**DUNMANWAY MASSACRE**

**History Ireland and Irish Political Review articles and letters (most separately elsewhere)**

Jeffrey Dudgeon letter in *The Irish Political Review* of October or September 2011:

Dear IPR,

I am happy that Brendan Clifford is so willing to engage on these issues of the middle past that I dealt with in my letter, *On Peter Hart And Other Matters*, but wish to set the record straight on a number of the points he raises in his response, *A Unionist Going South,* in the May 2011 edition of the IPR. It is important that these areas of contention are opened up and discussed.

The Communist Party of Northern Ireland’s iron grip on the trade unions was not “broken” by the Campaign for Labour Representation (CLR) after “the break-up of the Soviet Union.” For a start that happened in 1991, long after the CLR was destroyed from within.

The CPNI and others’ grip meant that none of the key unions (the ATGWU led by John Freeman, Unison then NUPE, led by Inez McCormick, and NIPSA) moved into support of Labour organising in Northern Ireland. Indeed they worked against it at every turn, and, in relation to the political levy, ensured it did not go to the Labour Party, if it was even levied.

In relation to the 1922 Dunmanway massacre of 13 Cork Protestants, Brendan repeats an unevidenced innuendo that it was the British who carried it out.

I was criticised for arguing that the only likely candidate was the IRA, in some form or other. He assesses, as one must do in writing about history, that the lack of mutual blaming between the various IRA factions was silence indicative of non-responsibility. He also infers British involvement despite their effective withdrawal, after the truce, to Cork city, months earlier.

This begs two questions, why would the British do it and how could they be so quick in their response to the accepted trigger – the shooting of an IRA man, Michael O’Neill, during the raid on the Hornibrook household the night before.

The ten other Dunmanway dead were not horse Protestants nor even big farmers but small town citizens which explains and underlines my point that the less well-off Cork Protestants experienced the most marked decline between the 1911 and 1926 censuses. They showed mammoth declines of 40% for the county and 49% for the city. The latter’s higher rate would have had something to do with the withdrawal of Cork’s British administrative and military infrastructures.

On the Northern Bank robbery, about which he says “there is not a shred of evidence” of IRA involvement, I would point him to the convictions of several IRA-related people in the Republic for possession of stolen banknotes etc.

In 1987, we all, CLR, CEC and BICO, supported and worked for a ‘Real Unionist’ candidate, Robert McCartney, in North Down at the general election. He lost and yet won in 1995 at a by-election standing as a UK Unionist, after which I worked for him for three years trying (if not successfully) to get Northern Ireland more involved in national politics. So who slipped first into Unionist communalism and when?

On the question of the Two Nations theory, my simple point was that the Ulster Protestants did not cease to be British, not that they became an Ulster nation, even though the DUP is now in charge in a bi-government Ulster polity.

Brendan is right to say there has not been a single Protestant recruit to one-nation Irish nationalism as a result of the war. They only occur through marriage or exceptional guilt. The working classes in Belfast no longer inter-marry where they once used to because they worked together in industry, unlike the middle classes who now do work and mix together. Guilty Protestants are sadly quite numerous.

Kate Hoey was someone with whom I had no contact during this period and I cannot be accused of assisting her in the creation of Democracy Now, which I of course later supported. Like Robert McCartney, and so many MPs, she was never going to take instruction, let alone always good advice.

I have now read Professor David Fitzpatrick’s review of Gerard Murphy’s book on the Cork disappearances in the on-line *Dublin Review of Books.* It is indeed highly critical, yet states in its concluding paragraph that “despite these flaws, Murphy’s book contains a great deal of detailed and interesting information on those who disappeared (or possibly did not), and draws together many unexpected connections between disparate documents.” I said roughly the same in my IPR letter.

When Brendan wrote of my quotation of the remarks in 1971 of Macroom councilor Sean Twomey who called for the “repatriation” of Ulster Unionists that “someone is feeding Dudgeon tidbits and it is easy to guess who,” it does not become him.

He must know that when researching one comes across unexpected, reinforcing facts, as happened in this case, and in my Casement book. (I take his criticism of my failure to address there Casement’s published opposition to the 1st World War in *The Crime Against Europe*.)

However in the Twomey case, I was trying to track down the mysterious and oft-quoted Black and Tan list of informers that Meda Ryan and Niall Meehan repeatedly use to justify the Dunmanway killings (except for the two mistaken identity deaths). These documents are inaccessible to modern researchers although a badly photographed page appeared in the Southern Star on 20 November 1971, as fortuitously did the Twomey quote.

I had obtained a copy, from the National Library, of the edition with the key Flor Crowley article which came from a 1971 series on the period.

