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# Big House Burnings in County Cork during the Irish Revolution, 1920–21\*

## INTRODUCTION

THE BURNING OF BIG HOUSES belonging to landed Protestants and the occasional Catholic was one of the most dramatic features of the Irish Revolution of 1919–23. Of course, the Protestant landed elite was only a shadow of its former self in the southern parts of Ireland by the time that revolution erupted in 1919. But even where landowners had sold their estates to their tenants, they usually retained considerable demesnes that they farmed commercially, and they still held a variety of appointments under the British crown—as lieutenants or deputy lieutenants of counties and as justices of the peace. Symbols of an old regime in landownership that was not yet dead, and loyal to the British crown and empire, members of the traditional elite were objects of suspicion and sometimes outright hostility among IRA members and nationalists more generally. For many Southern Unionists or loyalists with Big Houses and some land, life became extremely uncomfortable and often dangerous after 1919.

Nowhere was this truer than in County Cork. In his important study *The Decline of the Big House in Ireland*, Terence Dooley put

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the total number of Big Houses burned throughout Ireland at 76 between January 1920 and July 1921. Of that number, as many as 26—roughly a third of all burnings—reportedly occurred in County Cork. The county with the next highest total—Clare—had 7, and the average for all twenty-six counties in Dooley’s list (except Cork) was just 2.<sup>1</sup> Dooley’s count, however, understates the real total, and the undercounting is most serious for County Cork. It appears from my research that close to 50 Big Houses and suburban villas were burned there before the Truce in July 1921.<sup>2</sup> In the greater part of Ireland, then, the destruction of Big Houses happened very rarely during the War of Independence, whereas in County Cork such burnings were a common occurrence. (It must be stressed that the general situation was quite different during the Civil War of 1922–23, when some 200 Big Houses were destroyed all around the country.)<sup>3</sup> The purpose of this article is to identify and analyze the reasons for the massively out-sized dimensions of this phenomenon in County Cork in 1920–21.

Why is such an enterprise needed, and what might it contribute to larger questions of concern to historians of the Irish Revolution of 1919–23? This is a worthwhile exercise partly because it sheds much new light on the strikingly wide extent of IRA attacks on the heavily Protestant gentry of Cork during the guerrilla war against Britain, especially in its last few months. It raises in a different form the hotly contested question about the nature and scope of active hostility toward Protestants among members of the IRA in County Cork during the 1919–21 conflict and places in a wider context the extraordinary violence by republicans against Protestant civilians in West Cork in the spring of 1922. Though Peter Hart analyzed violence on both sides of the guerrilla war in Cork in great detail, he had strangely little to say about the fate of the Protestant gentry of the county during 1920–21 or 1922–23 in his landmark study *The I.R.A. and Its Enemies*.<sup>4</sup> In his treatment of the experiences of Cork Protestants in

1. Terence Dooley, *The Decline of the Big House in Ireland: A Study of Irish Land-Ed Families* (Dublin: Wolfhound Press, 2001), 286. See also idem, “*The Land for the People*”: *The Land Question in Independent Ireland* (Dublin: University College Dublin Press, 2004).

2. The burned suburban villas numbered about a half dozen.

3. Dooley, *Decline of the Big House*, 187–92, 287.

4. Without distinguishing among Protestants of different social classes, Hart did observe that “of 113 private homes burned by the guerrillas, 96 (or 85 per cent)

that work and other writings, Hart focused heavily on the “unprecedented massacre” of thirteen Protestant civilians in the Bandon valley in late April 1922—almost ten months after the Truce had ended armed conflict with Britain.<sup>5</sup> He saw this extraordinary episode as a culmination of a strong sectarian current within the Cork IRA that had been evident since late 1920. He stressed that of more than two hundred civilians in the county killed by the IRA as “spies” or “informers,” as many as 36 percent were Protestants—five times the Protestant proportion of Cork’s population.<sup>6</sup> Since in Hart’s reckoning “most of those shot (or denounced, expelled, or burned out of their homes) never informed,” the inescapable conclusion was that the grossly disproportionate targeting of Protestant civilians on this account could have stemmed only from a large streak of sectarian prejudice among Cork IRA men.<sup>7</sup>

This interpretation has provoked a flood of criticism outside and (increasingly) inside academic circles, and the controversy reached a new peak of intensity following the publication in 2010 of Gerard Murphy’s *The Year of Disappearances*, which with more speculation than hard evidence unpersuasively attributed responsibility for some dozens of alleged executions of supposed Protestant informers in 1921–22 to IRA commanders in Cork city or its environs.<sup>8</sup> Countering the notion of widespread sectarianism within the Cork IRA is a growing chorus of voices insisting that Protestants were rarely or never targeted because of their religion alone. Those academic and other historians who reject the views of Hart and Murphy on

belonged to Protestants.” See Peter Hart, *The I.R.A. and Its Enemies: Violence and Community in Cork, 1916–1923*, paperback ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 313.

5. *Ibid.*, 273–92. See also Hart’s essay “The Protestant Experience of Revolution in Southern Ireland” in his collection *The I.R.A. at War, 1916–1923*, paperback ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 223–40.

6. Hart, *IRA and Its Enemies*, 304.

7. *Ibid.*, 303.

8. Gerard Murphy, *The Year of Disappearances: Political Killings in Cork, 1921–1922* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 2010), *passim*. For several highly critical reviews of this work, see those by Eugenio Biagini in *Reviews in History*, <http://www.history.ac.uk/reviews/review/1053> (accessed 31 Aug. 2011); John Borgonovo in *History Ireland* 19, no. 1 (Jan.–Feb. 2011): 56–57; David Fitzpatrick in *Dublin Review of Books* 17, [http://www.dr.b.ie/more\\_details/11-03-17/History\\_In\\_A\\_Hurry.aspx](http://www.dr.b.ie/more_details/11-03-17/History_In_A_Hurry.aspx) (accessed 31 Aug. 2011); and Caoimhe Nic Dháibhéid in *Irish Times*, 11 Dec. 2010.

sectarianism contend that IRA attacks on Protestants in Cork and elsewhere can generally be explained by the staunch loyalism of most southern Protestants—a loyalism that before the Truce of July 1921, it is argued, often took active forms of supporting the military or police forces of the crown or of resisting republican enterprises. For these historians IRA attacks on Protestant civilians during the War of Independence are properly viewed as having been prompted by political or military reasons that had little or nothing to do with the religious beliefs of these victims.<sup>9</sup> The examination of IRA motives for the burning of Cork Big Houses in this article seeks to contribute to the resolution of this controversy.

While the pre-Truce plight of the Cork Protestant gentry is a central focus of this essay, it also addresses the agrarian facet of these Big House burnings. Research on the west of Ireland in recent years has shown that agrarian violence and intimidation directed mainly against landowners and graziers were major features of the revolutionary events there in 1920–21, while at the same time the level of political violence in Connacht paled by comparison with that of the Munster counties in general and Cork above all.<sup>10</sup> In the west, as Fergus Campbell has demonstrated, “serious agrarian grievances remained unaddressed and provided the basis for renewed land agita-

9. Michael Farry, *The Aftermath of Revolution: Sligo, 1921–23* (Dublin: University College Dublin Press, 2000), chap. 9; Meda Ryan, *Tom Barry: IRA Freedom Fighter*, paperback ed. (Cork and Dublin: Mercier Press, 2005), 209–29; John Boronovo, *Spies, Informers, and the “Anti-Sinn Féin Society”: The Intelligence War in Cork City, 1920–1921* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2007); Brian P. Murphy and Niall Meehan, *Troubled History: A 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Critique of Peter Hart’s The I.R.A. and Its Enemies* (Millstreet, Co. Cork: Aubane Historical Society, 2008); Niall Meehan, “An ‘Amazing Coincidence’ That ‘Could Mean Anything’: Gerard Murphy’s *The Year of Disappearances*,” <http://www.spinwatch.org/reviews-mainmenu-24/book-reviews-mainmenu-23/5401-an-amazing-coincidence-that-could-mean-anything-gerard-murphys-the-year-of-disappearances> (accessed 31 Aug. 2010); Niall Meehan, “Distorting Irish History, Two: The Road from Dunmanway,” <http://www.spinwatch.org/articles-by-category-mainmenu-8/52-northern-ireland/5436-distorting-irish-history-two-the-road-from-dunmanway> (accessed 31 Aug. 2010).

10. Tony Varley, “Agrarian Crime and Social Control: Sinn Féin and the Land Question in the West of Ireland in 1920,” in *Whose Law and Order?: Aspects of Crime and Social Control in Irish Society*, ed. Michael Tomlinson, Tony Varley, and Ciaran McCullagh (Belfast: Sociological Association of Ireland, 1988), 54–75; Tony Varley, “A Region of Sturdy Smallholders? Western Nationalists and Agrarian Politics during the First World War,” *Journal of the Galway Archaeological and Historical Society* 55 (2003): 127–50.

tion on a scale not seen since the Land War (1879–81).”<sup>11</sup> No such agrarian upheaval coincided with the War of Independence in County Cork. Nevertheless, the agrarian elements of the IRA campaign in the county were not as limited as might appear at first glance. Though agrarian motives played a relatively modest role in Volunteer decisions to burn particular Big Houses, what happened in the wake of these burnings before and especially after the Truce of 11 July 1921 provides strong evidence that agrarian considerations exercised considerable influence over the actions of the Cork IRA brigades and their leaders.

What will emerge clearly in the course of this article is a set of patterns in the targeting of particular Cork Big Houses and their owners that can be sketched briefly at the outset. Though some of the Big House owners who were attacked had acted as spies or informers or were perceived as such, this motivation seems to have prompted only a modest proportion of the burnings. Of greater importance were those cases in which the IRA sought to punish owners who had offered billets to the forces of the crown or whose mansions were considered likely to be used for such accommodation. Still more numerous were the Big Houses that fell victim in the last months of the conflict to IRA counterreprisals for the “official” reprisals carried out by British soldiers against the dwellings and other property of republican activists and their supporters. This article underlines the salience for Cork Volunteers of the real and perceived entanglements of targeted Big House owners with the crown forces or with the enforcement of British rule. Among members of the old landed elite whose entanglements the IRA knew about or presumed, none were more sharply defined or more highly suspected than Big House owners or occupiers who were retired British military officers.

