1920s and who I thought may have disappeared. O'Riordan claimed that I was taking my cue from Hart and was looking for evidence that the IRA targeted Jews on the basis that Hart supposedly claimed that they did, which is nothing more than a bit of cheap pseudo-extrapolation from a single letter that he quoted. I include this here because it illustrates perfectly the peculiar and often poisonous level at which ‘debate’ on Irish historical issues operates.

*Dear Sir/Madam,*

*I wish to submit the following reply to the letter by Manus O’Riordan on my book The Year of Disappearances, which appeared in the August edition of The Irish Political Review.*

I suppose I should be grateful to Mr. O’Riordan for rallying to my defence for the ‘savaging’ I got from David Fitzpatrick (Letter to *Irish Political Review*, August 2011). However, I want to clarify one or two things.

I stayed out of the ethnic cleansing debate because I believe that the use of the term is inappropriate in the context of Cork city in 1921/22. As I pointed out, the Protestants who left the south eastern suburbs of the city were for the most part replaced by other Protestants. So the term is meaningless, which does not stop it being used to raise a hare to get people’s tempers up and their pulses racing.

The reason I was interested in the fate of Simon Spiro, a Cork Jew and JP who lived in Cork during the revolutionary period, was because I came across a missing persons file on him in Department of Justice records. I was also aware, from postal directories and valuation records that he had vacated his home on the Western Road in 1921/22. Initially, I thought the file was closed. I suspected something nasty may have happened to him – after all, three Cork JPs were assassinated by the IRA in 1921 and another half dozen or so were kidnapped. I contacted Manus O’Riordan who had written about the ill-treatment of Cork Jews at the hands of the Black and Tans. I also contacted several others on this matter. There was no trace of Spiro in subsequent Birth, Marriages and Deaths records for Cork, nor was there any record of him emigrating to Palestine. A few weeks later I was back in Dublin where I discovered that the Spiro file was in fact open and that the Civic Guard had checked up on his whereabouts and found that he was living over his shop on Bridge Street in 1924. I also found his name on a passenger list of a liner bound for the US in the late 1920s and that he was also an officer of residence at UCC until the mid-1920s. I contacted Manus O’Riordan out of courtesy to let him know that I had found my man. I tell this story merely to show that my search for Spiro had nothing to do with Peter Hart. I have never come across any evidence, from Peter Hart or from anyone else, that Cork Jews were targeted by the IRA. Of course, Manus is correct in one thing: if Spiro had disappeared he would of course have been included in *The Year of Disappearances*. But he didn’t, so he wasn’t. This is another canard, like the ethnic cleansing issue.

I am surprised to learn that Manus would not have tried to help me if he had known I had an ‘agenda’. I would have thought that the fate of disappeared persons from a conflict almost 100 years in the past would be a legitimate historical subject. Would he object to a study on disappeared persons from the Spanish Civil War for instance? It is ironic that in a book of over 300 pages in which a lot of controversial material is uncovered that Manus should focus instead on a couple of (private) emails sent to him on a subject (Simon Spiro) and a topic (Cork Jews) that do not even come up in the book. Extraordinary! But this is the level at which much of Irish historical debate operates. This is a place where, to quote the cop shows, ‘anything you say, can and will be taken down and used against you’, a point neatly proven by Manus O’Riordan’s letter. As for Prof Fitzpatrick, I will be responding to his article in due course. In the meantime, perhaps Manus can assure the good professor that I do actually carry out some research. Hey, I even ‘dip into’ Births, Marriages and Deaths records from time to time.