It was in that newspaper in its ‘Centenary Supplement’ of December 1989, another copy I obtained, that I also read the Kilkmichael ambush witness, Ned Young, who had supposedly died, being described as “one of the few surviving veterans.”

The Southern Star photographs revealed nothing useful by way of readable detail, origin and current whereabouts of these documents on which the whole Dunmanway case hinges.

I challenge those writers again: produce them or at least reveal their whereabouts.

The same IPR edition quotes elsewhere my published view, in the *News Letter*, of the Queen’s visit, without its second sentence (here in italics): “It is a very heavy imposition on a British monarch to have to venerate those who waged war on her people and armed forces. *It needs to be, and has been to a degree, reciprocated.*” My other two (unpublished) sentences read: “If this is a choreographed diplomatic necessity, so be it. There remains however a line between those now dead, and those who killed within living memory yet continue to find a faulty, historic justification for their actions.” This gives fairer and proper context to my remarks.

On a separate topic, in the latest ‘Church and State’ (Second Quarter, 2011), Jack Lane wrote an article entitled ‘Trinity: Rack-Renter”. He made repeated play of the college having “only 183 students by 1902,” (p. 10, quoting from p.76 in a book by R.B. McCarthy) to illustrate Trinity’s inadequacies, not to mention its greed.

As a Trinity Seanad candidate, I feel I must make it clear that that figure is quite wrong and the point thereby lost. The figure quoted is, I suspect, a misunderstanding around the number of students who matriculated in 1902 not the total at the college.

As TCD’s courses were four years long you would have to multiply by four to get an approximate total number of students in the college in any one year. The number in 1902 was therefore actually some 800 not 183.

R.B. McDowell and David Webb note on pp. 499-500 of ‘Trinity College Dublin 1592-1952, an Academic History’ (1982) that “the pronounced minimum at 1902 remains, however, a mystery,” indicating 1902 was the lowest year for new students to start with.

They wrote, “From 1887 to 1907 there was not to be a single year in which the annual intake exceeded 300.” The authors indicate that this 20-year decline in student numbers was reversed in 1904 (p. 327) probably with the admission of women. They also display a graph which shows that annual matriculation was never lower than 200 after 1825.

Jeff Dudgeon (written 24 May 2011)

**See also Niall Meehan, replies to Jeffrey Dudgeon on Peter Hart**

[**http://gcd.academia.edu/NiallMeehan/Papers/1133971/**](http://gcd.academia.edu/NiallMeehan/Papers/1133971/) **IPR November 2011**

[**http://gcd.academia.edu/NiallMeehan/Papers/1369781/**](http://gcd.academia.edu/NiallMeehan/Papers/1369781/) **IPR February 2012**

**David Fitzpatrick and Peter Hart <http://gcd.academia.edu/NiallMeehan/Papers/618347/>**

**[Response to Barry Keane’s article in Irish Political Review September 2012. Published in IPR November 2012 with ‘Some Comments’ and an attack/reply by Brendan Clifford ‘Prying out sectarianism.’ (Part I). Part II and Barry Keane’s response came in December 2012.]**

[**http://free-magazines.atholbooks.org/ipr/2012/IPR\_November\_2012.pdf**](http://free-magazines.atholbooks.org/ipr/2012/IPR_November_2012.pdf)

[**http://free-magazines.atholbooks.org/ipr/2012/IPR\_December\_2012.pdf**](http://free-magazines.atholbooks.org/ipr/2012/IPR_December_2012.pdf)

**Michael O’Donoghue’s Bureau of Military History Witness Statement regarding the Dunmanway Massacre**

**By Jeffrey Dudgeon**

The *Irish Political Review* (IPR September 2012) carried a press statement by Cork historian and web writer, Barry Keane, under the headline ‘*Dunmanway – Some New Information*.’ Keane asserts in his own heading “former GAA President’s statement to the Bureau of Military History (BMH) ends 1922 West Cork Protestant killings controversy.”

He added “both sides will be able to claim victory as the real story is revealed” and that while Peter Hart “got the sequence of events right,” Michael O’Donoghue’s information “directly contradicts his thesis that the murders were sectarian.” He concluded, “The Dunmanway killings “were a unique stain on the reputation of the IRA” as per “de Valera’s official biography” but they were not evidence of “systematic ethnic cleaning similar to that which happened to Catholics in the north.”

The BMH archive of over 2,000 items, mostly witness statements, was “collected by the State between 1947 and 1957, in order to gather primary source material for the revolutionary period in Ireland from 1913 to 1921.” It is separately described as ending on 11th July 1921. The Truce was seen as a suitable cut-off date as it avoided the Civil War and its preliminaries which were obviously highly sensitive in the south in the 1950s as so many of the participants were still alive.