At a general level the most important explanation for the frequency of Big House burnings in County Cork is fairly obvious. Apart from Dublin city, violent IRA guerrilla activity was more intense in the county and city of Cork than anywhere else. In its brutal efforts to stamp out revolution in Ireland, the British state not surprisingly concentrated a disproportionate share of its repressive apparatus on “rebel” Cork. Of the forty British infantry battalions and six cavalry

11. Fergus Campbell, *Land and Revolution: Nationalist Politics in the West of Ireland, 1891–1921* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 280.

regiments in Ireland in August 1920, as many as eight infantry battalions (20 percent of the total) and one cavalry regiment were stationed in the county or city of Cork alone. Toward the end of the conflict, in May 1921, the crown forces (excluding sailors, marines, and coastguards) stationed in County Cork probably totaled about 12,600 men, including the police and the Black and Tans.<sup>12</sup> The ceaseless search for suitable quarters for this hugely inflated number of British soldiers and police and their officers—quarters that would put them in close striking distance of their quarry—was to become one of the main reasons for Big House burnings in Cork.

### EARLIEST BURNINGS

No Big House was destroyed in Cork before May 1920, and the number burned during the rest of that year amounted to fewer than a dozen. Three of the earliest burnings were closely related in timing and motive—those of Oak Grove at Killinardrish near Coachford, Dromgowna House near Dripsey, and Dripsey Castle itself in June of that year.<sup>13</sup> Oak Grove had been the home of Captain John C. Bowen Colthurst, an officer in the Second Royal Irish Rifles who had been court-martialed after the Easter Rising for the murders of Francis Sheehy-Skeffington and two other journalists.<sup>14</sup> Though convicted of the murders, Bowen Colthurst was adjudged insane and committed to an asylum for somewhat more than a year, after which he was released, to the fury of Irish nationalists.<sup>15</sup> There were perhaps few events connected with the repression of the Easter Rising, apart of course from the executions of the Rising leaders, that were seared more deeply into the Irish nationalist consciousness than the execu-

12. James S. Donnelly, Jr., "'Unofficial' British Reprisals and IRA Provocations, 1919–20: The Case of Three Cork Towns," *Éire-Ireland* 45, nos. 1–2 (Spring/Summer 2010): 152–53, note 1.

13. *Cork Examiner* (hereafter cited as *CE*), 7, 11 June 1920.

14. "The Morning a Mad Captain Ordered the Death of a Pacifist and Two Journalists," <http://www.irishtimes.com/focus/easterrising/tuesday/article6c.htm> (accessed 11 July 2012). Besides the three murders for which he was convicted by court-martial, Bowen Colthurst shot and killed at least two other innocent persons during the 1916 Rising—the Sinn Féin politician Richard O'Carroll and the youth J. J. Coade.

15. *Irish Independent* (hereafter cited as *II*), 8 Jan. 1921.

tion without trial of the pacifist and women's-suffrage campaigner Sheehy-Skeffington and these two other prisoners, followed by the court-martial that found Bowen Colthurst insane rather than culpable.<sup>16</sup> There is no doubt that the vivid and repulsive memory of these episodes prompted members of the North Cork Brigade (officially No. 2) to attack not only Oak Grove but also, only three or four days later, the residence of Peggy Bowen Colthurst, sister of the reviled British officer, at Dromgowna House, located near Dripsey. Indeed, a reliable report indicted that yet "another residence, unoccupied for some time, on the same property and in the immediate vicinity, was also burned during the [same] night."<sup>17</sup> This was probably her mother Georgina's usual home at Dripsey Castle. A remarkable feature of the Volunteer vendetta against the Bowen Colthursts is this: because of some incompleteness in the destruction wrought by the fires of mid-1920, Volunteers came back and burned what remained of these three Big Houses early in June 1921, on the same or nearly the same days of the month as the original burnings twelve months earlier.<sup>18</sup>

In nearly all the other Cork Big House burnings in 1920, and in a much smaller proportion of those destroyed in 1921, the Volunteers were determined to prevent the occupation of the mansions in question by British military or police forces or sought to punish their owners for allowing or encouraging such use. The IRA's very first burning of a Cork Big House was certain to seize public attention because of the sheer size, prominence, and opulence of the mansion destroyed. Kilbrittain Castle, valued in one report at £100,000,<sup>19</sup>

16. The court-martial of Bowen Colthurst "became a *cause célèbre* and provoked a political furore" culminating in a British commission of inquiry in Dublin that left Irish nationalists further embittered. See "Francis Sheehy-Skeffington," [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Francis\\_Sheehy-Skeffington](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Francis_Sheehy-Skeffington) (accessed 12 July 2012). See also Andrée Sheehy Skeffington, *Skeff: The Life of Owen Sheehy Skeffington, 1909-1970* (Dublin: Lilliput Press, 1991), 16-17, 19-20.

17. *CE*, 11 June 1920.

18. *Irish Times* (hereafter cited as *IT*), 7, 11 June, 5 Nov. 1921; *CE*, 16 June 1921.

19. *IT*, 27 May 1920. Statisticians and economists have invested much labor in estimating the monetary values of earlier centuries and decades in today's money. According to one rigorous method for making such calculations, the reported value of Kilbrittain Castle (£100,000) in 1920 would be roughly the equivalent of about £3 million in today's money. Thus for other mansions whose estimated worth is mentioned in this article, a convenient calculator based on an index of retail prices would

boasted as many as sixty rooms, including a grand ballroom and a spacious banqueting hall.<sup>20</sup> The “entirely ivy-clad” mansion six miles south of Bandon stood out boldly on a hilltop (overlooking Courtmacsherry Bay) amid about 300 acres of farmland and 200 acres of woods. For many generations Kilbrittain Castle had been the home of the Stawell family,<sup>21</sup> but it had not served as a normal gentry residence since just before the First World War.<sup>22</sup> In May 1919 the mansion and about 500 acres of adjacent land had been purchased by the Cork city timber merchants Daniel O’Riordan and Denis F. Doyle. According to a detailed report on this sale, the purchasers paid as much as £137,000 for the castle, extensive woods, and the arable land, which was “let to grazing.”<sup>23</sup>

It was clear from the start that O’Riordan and Doyle themselves had no intention of occupying the castle. They set out to exploit the woodlands and to find a suitable buyer for the mansion. Timber prices had soared so much in recent years that woodlands had become extremely valuable; the explosion of timber prices had spurred much speculative investment in such property, as at Castle Freke near Rosscarbery and around Lohort Castle near Charleville.<sup>24</sup> The new owners, with about 40,000 tons of timber on the property, bought equipment, hired woodsmen, installed over twenty of them along with their families in “apartments” at the castle, and began to recoup their huge investment by extensive cutting.<sup>25</sup> They also made seeming progress in finding a buyer for the castle. They had nearly sold it to a Belgian order of teaching brothers for use as a school when that deal fell through for “ecclesiastical reasons”; negotiations were then opened with representatives of the Maynooth Mission to China for the purchase of the castle and about 20 acres of lawn for £40,000.<sup>26</sup>

multiply the British-sterling values of 1920–21 by 30. See Lawrence H. Officer, “Five Ways to Compute the Relative Value of a UK Pound Amount, 1830 to the Present [2009],” <http://www.measuringworth.com/ukcompare/> (accessed 6 May 2011).

20. *Southern Star* (hereafter cited as *SS*), 16 Oct. 1921.

21. Mark Bence-Jones, *Burke’s Guide to Country Houses*, vol. 1: *Ireland* (London: Burke’s Peerage, 1978), 164.

22. *CE*, 27 May 1920.

23. *SS*, 16 Oct. 1921.

24. Jasper Ungoed-Thomas, *Jasper Wolfe of Skibbereen* (Cork: Collins Press, 2008), 133–40; *II*, 8 July 1921; *IT*, 5 Nov. 1921.

25. *CE*, 27 May 1920.

26. *SS*, 16 Oct. 1921.



Those negotiations were rendered pointless by the devastating fire of 25 May 1920. Shortly after midnight, villagers, tenants, and estate workers “witnessed the sensational picture of the castle ablaze.” By morning little but the bare walls remained. As the steward wired to one of the inquiring co-owners, “Castle gutted; stables, yard intact.”<sup>27</sup>

In the immediate aftermath one of the co-owners told a newspaper reporter that the tenants of the property “were all excellent men, and the relations of the people in the district toward them as owners of the castle were most cordial.” He denied that any objection had been raised “to the manner in which the estate was being worked or dealt with.” And he flatly contradicted the notion that “any representations” had been “made as to the military going to enter into occupation of the castle.” But there are good reasons to doubt the accuracy of all these assertions. The Belgian religious order that had once been negotiating with timber merchants Doyle and O’Riordan to buy the mansion and some of the grounds “was warned not to interfere with the property.” Furthermore, some of the timber from the estate lying at Burren pier on Courtmacsherry Bay had been maliciously “rolled into the tide,” and Doyle and O’Riordan had actually received some compensation for this malicious damage about a year earlier. It does therefore appear that there were local objections to the extensive timber cutting.<sup>28</sup> And lastly, again clashing with the categorical denial of the co-owners, an “official report from Dublin Castle” indicated that Kilbrittain Castle “was to be occupied by [the] military.” The headline for this small newspaper item proclaimed, “KILBRITAIN CASTLE—Was To Be Military Camp.”<sup>29</sup>

The same motive prompted Volunteers in the Ballyvourney district of northwest Cork to engage in a spate of burnings, including the fiery destruction of the former “Colthurst Great House” that had sheltered the Colthurst baronets. The property on which the Great House stood had recently been purchased by the prosperous general merchant William George Williams, called “a man of the people” in one republican source and by no means an enemy of the local Volun-

27. *CE*, 27 May 1920.