Yours etc

Gerard Murphy

Posted by Gerard Murphy at [Tuesday, November 08, 2011](http://year-of-disappearances.blogspot.co.uk/2011/11/reply-to-manus-oriordan.html)

Labels: [Cork Jews](http://year-of-disappearances.blogspot.co.uk/search/label/Cork%20Jews), [ethnic cleansing](http://year-of-disappearances.blogspot.co.uk/search/label/ethnic%20cleansing), [IRA](http://year-of-disappearances.blogspot.co.uk/search/label/IRA), [Manus O'Riordan](http://year-of-disappearances.blogspot.co.uk/search/label/Manus%20O%27Riordan)

**Sunday, 23 October 2011**

**[Reply to John Borgonovo](http://year-of-disappearances.blogspot.co.uk/2011/10/reply-to-john-borgonovo.html)**

Reply to John Borgonovo’s review of *The Year of Disappearances* (*History Ireland* Jan/Feb, 2011).

I was a little disappointed with John Borgonovo’s review of my book *The Year of Disappearances* that appeared in the January/February edition of HI. I would have expected more in the line of constructive criticism rather than the dismissal that the book received. My book, he asserts ‘cannot be presented as serious scholarship; it is a work in which ‘speculation replaces sound historic methodology’. Borgonovo’s method of criticism was to quickly run through the various elements of the book while asserting that I produce no evidence to support any of them. In each instance he ignored the evidence that I did provide. It is not possible to go through all his assertions in a letter of this length, so a few examples will have to suffice.

He states that Martin Corry is an unreliable witness who frequently exaggerated his War of Independence experiences and that I don’t question his credibility. Yet the first eight chapters of my book are spent in doing precisely that. Corry’s claims that a large number of people were shot out of the brigade prison at Knockraha are substantiated by other members of the 1st Cork Brigade, including his own commanding officer, Michael Leahy. As for the actual number killed, Corry himself in his IRA pension application form claimed that his group executed 27 prisoners during the War of Independence. It is well known that IRA pension applications were vetted by having their claims authenticated by senior veterans of the conflict. It is fair to assume that if Corry claimed to have executed 27 people that this number was agreed by his superiors in the Old IRA. 35 might have been an exaggeration, 27 is not.

Another example of Mr. Borgonovo’s method is his statement that the only evidence I produce on the abduction of half a dozen Cork city merchants on St Patrick’s Day 1922 are three newspaper reports. In fact, this story was carried by no less than six newspapers and was even picked up by the Press Association and ran, off and on, in these newspapers for the next week – though the men are not named. It is also supported by the accounts of IRA veterans who predated it to make it look as if it occurred a year earlier. John Borgonovo knows this as well as I do. After all, he wrote a whole book trying to prove that these men were killed in the spring of 1921, something he failed to prove. Based on Liam de Roiste’s diary entry of 23 March 1922, he then states that the men abducted on 17 March 1922 were in fact two local IRA officers arrested for joining the Gardai. It is true that two IRA men called Hallinan and Kelleher were arrested around that date after making a visit to Dublin to join the Civic Guard but these were not the six ‘prominent citizens’ taken on St Patrick’s Day. (Kidnappings were almost a daily occurrence during those weeks.) Mrs Parsons, inquiring about the fate of her son (a fifteen-year old) who disappeared the same week was told at IRA HQ in Union Quay barracks to hold out no hope as 'a lot' had been shot around that time.

Mr. Borgonovo stated that I could not uncover ‘blatant anti-Masonic and anti-Protestant sentiments amid thousands of pages of O’Donoghue material’. I think the reasons for that are fairly obvious. Maybe he should spread his wings a little and have another look at the correspondence emanating from the 1st Southern Division in the Mulcahy and indeed the Lankford papers. There’s plenty anti-Masonic stuff in there. Besides, what was O’Donoghue doing ‘updating’ his lists of Freemasons as late as 1930 when he was no longer a member of the IRA? Mr. Borgonovo’s review is full of such examples of partial reporting of the evidence presented in my book. To rebut them all would require me writing the book all over again.