That period was then only some 35 years earlier, the equivalent timeframe today for events in the late 1970s. However many of the statements, like Michael O’Donoghue’s, drift over into the 1922-23 period, and in his case extensively. References in the BMH files to the years 1922 and 1923 are numbered in hundreds. Of note is the fact that O’Donoghue’s statement is the only one to mention the Dunmanway murders and similarly the only one to mention the supposed Anti-Sinn Fein Society or League in Cork.

One other witness statement, that of Patrick Collins (Capt. 'G' Company, 2nd Battn., Cork No. 1 Bgde.) does mention something similar: “It was known by our Intelligence Service that, during the latter half of 1920, there was formed in Cork an Anti-Sinn Fein organisation, comprising members of the Freemason and Protestant Young Men's Christian Association in Cork City.” This unlikely combination however belongs to a somewhat earlier time and the city.

Barry Keane is far too sanguine about this controversy ending although he would very much like it to be so, believing it “a pointless debate.” His added overstatement above about “systematic ethnic cleaning” of Catholics in the north is largely for another day but it is worth reminding him that Peter Hart said such cleansing occurred in neither part of Ireland while the general fate of the northern Catholics does not suggest what did happen to them was systematic cleansing. It was certainly not entirely defensive as ninety-two police officers – RIC and RUC – were killed from 1920 to 1922 in the six counties.

I think Mr Keane would prefer that historians concentrated on the main aspects of the War of Independence in Cork and the less problematic, but Dunmanway was too great a crime to be a mere “stain” on the reputation of the IRA. It may have been exceptional but in a war in which Protestants feared they would suffer drastically it was inevitable, and probably more so in the post-truce chaos. Like Bloody Sunday, it was remarkable for the number of dead and the loss of control by the military.

In truth, Michael O’Donoghue’s witness statement to the BMH adds very little by way of information where Dunmanway is concerned. Indeed it is hardly a witness statement at all as he is only reporting on what he has heard and surmising in consequence.

The statement’s worth comes from who is saying it, more than what is said. On the basic facts and taking it at face value, O’Donoghue is likely to be correct as to the sequencing and origin of the killings, as such comments did not endanger comrades’ reputations. On the sectarian aspects, he has to be much less convincing since that is essentially a matter of opinion, something politically subjective.

The statement must therefore be assessed, in its context, with caution and due scepticism. Overall it is a well-written, literary, and stirring narrative of military campaigning, 377 typed pages in length. Although it is unsigned and undated a year in the 1950s can be inferred from a note of 19 August 1958 regarding the abstraction of several pages of his Civil War service description.

The tone and style of the short section (280 words) on the Dunmanway murders differs from the rest of his testimony. It is hard edged, defensive and plainly propagandist although his humanity seeps through. It was written as a tribute to a fallen comrade just after a mention of him. No names or ranks of those who carried out the massacre are given nor were they likely to have been.

He wrote, “Poor Mick O'Neill A grand chivalrous warrior of the I.R.A. less than two months later, he called at the house of a British loyalist, named Hornibrook, to get help for a broken-down motor. As he knocked on the door, he was treacherously shot dead without the slightest warning by a hidden hand from inside the house. The I.R.A in Bandon were alerted. The house was surrounded. Under threat of bombing and burning, the inmates surrendered. Three men, Hornibrook, his son and son-in-law, a Captain Woods. The latter, a British Secret Service agent, confessed to firing the fatal shot, Why? God alone knows. None of the three knew O'Neill or he them. Probably Woods got scared at seeing the strange young man in I.R.A. attire knocking, thought he was cornered and fired at him in a panic. The sequel was tragic.”

By the time of the killings, which started in the early morning of 26 April 1922, O’Donoghue had moved to Donegal. He talks of attending meetings in Cork at the end of March 1922 and then of his decision to go to Donegal as the 1st Northern Division’s military engineer, swapping with one Mick Crowley. By late April 1922 he was out of Cork.

O’Donoghue concluded, “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 that day near Crookstown in May 1922 Fifteen or sixteen loyalists in all went to gory graves in brutal reprisal for O'Neill's murder.”

The use of the term “anti-Sinn Féin Society” seems to be exculpatory as O’Donoghue’s assertion that religion was not the issue does not pass muster when he accepts the ten later deaths – all Protestant – were reprisals. Nobody has produced evidence of such an entity in 1922 although Peter Hart says a number of those killed had pro-British reputations not least the Hornibrooks. That coheres with Gerard Murphy who wrote of an “‘anti-Sinn Féin Society’ consisting of renegade British officers carrying out assassinations in Cork during 1920/21. But IRA men then used this as a blanket term to cover their own shootings of Protestants in the post-Truce period.”