28. *Ibid.*

29. *CE*, 31 May 1920. Indeed, the *Irish Times* correspondent stated baldly that this “large, ancient, and historic building” had already been “recently occupied by the military” (*IT*, 27 May 1920).

teers.<sup>30</sup> Along with the Great House, Williams had acquired certain other buildings at Ballyvourney then in use as a courthouse, a police barracks, and a school. These latter buildings were burned down on Easter Sunday in April 1920 as one small part of a huge commemorative bonfire of hundreds of police barracks, tax offices, and courthouses all over Ireland.<sup>31</sup> The old building called “The Courthouse” in Ballyvourney was a large fortresslike structure adjacent to the Big House and capable of accommodating dozens of British soldiers. Having learned from IRA intelligence sources that “the enemy intended to occupy the fortress,” and fearing that if this happened, the courthouse “would forever be a thorn in our side,”<sup>32</sup> members of the North Cork Brigade used some 120 gallons of petrol and several barrels of paraffin oil to reduce the courthouse to a smoldering shell on 4 April of that year.<sup>33</sup> The Great House next door was spared temporarily, perhaps because of its magnificence and the perceived nationalist sympathies of its new owner, but local Volunteer leaders decreed that it should be torched if British officers inspected it with a view to military occupation, and after some officers had been observed paying a visit to the mansion in daylight on 8 June, it was destroyed that very night.<sup>34</sup>

The common motives of denying barracks to crown forces and punishing loyalist supporters for providing such accommodation also lay behind the burning of Timoleague House and Timoleague Castle (figure 1)—two separate buildings—on the property of Robert A. Travers early in December 1920. Like the Kilbrittain area, which was only four miles away, the Timoleague district was another republican stronghold. Among the most notable actions of Volunteers in this vicinity earlier in the year was the killing of three policemen at

30. Mícheál Ó Súilleabháin, *Where Mountainy Men Have Sown* (Tralee: Anvil Books, 1965), 154. But see also Application of William George Williams to Irish Grants Committee, 29 Jan. 1927, with Statement of Claim and Proofs of Various Dates, Submitted 11 Oct. 1929 (The National Archives of the United Kingdom [hereafter cited as TNA], Kew, CO 762/151/2567).

31. “David Hogan” (Frank Gallagher), *The Four Glorious Years* (Dublin: Irish Press, 1953), 160–61.

32. Ó Súilleabháin, *Where Mountainy Men Have Sown*, 149.

33. *Ibid.*, 150–51.

34. Patrick J. Twohig, *Green Tears for Hecuba* (Dublin: Gaelic Press, 1979), 20–21; Ó Súilleabháin, *Where Mountainy Men Have Sown*, 154–55. See also *CE*, 9 June 1920.

Ahawadda Cross on 10 May.<sup>35</sup> Four days after this deadly ambush, soldiers came to occupy Timoleague Castle as a security measure in response to the killings. They remained there for about six months, until the end of September 1920, when they were transferred to the coastguard station at Courtmacsherry, three miles away.<sup>36</sup> While occupying the historic castle at Timoleague, the soldiers conducted frequent patrols and raids and apparently committed or were associated with the commission of a gross sacrilege—the desecration of famed Timoleague Abbey. In mid-August, a few days after a military party had raided several houses in the village and district of Timoleague, local inhabitants “found to their horror that the Abbey burial ground had been desecrated. Vaults were opened, [and] the flags over graves were broken and thrown aside. Coffins were opened, and in some cases the human remains were visible.”<sup>37</sup>

The removal of the troops six weeks after this enraging incident was no doubt welcomed by the vast majority of people in the village and its surrounding area. But the soldiers’ departure prompted alarm on the part of Robert Travers, especially since the police had already been withdrawn from Timoleague “several months” before the soldiers departed.<sup>38</sup> Travers reportedly pleaded with the British military officer in charge of this force not to leave, since he feared that Timoleague Castle or (worse) his own residence, an “imposing” late Georgian house built about 1830,<sup>39</sup> or both buildings, would be sacrificed. The officer tried to reassure Travers that even though his men would now be stationed at Courtmacsherry, they would maintain a close watch on his property. The officer’s assurances proved worthless.<sup>40</sup> On the night of 3 December, Volunteers burned Travers’s “fine mansion” and blew up the historic castle; for good measure they also sent

35. Richard Abbott, *Police Casualties in Ireland, 1919–1922* (Cork and Dublin: Mercier Press, 2000), 75–76.

36. *CE*, 6 Dec. 1920. See also Commonplace Book of Canon Lionel Fleming, Rector of Timoleague, 1908–23 (recently transferred to the archives of the Representative Church Body in Dublin). I am very grateful to Dr. Gearóid Barry of the National University of Ireland, Galway, and to William O’Riordan of Timoleague for drawing my attention to this valuable source. I am indebted to Robert Travers of Timoleague House for making this source available to me.

37. *CE*, 16 Aug. 1920.

38. *CE*, 6 Dec. 1920.

39. Bence-Jones, *Burke’s Guide to Country Houses*, 272–73.

40. William O’Riordan to author, e-mail of 7 July 2009.



FIGURE 1. Timoleague Castle: Invited by its owner Robert Travers, soldiers occupied historic Timoleague Castle from mid-May to late September 1920, but their departure for the coast-guard station at Courtmacsherry after the desecration of Timoleague Abbey burial ground helped to set the stage for the destruction of both the old castle and Travers's adjacent residence by the IRA early in December. Photograph reproduced by courtesy of the National Library of Ireland.

the vacated Timoleague police barracks up in flames.<sup>41</sup> The Travers family estimated their losses that night at about £25,000; they were eventually to be offered only a third of that sum in compensation.<sup>42</sup>

A very similar pattern of events brought down IRA revenge on John B. W. Massy, whose mansion near Macroom was burned less than three weeks after Travers's. Here again, a modest military force had occupied a gentry residence (Mount Massy) some months earlier, and Massy had to bear his quota of the popular antagonism provoked by the grievous misconduct of these soldiers and their police allies.<sup>43</sup> Deeply involved in the misconduct were members of the RIC Auxiliary Division ("C" Company), better known as the Black and

41. *CE*, 6 Dec. 1920.

42. *II*, 22 Jan. 1922.

43. *SS*, 11 Sept. 1920.

Tans, who since September 1920 had occupied Macroom Castle.<sup>44</sup> Contributing mightily to the extraordinary upsurge in local popular anger against these “Tans” was their killing of a harmless, nonpolitical laborer named James Lehane of Ballymakeera at the beginning of November.<sup>45</sup> At the end of the month the Flying Column of the West Cork Brigade (officially No. 3) ambushed two lorries full of Auxiliaries from Macroom and systematically killed almost every one of them at Kilmichael—sixteen on the spot and one more within hours afterward. Of course, the slaughter of Auxiliaries at Kilmichael was followed by severe British reprisals, not only locally but also in Cork city and in certain other southern towns.<sup>46</sup> Against this background and under its influence, Mount Massy emerged as a Volunteer target. The soldiers who had been billeted at Mount Massy were transferred elsewhere on 19 December, and a day later the mansion was “burned to the ground.” Adding to the urgency of action in the minds of Volunteers had been the rumor that the mansion was to be occupied by the execrated Auxiliaries.<sup>47</sup>

#### THE TARGETING OF MAGISTRATES AND DEPUTY LIEUTENANTS

Well before British and IRA violence reached a crescendo toward the end of 1920, all members of the loyalist landed elite throughout the county had been warned to cease serving as magistrates. This move came as one feature of the more general Sinn Féin campaign to bring the functioning of the agencies of British government in Ireland at all levels to a halt and to substitute republican equivalents in their stead. Those nationalists present at what was described as a numerously attended meeting of magistrates of Cork city and county, held at the City Hall on 21 July 1920, unanimously adopted a resolution declaring their intention to surrender their commissions as magistrates or justices of the peace (JPs) and “inviting” all city and county JPs who had been unable to attend the gathering “to say whether they are prepared

44. Twohig, *Green Tears for Hecuba* (Gaelic Press ed.), 31.

45. *CE*, 18 Oct. 1920.

46. These reprisals were in fact much more serious and widespread than Peter Hart acknowledged. See *CE*, 1 Dec. 1920; Donnelly, “‘Unofficial’ British Reprisals and IRA Provocations,” 172–78.

47. *CE*, 22 Dec. 1920.

to subscribe to the resolution.” The resolution was a strongly nationalist one, asserting that “Ireland is entitled, like other oppressed nationalities, to form a government chosen by the people,” and thus it is most unlikely that the attendees included any Unionist magistrates.<sup>48</sup> There followed a spate of publicly announced resignations. Initially, most of them appear to have come from Catholic magistrates,<sup>49</sup> but certainly throughout the last three months of the year heavy pressure was brought to bear on Protestant magistrates in East Cork regions close to the city to resign their commissions. The announcement in late November, for example, that old Henry Smyth of Finure near Cloyne was “the third Protestant magistrate to resign within a month in the district” provides firm evidence of the intimidation exercised by Sinn Féin adherents and Volunteers on loyalists to comply.<sup>50</sup>

It was in some cases only a short step from intimidation to violent punishment. The issue of mandated withdrawal from the magistracy and deputy lieutenancy apparently helped to prompt a limited number of Cork Big House burnings in the latter part of 1920 and during 1921. One such target, it seems, was Dunsland, the palatial Glanmire residence of Joseph Pike, chairman of the City of Cork Steamship Company and a leading member of the Irish Unionist Alliance (Cork city and county branch); he served on its executive committee.<sup>51</sup> Valued with its contents at £34,100, Dunsland was torched while the Pikes were away on a visit to Harrogate, the spa town in north Yorkshire—perhaps for prudential reasons. On the night of 29 August 1920 the housekeeper Anna Georgina White encountered three Volunteers within the mansion. They ordered her and the five maids to leave at once with their personal possessions, set off an explosion and a raging fire with petrol purloined from the garage, and thus laid Dunsland (“with all that was in it”) in ruins.<sup>52</sup>

48. *CE*, 24 July 1920.