As I have said previously, my book is a book of evidence, not a book of conclusions. I work from the standpoint of scientific methodology. What evidence I have, I put out there on the basis that it is falsifiable. (In other words that it can be proven wrong, if it is wrong - for those who don't understand what the word 'falsifiable' means.) My hope is to provide stimulus to others to further investigate the subject as new information becomes available. I was surprised at the tenor of John Borgonovo’s review, considering that my work augments his own and explains a lot of the puzzling ambiguities that his data, based largely on the accounts of Old IRA veterans, throws up. Suggesting that this is not a work of serious scholarship, when I use considerably more sources than he does, is not just being disingenuous, it is also plain wrong.

Gerard Murphy

Updated 23 October 2011

Posted by Gerard Murphy at [Sunday, October 23, 2011](http://year-of-disappearances.blogspot.co.uk/2011/10/reply-to-john-borgonovo.html)

**Examiner, Historians to revisit 1922 massacre of Protestants   
   
Wednesday, April 25, 2012**  
   
 Several leading historians will be in Cork this weekend to discuss one  
 of the bloodiest sectarian massacres of the War of Independence.  
   
 The killing of 18 people in West Cork — all Protestant but one — at  
 the end of Apr 1922 remains one of the most contentious events of the  
 time.  
   
 Since then, various interpretations of the so-called Bandon Massacre  
 have polarised opinion.  
   
 A public event at the Imperial Hotel, Cork, on Saturday Apr 28 will  
 explore the complex backdrop which led up to the tragic event.  
   
 John M Regan, who teaches Irish and British history at the University  
 of Dundee, will re-examine the late Professor Peter Hart’s  
 controversial interpretation of the killings.  
   
 Dr Regan claims that, from the available evidence, it is impossible to  
 know exactly who carried out most of the killings, or what motivated  
 them.  
   
 He explains how Prof Hart constructed his narrative of an "unambiguous  
 sectarian massacre" from contradictory sources.  
   
 Dr Regan argues that Prof Hart’s interpretation "rests on an unsound  
 reading of the evidence", and he concludes that Prof Hart exaggerated  
 tensions between Catholics and Protestants in West Cork to support his  
 interpretation of the massacre as sectarian.  
   
 The event is organised by Dunlaoi Teoranta, which has invited leading  
 members of all the faith communities around Cork, and members of the  
 public, to attend and contribute to the discussion.  
   
 Andrew Bielenberg, senior lecturer in history at University College  
 Cork, will speak on the historical context and impact of the killings  
 on the community in West Cork.  
   
 The chairperson of the event will be Seán Ó Coileáin, emeritus professor of modern Irish, UCC. Hiram Morgan, senior lecturer in history at UCC, will facilitate questions and answers.  
   
 \* The event takes place at the Imperial Hotel Ballroom at 2.30pm on Saturday.

[End - For this is the second attempt in the last few years to try to tar the victims of the Bandon massacre with the label of ‘spy’ – which they were not even labelled with at the time. (The first was based on equally spurious evidence – the suggestion that they were named on the Auxiliary dossier that was found in Dunmanway workhouse after the Auxiliaries who had occupied it left. The ‘spies’ named on the dossier were never harmed, while the Dunmanway victims were not named in it at all.) The past should be interpreted in its own terms. People should be innocent until proven guilty, not the other way round. Whatever about contemporary propagandists peddling this kind of nonsense, it is surprising to find a professional historian trying to do the same. Seán Buckley and Tom Hales were closer to the truth than many of those who would wish to overturn history. Hart’s interpretation of these events may need to be changed if new information becomes available. Until it does, however, it is still the best show in town.]

1. [1] *Sunday Tribune*, 16/1/2011. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. [2] <http://year-of-disappearances.blogspot.com/2011/10/response-1-to-padraig-og-oruairc.html> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. [3] Connie Neenan interview Belt 7 PR7/1, Cork City and County Archives [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. [4] Connie Neenan Memoir 1916-1940, PR7/7, Cork City and County Archives [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. [5] *Year of Disappearances,* Chapter 17, pp 95-99. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)