O’Donoghue’s phrasing reads remarkably like Hart’s memorable chapter heading ‘Taking it out on the Protestants.’ (*The IRA and its Enemies*, 1998) With so many killings, often based on little more than perception, local gossip and grudges, it was inevitable that collateral damage would also occur with the wrong victims being picked out or relatives substituting, as may have happened in the case of the shot Church of Ireland clergyman, the Rev. Ralph Harbord. It is probably true that if Captain Woods had not resisted, fourteen people would not have died.

The section is notable for being both justificatory and condemnatory yet the phrasing reveals his horror at the excesses of the days of rage. Minor points include him getting the month wrong (April not May) while later saying some of the Protestants were hanged which chimes with the statement by Matilda Woods, daughter of Thomas Hornibrook. Her husband was the uncle of Captain Woods who fired the fatal shot. (See Keane’s valuable website <https://sites.google.com/site/protestantcork191136/> for such accurate details in his section ‘*Protestant Cork decline 1911-1926 Murders, Mistakes, Myths, and Misinformation*.’)

Perhaps Thomas Hornibrook, his son Samuel and Captain Woods were indeed hanged if their crime was thought to be murder, the word used here. Most accounts accept that the IRA was raiding their house in darkness. O’Donoghue unobtrusively understands their predicament. One welcome result of the developing controversy might be the discovery and reburial of the bodies of those three disappeared men which have never been located.

On the origin of the massacre, John Regan’s supposition that the capture on 26 April in Macroom of the four British Intelligence officers and their later execution was related no longer stands up. Similarly the notion expressed in the IPR that there is a case for the killings having been the work of the British can be discarded. It has to be said however that O’Donoghue only implies IRA involvement, probably because it did not seem an issue at that time, and not one he wanted to emphasise.

Jack Lane wrote in the same IPR issue, “But the killings were repudiated at the time on the basis that they were sectarian and would fuel sectarianism.” This was indeed true – of both sides of the Dail – and it does not suggest the anti-Treatyites were “prepared to kill groups of Protestants to further their cause.” Most of the Cork IRA was anti-treaty for all sorts of reasons and its senior officers were at that moment in Dublin, as we know, but it has to be admitted then when blood is up sectarianism is never far from the surface. The killing of ten Protestants in county Cork after O’Neill’s killing is in no way dissimilar to the Kingsmill massacre in county Armagh fifty-four years later where ten Protestants were taken out of a minibus and shot dead in reprisal for earlier killings.

But why is the accusation of sectarianism so strenuously resisted by O’Donoghue, the IPR and most Irish nationalist writers in relation to these and other events? It would be remarkable if an ethnic or national war like that in Ireland over the last century did not involve a high degree of sectarianism. Rebel or paramilitary forces would hardly be an exception to the pattern.

The only reason, I believe, is that Republicanism grew out of, maintains and certainly trades effectively – especially internationally – on a policy and reputation of bringing Irish people of all persuasions together. This could be possible with Irish Protestants, rarely of Unionists and certainly never of the pro-British population and Loyalists – the majority in the north. The problem always was that only a very few could afford to be simply Protestants and those who could showed a remarkable propensity to convert to Roman Catholicism, for whatever reason, or had a minority radical and Anglophobic outlook like F.J. Bigger, Bulmer Hobson, Casement and Douglas Hyde.

This successful piece of disingenuity or sometimes self-deception is at its most resonant with Wolfe Tone’s statement of aims, worth quoting at length, “'To subvert the tyranny of our execrable government, to break the connection with England, the never failing source of all our political evils, and to assert the independence of my country - these were my objects. To unite the whole people of Ireland, to abolish the memory of all past dissentions, and to substitute the common name of Irishman, in the place of the denominations of Protestant, Catholic, and Dissenter - these were my means.”

Not only did he fail then but his words now have only the opposite effect, and have done since partition. If the Ulster Protestants are not part of the Irish nation, Republicanism for them has to be sectarian and is in fact Hibernianism, recognisable or not.

Michael O’Donoghue, having a twin brother James in the RIC exemplified the split line amongst Irish Catholics, one more evident today with Home Rule sentiment surfacing as Republican hegemony slides away.

He wrote in his witness statement of that twin: “His training completed, he was posted to Aughnacloy, Co. Tyrone, where he served until the R.I.C. were disbanded in 1922. I wrote back to mother and told her to warn her R.I.C. son never to write to me or never to mention that he had a brother in Cork at U.C.C. Furthermore, I wanted to hear no mention of him whatsoever in any of her letters, and I never referred to him at all. I was a bit alarmed about my own extraordinary position. Here was I now in Cork, an active member of the Irish Volunteers (now the I.R.A.), while my twin brother was in the R.I.C. Force in Ulster, and my father, an ex-sergeant, R.I.C.”