49. *CE*, 14 Aug., 7 Sept., 11 Oct. 1920.

50. *II*, 25 Nov. 1920. At the time of the 1911 census Henry Smyth of Finure was already seventy-nine years of age; he was thus almost ninety at the point of his resignation (Forms A and B.1 of 1911 Manuscript Census of Ireland [hereafter cited as MCI], under Henry Smyth of Finure). That he felt it necessary to comply with republican pressure at his age, and that republicans considered it needful to exert such pressure in his case, seems of special significance.

51. *IT*, 7 Apr. 1919.

52. *CE*, 16 Oct. 1920. See also *II*, 30 Aug. 1920.

Though his prominence as a leader of the Cork branch of the Irish Unionist Alliance may have been enough to bring Joseph Pike within Volunteer sights, he was also one of the county deputy lieutenants—a group that had traditionally included about thirty or so of the wealthiest members of the Cork landed elite.<sup>53</sup> While also serving as JPs, deputy lieutenants held honorific and quasimilitary offices earned by special service rendered to the British crown either in uniform or in a civilian capacity.<sup>54</sup> In more recent years some highly successful Protestant city businessmen like Pike had been admitted to the charmed circle. Having a much longer standing within this circle were the Longfields of Castle Mary near Cloyne. This Big House was a “fine old historic residence,” located three miles from Middleton and “standing in the centre of the extensive Castle Mary demesne”; it belonged in 1920 to Colonel Mountifort J. C. Longfield, retired from service with the Second Irish Life Guards Regiment and acting as another deputy lieutenant.<sup>55</sup> Since coming into possession of Castle Mary soon after 1900, Longfield had spent over £35,000 on additions to the house, which now included “a large tower, drawing room, and smoking room, along with several other improvements.” At the conclusion of these costly restoration projects Castle Mary boasted fifty-four apartments, seventy-seven doors, and electric lighting throughout.<sup>56</sup> Like Joseph Pike, whose residence had been burned three weeks earlier, Longfield was away from home (vacationing in Rome with his family) when his lavishly restored mansion was completely destroyed on 19 September.<sup>57</sup>

Though it is not certain that refusals by Colonel Longfield and Joseph Pike to resign as deputy lieutenants and JPs sparked the special hostility shown toward them by the IRA, this seems the most likely reason, given the intensity of the Volunteer campaign in this area of East Cork to pressure Protestant magistrates into surrendering their official positions. By burning Longfield’s mansion along with its “most

53. In 1907 the list of deputy lieutenants for County Cork included the names of twenty-three individuals. See *Guy’s City and County Cork Almanac and Directory, 1907*, 153, <http://www.corkcitylibraries.ie> (accessed 13 Apr. 2011).

54. Hansard, *The Parliamentary Debates (Official Report)*, 5<sup>th</sup> series, *House of Commons*, vol. 108 (24 July 1918), cols. 1913–29.

55. *II*, 21 Sept. 1920.

56. *CE*, 1 Feb. 1921.

57. *Ibid.*

valuable furniture and effects,” the Volunteers inflicted on him a huge loss amounting to as much as £60,000.<sup>58</sup> This dramatic act of incendi- arism against a very prominent Unionist deputy lieutenant and mag- istrate was probably intended to intimidate others of the same class and politics to lay aside their posts and to remain quiescent.

Members of the old Protestant elite were made to suffer wholly or partly for the same reason in other regions of Cork as well. Among those singled out in West Cork was the gentleman farmer James H. Morton, who lived with his wife, a steward, and four servants in the nineteen rooms of Carrigmore, his mansion in the Ballineen district.<sup>59</sup> Like Joseph Pike, Morton was a member of the executive committee of the Cork branch of the Irish Unionist Alliance.<sup>60</sup> One night in mid-October 1920, Volunteers “cast bombs into his garage and outhouses, completely destroying them by fire.”<sup>61</sup> The local IRA seemed to hold Morton responsible as a loyalist magistrate for the arrest and detention of a considerable number of their comrades.<sup>62</sup>

Much more persistent and destructive was the punishment meted out by the IRA to William N. Leader of Dromagh Castle near Banteer in northwest Cork. He and his solicitors informed the Irish Grants Committee in 1929 that the long series of attacks on his property had begun “from about the end of 1920, when he refused to resign his commission of the peace and showed his support and sympathy with the British authorities.”<sup>63</sup> Leader’s worst material loss was the destruction of Dromagh Castle on the night of 10 March 1921 by members of the Kanturk and Millstreet battalions of the North Cork Brigade. The reason given for its demolition was that a force of Auxil-

58. *II*, 21 Sept. 1920; *IT*, 21 Sept., 8 Oct. 1920; *CE*, 1 Feb. 1921. Like so many other owners of burned Big Houses, Colonel Longfield experienced repeated delays in collecting compensation and had to endure a steep reduction in the amount of the original grant. In October 1923 the Irish Compensation Commission lowered the award for Castle Mary to only £30,000, or by as much as half (*IT*, 18 Oct. 1923).

59. Forms A and B.1 of 1911 MCI, under James Henry Morton of “Drom- dulough West” (Dromidiclogh).

60. *IT*, 7 Apr. 1919. Morton is mistakenly listed here as “James H. Martin, J.P.”

61. *CE*, 20 Oct. 1920.

62. *Ibid.*

63. Application of William N. Leader to Irish Grants Committee, 11 Jan. 1927, with Statement of Claim and Proofs of Various Dates, Submitted 1 May 1929 (TNA, CO 762/106/1820).



aries was about to occupy it in the aftermath of the famous IRA ambush of crown forces at Clonbanin near Millstreet on 5 March—an engagement in which the British suffered one of their worst reversals of the guerrilla war, with as many as thirteen dead and fifteen more wounded.<sup>64</sup> In its brief report about the subsequent attack on Dromagh Castle the *Cork Constitution* observed that “nothing now remains of the splendid building but the bare and blackened walls.”<sup>65</sup>

Quite apart from functioning as a deputy lieutenant and cooperating with British troops, Leader conducted a wide-ranging set of agricultural enterprises that were no doubt the envy of many local farmers and laborers, and that exposed him to further Volunteer reprisals. These enterprises were physically split between about 400 acres in the townlands of Dysert and Gurteen and about 1,340 acres in three other adjoining townlands that formed the so-called Dromagh Castle Estate.<sup>66</sup> Leader’s actual residence was Rosnalee, a mansion with almost thirty rooms, in the townland of Gurteen.<sup>67</sup> Of his extensive acreage, Leader in 1919–20 devoted about 200 acres to tillage crops and about 400 to meadow. Most of the rest was given over to the raising of cattle and sheep and to dairying. He kept about 100 dairy cows, dividing them between his residential farm at Gurteen and his even larger farm around Dromagh Castle. In addition, he maintained on grass and fodder an average of some 70 to 80 calves and about 200 older cattle, along with 100 ewes and 130 to 140 lambs a year. To supervise and cater for so much livestock, hay, and tillage, Leader employed two stewards and up to thirty laborers. It is likely that he was the largest single employer in his district. His econom-

64. In his *Topographical Dictionary* of 1837, Samuel Lewis sketched the fortress-like character of Dromagh Castle, with its “square enclosure flanked by four circular towers.” See Samuel Lewis, *A Topographical Dictionary of Ireland . . .*, 2 vols., reprint ed. (Baltimore, MD: Genealogical Publishing Co., 1984), 1:509. It can readily be imagined why this walled structure appealed to British forces seeking accommodation in the district. See also Pat Lynch, “First British General to Take Civilian Hostages on His Lorries Killed in Action at Clonbanin,” in *Rebel Cork’s Fighting Story from 1916 to the Truce with Britain* (Tralee: Kerryman, n.d.), 147–55. The official spelling of this townland is Cloonbannin.

65. *Cork Constitution* (hereafter cited as *CC*), 12 Mar. 1921. See also *CE*, 12 Mar. 1921.

66. Leader did sell off about 100 acres around Dromagh Castle in 1920 and early 1921. See source in note 63 above.

67. Forms A and B.1 of 1911 MCI, under William N. Leader of Rosnalee.

ic power soon became as detested as his political allegiance, and a whole series of blows—generally from republicans and Volunteers—rained on his head. Along with Dromagh Castle, Volunteers burned down on 10 March 1921 his farmyard there as well as a dwelling house, dairy, and barn. These losses prompted him to sell off about 50 of his cows and to confine his dairying operations to Gurteen. The month of April was no better. One day during that month “two well-known republicans” stopped him on the road and ordered him to surrender to them about 50 acres of his land, and they “afterwards forcibly put their cattle on this area.” His assistant steward was so badly beaten that “he was confined to bed for three weeks,” and shots were fired over the heads of him and his wife. Then came an attack on Leader’s residence at Rosnalee. Though Volunteers “failed to effect an entrance,” they commandeered his motorcar and, armed with revolvers, ordered the ploughmen off his land. In May Volunteers tried unsuccessfully to kidnap him (abductions of members of the gentry still serving as magistrates were soon to become common in County Cork). Instead of the Truce on 11 July 1921 bringing a halt to hostilities, “intimidation and annoyance increased considerably,” as did Leader’s losses on his risky agricultural operations.<sup>68</sup> Leader’s painful reversals of fortune in these months mirrored the losses sustained by numerous other Cork Protestant landowners.