He then related the fate of that brother in the summer of 1922 after he left the RIC, “The local I.R.A. police had promptly arrested him and ordered him to leave Cappoquin within 24 hours under threat of death. He had gone back straight to Gormanston R.I.C. H.Q., where he was retained in the R.I.C. for a few months longer. My parents were irate with the local I.R.A. for this bit of tyranny, and I, too, shared their resentment, somewhat. It certainly was galling for me, an I.R.A. fighter in North and South, to dash home to see my parents and family and to find that my brother, a demobbed R.I.C. man, returned home, had been driven away as a dangerous criminal at the point of the gun by the local Republican police”.

An anti-Treatyite, O’Donoghue was no unseeing triumphalist, observing, “It was just one of the many acts of bullying end brutal tyranny indulged in at that time by petty local Republican "warriors" to show their arrogant authority and self-importance. These acts resulted in the name of I.R.A. police becoming obnoxious in many districts. In many places, the local Battalion Commandant claimed supreme authority in his area and ruled like a feudal baron.”

Once at war, there is little can be done to curb excesses at command level let alone at the periphery. This witness gave honourable examples of how he tried while always defending his comrades but it is not the last word on the matter of Dunmanway.

Jeffrey Dudgeon

14 September 2012

**Jeffrey Dudgeon letter to History Ireland**

***More on Dunmanway controversy***

Published in History Ireland [Letters Extra](http://www.historyireland.com/category/letters-extra/) on website January 2013

[**https://www.historyireland.com/letters-extra/dunmanway-massacre/Dunmanway massacre**](https://www.historyireland.com/letters-extra/dunmanway-massacre/Dunmanway%20massacre%20)

**April 1922**

Dear Editor,

John Desmond of Bandon draws attention (*History Ireland,* September/October 2012) to the murder of the Coffey brothers on 14 February 1921 in Enniskeane by Essex Regiment soldiers, soon after that of Thomas Bradfield on 1 February 1921. An elderly Protestant farmer from Bandon, Bradfield had mistaken a Scottish-accented IRA man for a British soldier and unwisely advised him of a ‘dugout’ he had discovered on his land.

He declares the deaths of James and Timothy Coffey have not been linked to the later Dunmanway massacre in April 1922, adding “the seed of the now infamous Bandon Valley massacre was sewn” there and “matured several months later when those same forces vacated the military barracks in Dunmanway, leaving behind unfortunately for some people, a diary containing their names, and those of other informers.”

He explained how “two masked civilians, who were members of the ‘Anti-Sinn Fein Society’” led soldiers directly to the Coffey brothers’ bedroom, and that one of the two later escaped (from the Dunmanway massacre) and was awarded compensation for ‘dislocation’.

This was apparently Richard Helen from Clonakilty who was also said to have passed information to the police shortly after the murder of District Inspector Michael Kenny (or Keany) and the serious wounding of his sixteen-year-old son Edward on 11 February 1922 in Clonakilty where he had been Head Constable.

Mr Desmond concluded by asking that “historians delve into the unresearched facts, and then let all the dead rest in peace.” But history is never about letting the dead rest in peace; rather it subjects them to constant re-excavation. It wouldn’t be history otherwise.

I don’t doubt that many, perhaps most, of those thirteen Protestants (or their relatives) who were taken out and killed that April had assisted the security forces or the British administration during the War of Independence; few wouldn’t by commission or omission.

Those attacked included Revd. Ralph Harbord who was badly wounded at Murragh Rectory, the house of his father Canon Richard Harbord, and probably mistaken or substituted for an army brother; John Bradfield shot dead despite the killers asking for his brother William; and sixteen-year-old Robert Nagle shot dead in place of his father, Thomas, caretaker of the Masonic Hall in Clonakilty. It appeared anyone in the family would do those nights.

The killers were not being particular as this was sectarian terror fuelled by vengeance – ethnic cleansing if it had continued at that pace. And if the Protestants were not known to have collaborated they were perceived as having done so in suspicions that conflated spies, informers, boy scouts, Freemasons, YMCA members, and ‘anti-Sinn Fein Society’ loyalists, not unlike the toxic reasons of those murdering Catholics so often in the later Troubles.

But that is not the modern point. It was in this instance, as in Peter Hart’s chapter title, a matter of ‘Taking it out on the Protestants,’ and the consequences were extreme like other such mass killings – the thirteen Catholic civilians on Bloody Sunday in Derry in 1972 or the ten Protestants in Kingsmill, Armagh in 1976.

The trigger in April 1922 was the raid on the Hornibrook house at Ballincollig and the defensive killing of Vice-Commandant Michael O’Neill by Herbert Woods the nephew of the husband of Matilda Hornibrook.

Unless that was the first act in what was then made massacre. Why otherwise would the IRA in west Cork (with its top officers absent in Dublin) raid a prominent Protestant’s house in the middle of the night except to either kill the occupants or at least destroy the building? Woods, Thomas Hornibrook JP and his son Samuel were taken away and either hanged or shot. Their bodies were never located. They are amongst the disappeared.

Another seed is likely to have been the fact that on 15 December 1920 in Dunmanway, Cadet Harte of the Auxiliaries had killed a Catholic priest, the elderly Canon Magner and another man. Harte was later found guilty but insane, his mind said to have been affected by the Kilmichael killings a few days earlier.

That the Bandon area is significantly more Protestant than elsewhere in the south is of course relevant in terms of related motives such as economic jealousy, land grabbing and anti-masonic suspicion. The more better-off Protestants the more resentment.

The air of revenge in the city and county of Cork after the truce is also evidenced by the killing of a number of RIC officers such as DI Kenny who had apparently defended Rosscarbery barracks during the IRA attack in March 1921.

The attempts at a cover-up of the plainly sectarian motives in Dunmanway by so many writers, then and now, smack of collusion. We are told by John Desmond, the killings can be explained by that British intelligence document or diary naming informers, or ‘helpful citizens’ in the Bandon area. It remains inaccessible. Despite its continued invisibility it was used as evidence of legitimate motive by Meda Ryan and is quoted extensively in the Wikipedia article on Dunmanway.

The recently digitised Bureau of Military History statement by Michael O’Donoghue (Engineer, 2nd IRA Cork battalion) honestly explains, “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.”

However he prefaced his comments by saying that as all the dead were Protestants it may have given “the slaughter a sectarian appearance,” asserting instead, “Religious animosity had nothing whatever to do with it.” But what southerners and Republicans need to grasp is that Protestants in the south then and still so in the north, constitute an ethnic or national group, one wider and greater than its religion. Killing them for their ethnic loyalties is also sectarian.

The notion that the IRA, in particular the anti-Treaty IRA, could be undisciplined and sectarian is almost inconceivable to them. But all national or ethnic wars descend into murder. A case can be made for the War of Independence having been relatively restrained although that case can be argued as equally applying to the north, with neither conflict getting as far as ethnic cleansing.

However the epithet ‘sectarian’ is fiercely resisted in nationalist, and particularly, anti-revisionist quarters. Their case, if they only knew it, is consequently weakened, by defending or explaining away what is also, in Republican terms, indefensible.

Jeffrey Dudgeon

27 September 2012

O’Donoghue statement: <http://www.bureauofmilitaryhistory.ie/reels/bmh/BMH.WS1741%20PART%201.pdf#page=1>

**Belfast Telegraph - Debateni**

**Jeff Dudgeon article, 12 November 2013**

**Disappearance in Dunmanway**

“The past is a foreign country; they do things differently there,” wrote L.P. Hartley at the beginning of his novel ‘The Go-Between,’ set just before the 1st World War.

Well they didn’t in the 1920s, in relation to people disappearing. However as Billy McKee, OC in the IRA’s Belfast Brigade in the early 1970s, so brutally and frankly stated in the recent TV documentary, when he ordered people to be executed they were not disappeared. Their bodies were left in the open, often along border crossings, so that relatives and others were left in no doubt as to their fate.

In the years 1920-22, disappearing was a common practice, especially in Cork. The reasons varied. The most infamous sectarian killings were in the Dunmanway massacre in April 1922 (after the Truce) when thirteen Protestant men and boys were put to death over two days. The initial targets, three members of the Hornibrooks, a farming family in Ballygroman, were never seen again. The fate of the men was variously said to have been hanging, dismembering or shooting. Either way they disappeared for ever and had to be declared dead by the courts.

The past just doesn’t go away, as the consequent Bandon Valley killings of a further ten Protestants by an out-of-control IRA unit, bent on revenge and sectarian hatred have become controversial once again.

Tim Pat Coogan quoted a local woman writing at the time, “For two weeks there wasn't standing room on any of the boats or mail trains leaving Cork for England…refugees who were either fleeing in terror or had been ordered out of the country...none of the people who did these things, though they were reported as the rebel IRA faction, were ever brought to book by the Provisional Government.” These dead were parked and thought forgotten, not least by southern Protestants who reckoned it better not to dwell on their fate.

Former Senator Eoghan Harris in this week’s *Sunday Independent* reminded us how, “These victims’ disappearance was compounded by the vicious malevolent rumour mill that attempted to cast aspersions on their characters.” This even continues with false stories about them being ‘informers’ appearing as fact on Wikipedia. Of course they were mostly anti-IRA but so are, and were, most of the country.