#### THE FATE OF “COLLABORATOR” MARIA LINDSAY AND OTHERS

Because the consequences could be so severe, the great majority of Cork Big House owners avoided collaboration with the forces of the crown. But some accepted the hazard and paid dearly for it. Collaboration could take a variety of forms, as the following three cases illustrate. Mrs. Maria Lindsay of Leemount House near Coachford became the cardinal example in County Cork of an upper-class loyalist “informer” and victim, losing both her mansion and her life in the context of a complex set of events early in 1921 heavily drenched in

68. Application of William N. Leader to Irish Grants Committee, 11 Jan. 1927, with Statement of Claim and Proofs of Various Dates, Submitted 1 May 1929 (TNA, CO 762/106/1820). The details in this paragraph about Leader’s farming operations and about IRA attacks on him and others have been taken from the statement and proofs mentioned above.

tragedy on both sides. Maria Lindsay's loyalism was above all a matter of family tradition and cultural background. At the time of the 1911 census, when she was fifty years old, she lived with her husband (aged sixty-six), a retired senior British army officer, in a modest mansion of thirteen rooms. They led a comfortable life at Leemount with four domestic servants. The butler James Clarke and the housemaid Grace Eakin were both natives of County Down, as was John W. Lindsay himself (his wife was from County Kildare). The Lindsays belonged to the Church of Ireland. The butler Clarke was a Presbyterian, the housemaid Eakin was an Anglican, while the other two servants were Catholics. One of these Catholics served as coachman for the Lindsays, and Clarke eventually doubled as their chauffeur.<sup>69</sup>

By early 1921 Maria Lindsay had become a widow, and her once comfortable life was about to be completely upended. At the close of January in that year Volunteers from the Sixth Battalion of the Mid Cork Brigade (officially No. 1) were waiting at Godfrey's Cross, about midway between Coachford and Dripsey, to ambush a convoy of British soldiers. News of the impending ambush spread among the local populace, including the parish priest, and from him it reached the ears of Mrs. Lindsay, who went to Ballincollig military barracks and informed officers of the Manchester Regiment based there of the Volunteers' intentions. Within hours the Volunteers at Godfrey's Cross found themselves surrounded by five different groups of British troops, and as they tried to fight their way free of the encirclement, eight Volunteers were captured; five of the captives were wounded, two quite seriously. The British wasted no time in putting the eight captives before courts-martial at Victoria Barracks in Cork city. Five of the eight defendants were found guilty and sentenced to death.<sup>70</sup>

In the wake of the threatened execution of these five "Dripsey" prisoners, their Volunteer comrades abducted Mrs. Lindsay and her butler/chauffeur Clarke from Leemount House in the early morning hours of 17 February and took them to a secret location.<sup>71</sup> Her status as an

69. Forms A and B.1 of 1911 MCL, under John and Maria Lindsay of Leemount; Olga Pyne Clark, *She Came of Decent People* (London: Methuen paperback ed., 1986), 50.

70. See website "Cork's War of Independence on HubPages," under "Capture of I.R.A. Volunteers at Dripsey," <http://homepage.eircom.net/~corkcounty/Timeline/Dripsey.htm> (accessed 23 Apr. 2011). See also *CE*, 1 Mar. 1921.

71. *IT*, 18 Feb. 1921; *CE*, 18 Feb. 1921.

informer was a matter of absolute certainty to the IRA and was later conceded, though interpreted quite differently, by the British authorities.<sup>72</sup> Seeking to save the lives of the condemned “Dripsey” prisoners, local Volunteer leaders decided to use their two kidnapping victims as hostages who would be killed unless the executions of their five comrades, then scheduled for 28 February, were canceled. Two days beforehand, the IRA solemnly warned the Cork commanding general Sir Edward Peter Strickland himself by letter: “If the five of our men taken at Dripsey are executed on Monday morning as announced by your office, the two hostages will be shot.”<sup>73</sup> Strickland immediately communicated with General Sir Neville Macready, commander-in-chief of the British army in Ireland, at his headquarters at Parkgate in Dublin. Macready took a stern line with Strickland and later explained his rationale in his memoirs: “While I would have gone to great lengths to save the gallant lady’s life, I could not listen to such a proposal, which would have resulted in the kidnapping of loyal or influential persons every time a death sentence was passed on a rebel.”<sup>74</sup> Thus the executions of the five “Dripsey” prisoners (and another condemned Volunteer from Tipperary town) went ahead at the Victoria Barracks early on the morning of 28 February.<sup>75</sup>

These events went far to seal the fate of Mrs. Lindsay and James Clarke and to push the Volunteers toward the destruction of Leemount House. One more court-martial on 9 March and the handing down of yet another death sentence to Volunteer Denis Murphy—still recovering from his wounds at Godfrey’s Cross—seem to have filled the IRA cup of revenge to overflowing. Less than a week later, a party of perhaps forty Volunteers raided the Lindsay mansion near Coachford, allowed three female servants to remove their personal belongings, and then locked them in an outhouse. Very soon there-

72. *IT*, 5 Aug. 1921.

73. See website “Cork’s War of Independence on HubPages,” under “Capture of I.R.A. Volunteers at Dripsey,” <http://homepage.eircom.net/~corkcounty/Timeline/Dripsey.htm> (accessed 23 Apr. 2011).

74. General Sir Neville Macready, *Annals of an Active Life*, 2 vols. (New York: George H. Doran Co., 1925), 2:543.

75. See website “Cork’s War of Independence on HubPages,” under “Capture of I.R.A. Volunteers at Dripsey,” <http://homepage.eircom.net/~corkcounty/Timeline/Dripsey.htm> (accessed 23 Apr. 2011). See also *CE*, 1, 2 Mar. 1921; Boronovo, *Spies, Informers, and “Anti-Sinn Féin Society,”* 88.

after Leemount was gone—“consumed with practically everything it contained.”<sup>76</sup> On 21 March members of the local IRA executed Mrs. Lindsay and Clarke as spies; their bodies were never recovered.<sup>77</sup>

A second set of upper-class Cork Protestant loyalists who paid a stiff price for their antirepublican actions were Colonel William F. Spaight and his wife Lucy, the aged owners of a large mansion with twenty-four rooms in the village of Union Hall on the southwest coast.<sup>78</sup> As a retired British military officer and as a magistrate who refused to resign, Colonel Spaight was inevitably regarded by local republicans as antagonistic to their cause. But it was the association of the Spaights with events in and around the nearby village of Leap that eventually prompted severe Volunteer retaliation against this aged couple. They were the owners of the building in Leap that served as the local police barracks.<sup>79</sup> In the autumn of 1920 this barracks was reinforced by a number of Black and Tans recruited from England. Local Volunteers targeted the Tans soon after their arrival; relations between the Leap police and the local population were already badly strained because the police had recently wrecked the Catholic parochial hall in Leap and burned down a farmer’s house near the village.<sup>80</sup> In late October of that year three policemen were wounded, two of them fatally, as they were returning from Glandore to their barracks at Leap.<sup>81</sup> Again in late November, Volunteers fired on five constables just after they had left Sheehan’s Hotel in Leap, killing one and seriously wounding another.<sup>82</sup> Both were English recruits, as were those mortally wounded in the previous month.<sup>83</sup> Early in December, Volunteers burned the Leap barracks to the ground just two days after it had been evacuated.<sup>84</sup>

If the identity of the owner of the barracks had not been generally known beforehand, the press soon divulged that Colonel Spaight was

76. *CE*, 19 Mar. 1921. See also *IT*, 15, 19 Mar. 1921.

77. Borgonovo, *Spies, Informers, and “Anti-Sinn Féin Society,”* 104, note 132.

78. Forms A and B.1 of 1911 MCI, under William and Lucy Spaight of Myross.

79. *CE*, 9 Dec. 1920, 31 Jan. 1921.

80. The police claimed that they had been fired upon and set out to exact revenge (*CE*, 24 July 1920; *II*, 24 July 1920).

81. *II*, 23 Oct., 6 Nov. 1920; Abbott, *Police Casualties*, 135.

82. *CE*, 23 Nov. 1920; *II*, 23 Nov. 1920, 19 Jan. 1921; Abbott, *Police Casualties*, 151.

83. Abbott, *Police Casualties*, 135, 151.

84. *CE*, 9 Dec. 1921.

planning to claim a large sum (£3,000 at first report) in compensation for the destroyed building.<sup>85</sup> The submission of such a claim to a court no longer recognized by republicans was itself contrary to Volunteer dictates, and the very provision of the barracks meant that the Spaight were linked in the minds of local republicans with the introduction of the Black and Tans into that corner of the county. When the conflict intensified in the spring of 1921, the Spaight mansion in Union Hall was laid in ruins. If a Dublin Castle report on the episode can be trusted, the party of about thirty Volunteers who did the deed at the beginning of April made a wreck of “art treasures” and other valuables in the residence with the Spaight present, forced them to watch the burning of their home from a nearby steward’s house, and finally marched off with much of the Spaight’s furniture loaded onto horse and donkey carts. One of the Volunteers reportedly justified their actions by telling Lucy Spaight that she was responsible for bringing the Black and Tans into the district.<sup>86</sup>

The third case of collaboration differs markedly from the other two. Richard Christopher Williams enjoyed high public standing, unlike several other Big House owners in the Macroom district targeted by the IRA. A hotel proprietor in Macroom, Williams had married into a successful business family in that town.<sup>87</sup> The burning of his residence—Coolcour House in the valley of the Lee—a week before the Truce on 11 July 1921 was attributed by some observers less to his opposition to Sinn Féin and more to “a general plan to demolish such buildings in view of a possible big influx of troops in the autumn.” Though Williams was “a consistent Unionist,” he “never openly identified himself with politics” of a partisan kind. Doubt was publicly expressed that he had given “offence to Sinn Féin or endangered any of its adherents in the military sense.” And his conspicuous civic-mindedness during his long service on the Macroom Urban District Council was widely admired. He therefore had “many sympathisers in his loss,”<sup>88</sup> which Williams estimated at £20,000.<sup>89</sup>

85. Ibid.

86. *CE*, 6 Apr. 1921; *CC*, 8 Apr. 1921.