It is a remarkable fact that Sinn Fein must now recognise. No matter how much they try to appear modern and reconciling, the reality of a 40-year war which, if nothing else, was needlessly prolonged will haunt them for a century, especially in the south. If the campaign wasn’t simply sectarian, it was a war crime, ethnic cleansing, a crime against humanity, and genocidal. All those phases of the public discussion are yet to come.

Truth is a moving target liable to bite back. It is best left to historians not political campaigning.

**Jeff Dudgeon letter to Irish Times responding to Barry Keane – not published**

25 January 2014

Dear Editor,

Author Barry Keane is reported (‘*Killing of Protestants in 1922 truce not sectarian, study argues’,* Irish Times, 23 January 2014) as saying of the murder of thirteen Protestants in and around Dunmanway in April 1922 that “he believes Dr Hart was incorrect to ascribe a sectarian motive to the killings and instead believe they were revenge killings for the death of a local IRA man”. This is in the context of a lengthy dispute over whether the late historian Peter Hart ever, or properly, described these attacks as ‘ethnic cleansing’.

I think it is now accepted that nothing like the ethnic cleansing that occurred recently in the former Yugoslavia matches the 1920s in Ireland, whether in Belfast or Cork. However what remains firmly resisted by Mr Keane in his new book ‘Massacre in West Cork,’ as well as by Republican writers generally, is that the murders were sectarian.

Relying on the Bureau of Military History statement by former GAA President Michael O’Donoghue, Keane avers that the killings were simply retaliatory after an IRA man Michael O’Neill was shot dead during a night-time raid on a Protestant house. He insists “Dr Hart was incorrect to ascribe a sectarian motive to the killings”. So it was neither ethnic cleaning nor sectarianism.

Retaliation may well have been the trigger motive, especially as your paper on 17 January reported Col. Michael Costello’s newly released statement that the deceased’s brother Daniel O’Neill took part in “the murder of several Protestants in West Cork” in 1922. But retaliation in the form of murdering ten entirely uninvolved Protestants (only), not to mention kidnapping, executing and disappearing the three men in the house being raided, is a step change beyond vengeance although sectarian actions are often vengeful.

But why is the accusation of sectarianism so strenuously resisted by Mr Keane, Michael O’Donoghue and most Irish nationalists in relation to these and similar events in the south? It would indeed be remarkable if an ethnic or national war like that in Ireland over the last century did not involve a high degree of sectarianism.

The disingenuous reason, I believe, is that Republicanism grew out of, maintains and certainly trades on – especially internationally – a policy and superficial reputation of bringing Irish people of all persuasions together. This could be possible with Irish Protestants, rarely of Unionists and never of pro-British populations and actual Loyalists, the majority in the north and also then (of Protestants) in Cork.

Until writers face up to that deceit and recognise sectarianism is endemic on both sides, disputes over the Past will continue to corrode the present.

Yours faithfully

Jeffrey Dudgeon

**Barry Keane article in 2016 (‘updated’) -** <https://www.academia.edu/27954537/The_IRA_response_to_loyalist_co_operation_in_County_Cork_during_the_Irish_War_of_Independence?email_work_card=view-paper>

Looks like I never answered this article.

[Keane has little or no empathy with the Cork loyalists here. If they co-operate they can expect to die. The League or sometimes Association is not defined. It plainly never existed and Keane is letting it stand in for Protestants thus justifying the murders for what he also calls ‘loyalist co-operation with the British’. His very phrasing is revealing. Many of these loyalists would have seen themselves as British. Co-operation was as natural as night following day, as in the north. Does Keane’s concept of legitimate targets even after a truce extend to pretty well all Ulster Protestants? And still he believes this would not be sectarian.]

**History Ireland – Dunmanway Massacre**

**Jeffrey Dudgeon letter as sent July 2018**

Dear Editor,

In his letter in the March/April 2018 edition of History Ireland, Barry Keane expresses concern that the issue of the sectarian nature of the 1922 Dunmanway Massacre has resurfaced. He again says, “It’s time to give it a rest”, especially as he reckons it was indeed sectarian but the motives of the killers are unclear and will remain unproven. It is therefore a pointless debate.

Mr Keane states Peter Hart claimed that “there was no evidence against the victims”, yet avers there is such in British and Irish archives. His thorough researches have indicated links between the 13 victims and the ‘authorities’, for want of a better word. He quotes reports, rumours and gossip about each of the dead Protestants. The nastiest aspect is that some of the dead were related to other targets i.e. ‘any Prod would do’. In some form or other, they were identified as enemy agents, informants, hostile elements, or their deaths were simply collateral damage.

I think he would prefer that historians concentrated on the main aspects of the War of Independence in Cork and the less problematic, but Dunmanway was too great a crime to be a mere “stain” on the reputation of the IRA. It may have been exceptional but in a war where Protestants understandably feared they would suffer drastically, it was sadly inevitable, probably more so in the post-truce chaos of 1922. The result reported by the Cork correspondent of *The Irish Times* was that for many refugees, “So hurried was their flight that many had neither a handbag nor an overcoat.”

Like Bloody Sunday, Dunmanway was remarkable for the number of dead and the loss of control by the military. You could argue that Bloody Sunday in Derry was not a planned act of mass killings and I would tend to that view but the consequences were entirely as if it were. In Cork, the perception amongst southern Protestants after Dunmanway was the same - this was the future and it was sectarian. You are often better not to take time to consider the nature of the violence and whether it is ethnic cleansing or a spasm of local rage. You choose flight and think about it afterwards.

Keane insisted previously there is no evidence of “systematic ethnic cleaning similar to that which happened to Catholics in the north.” This attempt to see the north as qualitatively and quantitatively different won’t work. Both outbreaks were generated by similar fears and hopes. The 500+ dead in the north from 1920 to 1923 (including 90 police officers) were from both communities, the larger unquestionably bringing about more of them but the violence was far from one-sided.

The fact remains that in 1922 there were hardly any southern Irish Protestants and next to no Ulster Protestants who would not have been informants or ‘enemy agents’ in some form or other, if only by virtue of thought crime, and thus candidates for such patriotic and, by too many, excusable executions without trial.

Yours sincerely

Jeffrey Dudgeon

3 April 2018

***History Ireland***

**Bandon Valley killings**

**Letter from Andy Bielenberg and John Borgonovo responding to Barry Keane letter in March 2018 *History Ireland* issue**

Sir,—A ‘bemused’ Barry Keane (*HI* 26.2, March/April ’18, letters) rejects a sectarian interpretation to the contested Bandon Valley killings of late April 1922. We would like to point readers to our 2014 article, ‘“Something in the Nature of a Massacre”: The Bandon Valley Killings Revisited (É*ire-Ireland*: Fall/Winter 2014, pp.7-59, assisted by James Donnelly Jr), where we explain why a sectarian interpretation is called for. We based our judgement on an extensive range of sources, old and new, including almost all the material cited by Keane in his letter. While it is true that the individual IRA killers have not been identified, their victims have, thus enabling the analysis to proceed on the basis of outcomes. All thirteen Bandon Valley fatalities were Protestant, which leaves little room for doubt about the sectarian nature of the attacks. This compares to the War of Independence when the majority of suspected spies killed by the IRA in County Cork were Catholic (70%). If this was simply a matter of killing suspected spies, why was there not a single Catholic among the fatalities?

Beyond those killed, we also looked at those targeted (or who claimed to have been targeted) unsuccessfully by IRA gunmen in the Bandon Valley during the nights in question. Taken together we identified a total of 24 West Cork residents. Of those 24, 22 were Protestants (92%). The IRA gunmen largely visited **loyalist** households perceived to be hostile to republicans. But we note that the gunmen shot dead at least three men who do not appear to have been republican suspects but were killed in lieu of or in addition to their intended target. This kind of ‘collateral damage’ (as Keane describes it), is virtually unique among the scores of Cork IRA civilian assassinations that occurred during the 1920-23 period. Rather than a clinical purge of informers, it suggests the gunmen carried out a reprisal specifically against hostile Protestant **loyalist** households in the area, following the death of a senior IRA commander in an **encounter** with Protestant **loyalists** in nearby Ballygroman. Since Peter Hart’s exploration of the Bandon Valley killings in his 1998 book, *The IRA and Its Enemies*, a more nuanced interpretation has emerged in three respects: the quite exceptional and highly localised nature of the episode; the extent of the opposition to the killings by public officials, including anti-Treaty republicans; and the identities of the visited households as ‘suspect’ to local republicans (rightly or wrongly), without the occupants being considered sufficiently so as to **justify** their execution in the War of Independence.

The scale of the killings was unprecedented in County Cork. The IRA perpetrators did not accuse the Bandon Valley victims of espionage at the time, or publically take responsibility for the killings. Evidence strongly suggests they were not sanctioned by the IRA brigade leadership. Cork No. 3 brigade commander, Tom Hales, quickly issued a public statement standing down his units and promising to protect ‘all citizens in this area, regardless of creed or class’. Republican officials denounced the killings, including Erskine Childers who wrote in the anti-Treaty newspaper *Poblacht na h-Eireann*, ‘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’. Moreover, the anti-Treaty political and military leadership, both national and local, recognised the sectarian nature of these attacks. The major flaw in Barry Keane’s assessment of the Bandon Valley killings is that it fails to do likewise.—Yours etc,

Andy Bielenberg

John Borgonovo

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