87. Forms A and B.1 of 1911 MCI, under Mary Anne Williams of Carrigrohanebeg and Richard Christopher Williams of Macroom.

88. *SS*, 23 July 1921.

As the owner of perhaps the largest hotel in Macroom, however, he would have found it very difficult not to rent rooms to visiting British military or police officers and to prevent them from drinking or eating on his premises. He was also a merchant, selling groceries, corn, and flour, and probably not all of his customers were civilians.<sup>90</sup> Such types of “fraternization” with the forces of the crown would easily have exasperated prominent local republicans like Dan Corkery and Charlie Brown.<sup>91</sup> Fraternization of this kind may partly explain why Coolcour was destroyed, though IRA leaders in Cork also feared both before and after the Truce that an even greater campaign of British military repression might be in the offing, and they were acting accordingly by destroying poor-law-union workhouses, such as those at Macroom and Millstreet, that could be transformed into British military or police barracks.<sup>92</sup>

#### THE LATE WAVE OF BIG HOUSE BURNINGS

The last three months before the Truce on 11 July 1921 witnessed a great intensification of Volunteer attacks on the Big Houses of Cork loyalists. All but four of the nearly forty Big Houses and suburban villas destroyed throughout Cork from the start of 1921 to the Truce were burned from April onward. This development was largely an outgrowth of two related changes in the organization and strategy of the IRA. The first change involved the adoption in late April of the beginnings of a divisional structure and the creation of the First Southern Division embracing much of Munster under the command of Liam Lynch.<sup>93</sup> The second change was the collective determination of the commanders of the southern brigades to devise an effective means of stopping, or at least reducing, the seemingly end-

89. *IT*, 22 Oct. 1921. The Irish Compensation Commission nominally awarded Williams only £8,000 (*IT*, 12 July 1921).

90. “Guy’s Postal Directory, 1914, for County Cork, Ireland,” under Macroom, <http://www.failteromhat.com/guy.htm> (accessed 31 July 2012).

91. Daniel Corkery’s own house in Macroom had been burned down early in May 1921 as part of an official British reprisal for the killing of two policemen in the town on 29 April (*CE*, 9 May 1921).

92. *CE*, 28 May, 6, 24, 25 June 1921; *SS*, 25 June 1921.

93. Florence O’Donoghue, *No Other Law: The Story of Liam Lynch and the Irish Republican Army, 1916–1923* (Dublin: Irish Press, 1954), 154–55.

less series of official British military reprisals against the property of republicans or their sympathizers. Since the very beginning of 1921 scores of dwelling houses or business premises had been blown up or burned down by military order in County Cork in response to IRA violence. On 26 April Volunteer leaders in the Southern Division took a momentous step that soon spelled the doom of many Cork Big Houses. They sought the approval of IRA General Headquarters (GHQ) in Dublin for “the destruction of property belonging to active enemies in the areas where British reprisals had been carried out.” This policy of counterreprisals was intended to be highly punitive, or as Liam Lynch’s divisional adjutant Florrie O’Donoghue described it, “sufficiently heavy and persistent either to put an end to British reprisals or clear the country of its active resident civilian enemies.” IRA Adjutant General Gearóid O’Sullivan did not issue a formal order authorizing counterreprisals under specified conditions until 22 June, and even when GHQ finally embraced the Old Testament principle of “an eye for an eye,” it was at pains to stress that the “enemies of Ireland” must be carefully delimited: “*For the purpose of such [counter-]reprisals no persons shall be regarded as enemies of Ireland, whether they may be described locally as Unionist[s], Orangemen, etc., unless they are actively anti-Irish in their actions.*”<sup>94</sup> Cork Volunteer leaders, however, did not wait for formal approval of this more aggressive policy before putting it into action.

In fact, ten days before the formation of the First Southern Division, the headquarters staff of the North Cork Brigade had already initiated a policy of counterreprisals on its own authority and in direct response to local conditions. After British soldiers blew up six houses whose owners were considered complicit in the killing of two policemen,<sup>95</sup> members of the brigade, in coordinated actions on the night of 30 April–1 May, burned down three of the grandest Big Houses in the Blackwater valley. Preeminent among them was Convamore (figure 2) at Ballyhooly, owned by the now very elderly Third Earl of Listowel. Erected in the early nineteenth century, partly by the great architect James Pain, and then “greatly improved . . . to meet modern requirements” in the 1850s, Convamore and its longtime proprietor

94. For this “general order” of 22 June 1921, see *ibid.*, 332–33.

95. *CE*, 16 Apr. 1921; Abbott, *Police Casualties*, 220–21.



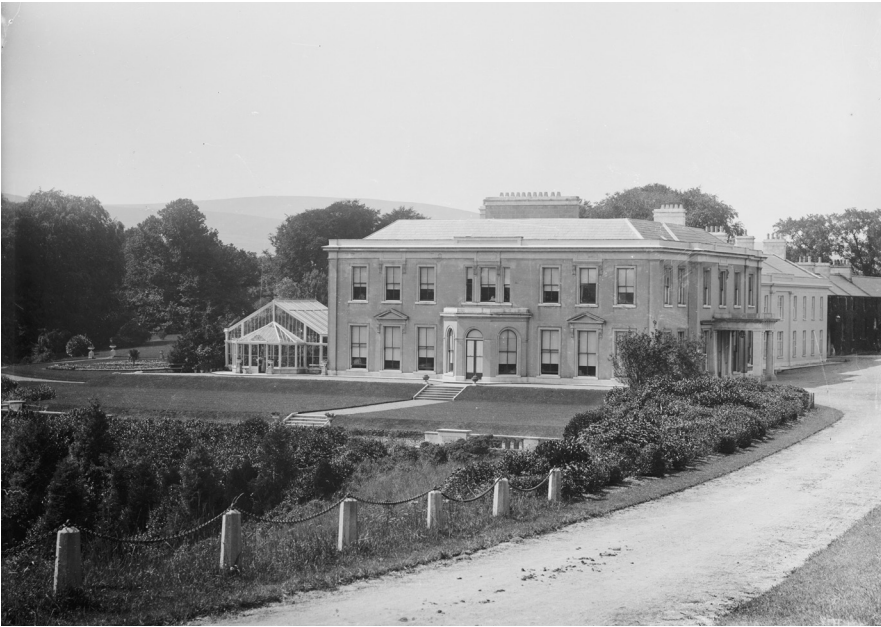


FIGURE 2. Convamore, Ballyhooly: Plain but very large mansion of the aged 3rd Earl of Listowel, looking down on what Mark Bence-Jones called “one of the most beautiful reaches of the River Blackwater.” It was occupied at the time of its burning by the earl’s niece Miss Barbara Becher. Photograph reproduced by courtesy of the National Library of Ireland.

had enjoyed a distinguished history.<sup>96</sup> But the recent violence in the locality had sealed its fate. The Volunteers who forced their way into Convamore on 30 April demanded that the earl’s niece, Miss Barbara Beecher, come downstairs, and when she complied, they handed her the following document addressed to the absent Lord Listowel:

Headquarters, Cork (No. 2) Brigade, 16th April, 1921.

On Wednesday, the 13th inst., the enemy bombed and destroyed six houses of Republicans as reprisals for I.R.A. activities on the 10th inst. You being an aggressively anti-Irish person, and your residence being in the battalion area of enemy reprisals, I have hereby ordered that [the] same be destroyed as part of our counter-reprisals. —Commandant.<sup>97</sup>

96. *IT*, 5 Nov. 1921. See also *CE*, 6 May 1921.

97. *IT*, 29 Oct. 1921.

Had the earl been present, he would have been indignant at hearing himself described as “an aggressively anti-Irish person.” An *Irish Times* reporter repudiated the suggestion six months later: “The truth is that Lord Listowel has always shown a passionate attachment to his country and its people and took little part in politics.” Whatever truth there was in these claims, they no longer counted for anything. Apart from the servants’ wing, which was saved, the mansion was reduced to a shell, and its site on the north side of the Blackwater was thus deprived of what had long been one of the premier architectural adornments of North Cork. Destroyed along with the mansion were “all its wealth of antique furniture and treasures of art,” with the losses totaling as much as £150,000 by the earl’s estimate.<sup>98</sup>

Also burned on the same night as Convamore were Ballywalter House, owned by S. G. Penrose Welsted and located near Castle-townroche, and Rockmills House, owned by Charles Deane Oliver and located near Glanworth. As with Miss Beecher at Convamore, Eleanor Penrose Welsted (her husband was away) and Charles Oliver learned from unwelcome Volunteer intruders that their fine residences, together worth almost £40,000, were immediately to be burned as IRA counterreprisals.<sup>99</sup> Oliver had become very unpopular as a result of what were misleadingly called “agrarian troubles” in the recent past. One night in late February 1920, three disguised and angry young male visitors to his Big House at Ballynahalisk shot him in both legs.<sup>100</sup> A short time earlier, Oliver had refused, contrary to custom, to allow one of his fields to be used for a race meeting held annually at Rockmills. He did so because three men, all of whom had Volunteer or Sinn Féin associations, had taken over the

98. *IT*, 5 Nov. 1921. In responding to the claim for compensation for the burning of Convamore at the Fermoy quarter sessions in late October 1921, the Recorder of Cork granted a total of £85,000—£56,300 for the building, £21,300 for the furniture, and £7,400 for the paintings (*IT*, 29 Oct. 1921). As with virtually all such awards, this sum was later reduced by the Irish Compensation Commission to £66,000 (*IT*, 24 Jan. 1924).

99. *CE*, 9 June 1921. See also *CE*, 6 May 1921.

100. *CE*, 1, 2 May 1920. See also “Copy of Statement Made by Charles Dean[e] Oliver, Rockmills,” 5 Mar. 1920, Dublin Castle Special Branch Files (CO 904/212/352/10–11). These files were published as compact disks under the title *Sinn Féin and Republican Suspects, 1899–1921* in Dublin in 2006 by Eneclann. All references to CO 904 records are to this published set.

conduct of the race meeting “for their own benefit.”<sup>101</sup> Oliver identified these three young men as his assailants and initially intended to prosecute them for the crime of attempted murder,<sup>102</sup> but they were discharged at a pretrial hearing in the following April when Oliver, reportedly intimidated and fearing reprisal, refused to confirm in public his previous statement and identifications to police.<sup>103</sup> Though incontrovertible evidence is lacking, it would be surprising if Oliver’s notoriety as the would-be prosecutor of three young republicans did not play some role in his selection less than a year later as a target for one of the Volunteers’ counterreprisals. Completely destroyed in the fire were not only the residence but also its immensely valuable contents.<sup>104</sup> The parallel fate of Ballywalter House was determined partly by the marked loyalism of its owner (he was a serving magistrate and had been an RIC officer) and partly by its location in the midst of a considerable demesne on which surrounding farmers cast jealous eyes.<sup>105</sup> One adolescent who lived nearby at the time distinctly recalled years later for her son-in-law Cal Hyland that certain named farmers of the area who were IRA members had “removed livestock from Ballywalter and replenished their own farms.” Some of the furniture saved from the fire at this mansion subsequently “adorned a number of local farm houses.”<sup>106</sup>

101. *CE*, 9 Apr. 1921. See also “Report of Outrage” from RIC Sub-District of Kildorrery, 1 Mar. 1920 (CO 904/212/352/21–22).

102. “List of Persons Suspected of Having Been Implicated in the Attempt to Murder Mr. Charles D. Oliver, Rockmills, Dist. of Mitchelstown, Cork E.R.,” on 28 Feb. 1920 (CO 904/212/352/7–9).

103. *CE*, 9 Apr. 1921; “Attempted Murder of Charles Dean[e] Oliver, Rockmills,” by District Inspector T. Walsh, 12 Apr. 1920 (CO 904/212/352/5–6). See also *CE*, 15 June 1920.

104. *CE*, 9 June 1921.

105. *IT*, 22 Oct. 1921. Explaining eight years later why the IRA had burned Ballywalter, Eleanor Penrose Welsted, the widow of its owner in 1921, recalled that before turning her out, “one of the raiders read aloud . . . an order from the I.R.A. saying ‘Ballywalter . . . was to be destroyed because of the military reprisals in the village of Shanballymore and because of his [her late husband’s] loyalist tendencies.’” See “Extract from Statement by Applicant,” undated but 1929, in Application of Eleanor Grace Penrose Welsted to Irish Grants Committee, 26 Jan. 1927, with Statement of Claim and Proofs of Various Dates, Submitted 17 Dec. 1929 (TNA, CO 762/104/1791).

106. E-mail from Cal Hyland to author, 10 Apr. 2009. The demesne farmed by the Welsteds amounted to about 700 acres. After the destruction of their mansion

## BURNINGS OF BIG HOUSES AND VILLAS IN THE VICINITY OF CORK CITY

Volunteer leaders in the Mid Cork and West Cork Brigade areas found themselves confronting essentially the same pressures and threats as those facing Liam Lynch and his men in North Cork—to stop British executions of captured IRA prisoners and to challenge effectively British reprisals against republican activists and their supporters. In these other two brigade areas the linked patterns of revolutionary and counterrevolutionary violence in April, May, and June produced an unusually heavy toll of Big House burnings. The violence on both sides in or near the city from 14 to 24 May was exceptionally brutal: the death from bomb-blast injuries of three policemen in the heart of Cork city; the shooting at point-blank range in bed of a city civilian by a group of loyalist vigilantes in a case of mistaken identity; the killing of a well-known and highly respected Catholic priest (Father James O’Callaghan) by apparently the same vigilantes at the home of Sinn Féin Alderman Liam de Róiste; the death from a bomb blast on Douglas Street of a city Volunteer working on the staff of the *Cork Examiner* and the wounding of three other staff members; and lastly, the authorized demolition by British troops of four houses or pubs in the Blackpool district of the city whose owners were deemed IRA supporters.<sup>107</sup>

These acts of violence set the stage for a dramatic series of IRA burnings. The Volunteer response came two days after official reprisals by crown forces in the Blackpool and Douglas districts. On the night of 25–26 May members of the Mid Cork Brigade burned down “the houses of four well-known loyalists as well as the pavilion of a popular golf club”—the Douglas Golf Links. The residences in question included Kilcrenagh House, “one of the largest in the county,”

the Welsteds departed, leaving the property in the hands of a steward, but local republicans repeatedly frustrated efforts to exploit it for financial gain, with the result that in 1925 the Land Commission, through a “forced sale,” was able to acquire for £14,000 lands that had been valued in July 1921 at over £26,000. See Application of Eleanor Grace Penrose Welsted to Irish Grants Committee, 26 Jan. 1927, with Statement of Claim and Proofs of Various Dates, Submitted 17 Dec. 1929 (TNA, CO 762/104/1791).

107. CE, 16, 18, 24, 25, 26 May 1921; Abbott, *Police Casualties*, 238–39; Borgonovo, *Spies, Informers, and “Anti-Sinn Féin Society,”* 105–16, 164–65; Richard O’Donoghue, ‘. . . Like a Tree Planted . . .’ (Dublin: M.H. Gill and Son, 1967), 90–98; Diarmuid Ó Murchadha, *Liam de Róiste* (Dublin: An Clóchomhar Tta, 1976), 227.

owned by Ebenezer Pike and located at Carrigrohane, four miles southwest of Cork city.<sup>108</sup> The armed and disguised raiders forced the Pikes to dress hurriedly, locked them in the stables with their servants, compelled them all to stay there for two hours, and went from room to room emptying tins of petrol and paraffin. When the Pikes “were released,” observed the reporter for the *Cork Constitution*, “their home . . . was burning furiously in all parts. On the hall door a card was pinned bearing the words—‘This is a reprisal for [the] Blackpool reprisal.’”<sup>109</sup> Ebenezer Pike was a central figure in the commercial life of Cork, serving as chairman of the City of Cork Steamship Company and as a director of the Great Southern and Western Railway Company.<sup>110</sup> According to the *Irish Times*, hardly a neutral source, the Pikes were “most popular with all classes and creeds in the district,” and the destruction of Kilcrenagh was blamed on outsiders. Yet the Unionist politics of the Pikes were well known and must have helped to make them a target. Their losses were “enormous, for valuable furniture, paintings, and art treasures were all consumed in the flames.”<sup>111</sup> Pike later claimed as much as £62,000 in compensation.<sup>112</sup>

Equally prominent in city affairs was a second IRA victim on this occasion, Sir Alfred Dobbin, the owner of Frankfort House on Montenotte Hill, overlooking Lough Mahon. The raiders there took large quantities of petrol from Sir Alfred and Lady Kate Dobbin’s own garage and sprinkled it all around the mansion. Their only concession was to allow Lady Dobbin, a renowned watercolor artist, “to remove about a dozen of her favourite paintings, and shortly afterwards the place was burning fiercely.”<sup>113</sup> Unlike the reasonably popular Pikes of Kilcrenagh, the Belfast native Sir Alfred Dobbin was far from beloved. The proprietor of a highly successful jam factory—Crosse and Blackwell’s—in the city, he was one of Cork’s leading business-

108. *SS*, 28 May, 4 June 1921. See also *II*, 27 May 1921, where the headlines proclaimed “Cork Mansions Burned” and “Counter-Reprisals on Loyalists.”

109. *CC*, 27 May 1921.

110. *SS*, 4 June 1921; “Ebenezer Pike,” [http://www.corkpastandpresent.ie/genealogy/pikescontemporarybiographies/contemporarybiographieso-y/biographies\\_hodges\\_complete\\_267\\_271.pdf](http://www.corkpastandpresent.ie/genealogy/pikescontemporarybiographies/contemporarybiographieso-y/biographies_hodges_complete_267_271.pdf) (accessed 13 July 2012).

111. *CC*, 27 May 1921.

112. *IT*, 18 Oct. 1921.

113. *CC*, 27 May 1921. See also *II*, 27 May 1921.

men and most active loyalists.<sup>114</sup> Dobbin was also vice chairman of the Cork Employers' Federation, a body that squared off frequently in the postwar years with the trade unions representing shop assistants and manual workers during industrial or commercial disputes. "About a year" before Frankfort was burned down, there had been "a protracted strike at one of his concerns."<sup>115</sup> Earlier still, in January 1920, there had even been an attempt to murder him, but it was unconnected with the political revolution that had been gathering strength ever since.<sup>116</sup> His disputes with his own workers and with many others in the city in his leading role with the Cork Employers' Federation no doubt earned him numerous enemies, and this may help to explain why the Volunteers targeted his palatial £25,000 residence for destruction.<sup>117</sup>

The IRA also carried its incendiarism on the night of 25–26 May into the heart of the solidly middle-class and largely Protestant southeastern suburbs of Blackrock and Douglas,<sup>118</sup> where the main sufferers were the owners or occupiers of four residences, including Castle View and Riversdale.<sup>119</sup> Clearly, the properties involved were villas rather than mansions, but the victims were close neighbors and shared a common Protestant respectability. These four villa dwellers and their families had residences ranging in size from nine to thirteen rooms. All of them belonged to the Church of Ireland.<sup>120</sup> Their combined losses were in the range of £5,000 to £10,000.<sup>121</sup> The burning of the pavilion at the Douglas Golf Links inflicted the

114. *CE*, 1 Dec. 1920; *IT*, 1 June 1920.

115. *II*, 27 May 1920.

116. *IT*, 9, 10, 13 Jan. 1920.

117. *IT*, 22 Oct. 1921. See also *IT*, 1 June 1921.

118. For Cork suburban development, see A. M. Fahey, "Place and Class in Cork," in *Cork: History and Society: Interdisciplinary Essays in the History of an Irish County*, ed. Patrick O'Flanagan and Cornelius G. Buttner (Dublin: Geography Publications, 1993), 808–9.

119. *IT*, 27 May 1921; *CE*, 28 May 1921.

120. According to the 1911 manuscript census, which allows us to unravel the complexity of physical and social relationships in this case, the sufferers or their immediate predecessors included the "commission agent" Thomas Sandham (28 Mahon, Blackrock); the medical doctor William Sandham (29 Mahon); the brewer William Hurst Simpson (31 Mahon); and the corn merchant Alfred W. Jacob (168 Ballintemple, Blackrock). See Forms A and B.1 of 1911 MCI under Thomas Sandham, William Sandham, William Hurst Simpson, and Alfred W. Jacob.

121. *IT*, 20 Oct. 1921. See also *IT*, 5, 12 July 1923.

heaviest financial loss, estimated at about £10,000.<sup>122</sup> Its destruction must also have registered as a psychological blow to Protestant suburban loyalism, as was no doubt intended. The city Volunteer leader Michael Murphy later denounced the Douglas Golf Pavilion as “a den of imperialism.”<sup>123</sup>

Preceding this particular set of suburban guerrilla actions were several others during the previous month. In a daring daylight raid on 5 April, a small party of Volunteers brought about the destruction of Glenmalure and Glen Eden, two spacious adjacent villas (each boasting fourteen rooms) at 121 and 122 Ballintemple in Blackrock. The owner of both these properties was John Riordan, a prosperous Catholic “foreman tailor,” but the main target was the occupant of Glen Eden, the bank accountant Robert Farmer Hill, regarded by the IRA as an informer.<sup>124</sup> His alleged offense was to have reported to the police the names of three Volunteers who had solicited from him a contribution to what was often called the “Irish Republican Loan,” with the result that the three men were arrested.<sup>125</sup> A few nights later came the turn of Carrigbawn, Charles J. Young’s substantial villa. A noted Unionist businessman, Young was the manager of the Clyde Shipping Company and had served as the coal controller for all of the south of Ireland for more than three years during and after World War I.<sup>126</sup> His alleged transgression was the same as that of his neighbor Robert Hill (telling the police about republican money collectors), and so too was the penalty.<sup>127</sup>

## BIG HOUSE BURNINGS IN TOM BARRY’S WEST CORK

The most serious and devastating set of British reprisals and IRA counterreprisals during these months occurred in the area of the West Cork Brigade—Tom Barry’s domain. A “devils’ competition”

122. *CC*, 28 May 1921.

123. Borgonovo, *Spies, Informers, and “Anti-Sinn Féin Society,”* 93.

124. *CE*, 6 Apr. 1921; *CC*, 8 Apr. 1921; Borgonovo, *Spies, Informers, and “Anti-Sinn Féin Society,”* 93; Forms A and B.1 of 1911 MCI, under John Riordan and Robert F. Hill.

125. *CC*, 5 Apr. 1921. See also *CE*, 6 Apr. 1921; *IT*, 6 Apr. 1921; *CC*, 6 Apr. 1921.

126. *CC*, 9 Apr. 1921. See also *CC*, 19 Apr. 1921.

127. *CE*, 6 June 1921. Young was, it seems, only the tenant of Carrigbawn (Forms A and B.1 of 1911 MCI, under William F. Anglin; *IT*, 18 Oct. 1923).

in house burnings erupted between the crown forces and the IRA in mid-April, when, in retaliation for a successful Volunteer attack on Rosscarbery police barracks, crown forces burned out the houses of three republican activists in the Clonakilty district, including that of Seán Collins of Woodfield, an older brother of Michael Collins himself.<sup>128</sup> The British even stepped up the pace of burnings after Barry's men retaliated in kind against two well-known Protestant farmers.<sup>129</sup> In doing so, officers at British military headquarters in Cork city publicly issued the following threat at the end of April: "If there are continued [IRA] burnings, [and] if two loyalist houses are burned, three Sinn Féin [dwellings] will be burned officially, and if that does not stop the thing, six will probably be burned."<sup>130</sup>

British officers seemed at first to be little deterred by fears of Volunteer retribution against loyalist Big Houses. After Tom Barry and his comrades unleashed a torrent of offensive actions throughout his area on 14 May (the most dramatic attacks came at Bandon and Dunmanway),<sup>131</sup> the British forces launched a series of reprisals that struck at the territorial heart of the West Cork Brigade—in the district around Crosspound in the Bandon valley near Innishannon. On 24 and 25 May, as authorized by the British military governor, Brigadier General H. W. Higginson, soldiers from the Essex Regiment destroyed five houses in this district "on the grounds that their owners are supporters of armed rebels, and that such armed rebels carried out cowardly and murderous attacks on the forces of the crown, many of whom were unarmed, in the Union and Rural District of Bandon on 14th May 1921."<sup>132</sup> The IRA retaliations against loyalist Big Houses

128. *CE*, 19 Apr. 1921. Seán Collins and his family sustained a huge financial loss. The claim for the destruction of their family homestead at Woodfield amounted to £15,000 (*IT*, 22 Oct. 1921; Forms A and B.1 of 1911 MCI, under John Collins of Woodfield).

129. For the burning by the IRA of the houses of the Protestant farmers Charles W. Harold and William Beasley (Beazley) on 20 April near Crossbarry in the Upton district, see *IT*, 29, 30 Apr., 22 Oct. 1921.

130. *IT*, 30 Apr. 1921. See also *II*, 30 Apr., 2 May 1921.

131. Liam Deasy, *Towards Ireland Free: The West Cork Brigade in the War of Independence, 1917–1921*, ed. John E. Chisholm (Royal Carbery Books ed., Cork, 1973), 273–77.

132. *CE*, 31 May 1921. For British reprisals against republicans in this district of West Cork, see Deasy, *Towards Ireland Free*, 9, 326–27, 351–52. See also Forms A and B.1 of 1911 MCI under Jeremiah and Helena Delaney of Belrose; Daniel and Cath-



for these well-targeted reprisals against leading members of the West Cork Brigade were cumulatively devastating. But Tom Barry's account of the counterreprisals in his *Guerilla Days in Ireland* exhibits several deficiencies.<sup>133</sup> It wrongly suggests that the IRA response was swift, that Big House burnings in West Cork occurred first or at least early in the Innishannon district, and that others followed elsewhere in their wake. His account also leaves out the context for the Innishannon burnings and omits much of great interest about the others.

Months before Barry and the West Cork Brigade focused on Innishannon, they became preoccupied with Rosscarbery, where numerous loyalists were entrenched and where four Big Houses and a spacious Protestant academy were eventually burned. The first Rosscarbery Big House to be destroyed was Burgatia, which lay at the center of two days of high drama at the beginning of February 1921. In a risky maneuver that almost backfired disastrously, Tom Barry led members of the Flying Column of his brigade in commandeering Burgatia on the first day of the month, as a prelude to a concerted attack planned for the next night on the Rosscarbery police barracks about a mile away. While at Burgatia, Barry and his chief comrades put on trial "Lord Tom" Kingston, its owner, for aggressively antirepublican activities, which allegedly included espionage for the British forces and the provision of what amounted to a courier service for "all the Black and Tan mails between Rosscarbery and Clonakilty."<sup>134</sup> Republican sources indicate that Kingston confessed his guilt and was sentenced to death, though he was then "pardoned" on condition of banishing himself from the country;<sup>135</sup> Kingston later insisted that he had never admitted or committed the wrongdoing of which he stood accused.<sup>136</sup> The Volunteers, however, had to beat a hasty retreat when local police learned of their presence on the following morning and almost completely surrounded the site. Anxious to deflect the adverse publicity that this retreat was bound to entail, Barry stealthily returned

erine Lordon of Farranalongh; Ellen O'Donoghue of Ballinadee; and Daniel and Ellen O'Mahony of Belrose.

133. Tom Barry, *Guerilla Days in Ireland* (Dublin: Anvil Books, 1989; first published 1949), 214.

134. *Ibid.*, 78–86 (quotation on 79). See also *CC*, 12 Feb. 1921; *IT*, 25 Apr. 1921.

135. Ryan, *Tom Barry*, 81–84, 95, 283.

136. *IT*, 25 Apr. 1921.

to Burgatia late that night with three other Volunteers; they “entered it, piled up the furniture and bedding, and set the place on fire.”<sup>137</sup> For Thomas Kingston and his wife Annie, the destruction of Burgatia meant the loss of a property worth perhaps £20,000.<sup>138</sup>

Though their initial plan for a full-scale assault against the Rosscarbery police barracks was derailed, members of the West Cork Brigade mounted another and this time successful effort at the end of March 1921. Bombs and fire destroyed the ground-floor rooms of the barracks before its defenders surrendered with heavy casualties—two dead and nine more wounded.<sup>139</sup> Adjacent to the barracks, and almost in the center of the town, stood that venerable and Protestant institution called “The College” (figure 3), which was directed by Mrs. Zoe Louise Becher, wife of the Rev. Harry Becher, the Anglican rector of Rosscarbery.<sup>140</sup> Reputedly the lineal successor of a famous school established in the sixth century by Saint Fachtna, foundress of the diocese of Ross, the college had served “for a long time past” as a Protestant academy,<sup>141</sup> and in 1921 it had perhaps forty students from well-to-do families.<sup>142</sup> After the Rosscarbery RIC barracks had been blown apart, rumors spread that the crown forces were about to occupy the college; the IRA promptly intervened and burned it down on 2 April.<sup>143</sup> About a week later, the Volunteers pressed their advantage, returned to Rosscarbery, and torched Derry House (fig-

137. Deasy, *Towards Ireland Free*, 207–8 (quotation on 208). See also *CE*, 2, 4, 5 Feb. 1921.

138. *IT*, 25 Apr. 1921. Complying with the IRA expulsion order, Kingston and his family left Ireland for England after the burning of Burgatia House. He returned to County Cork in August 1921 only to be confronted at the beginning of September with the seizure of his 168-acre farm at Burgatia and of “all that was in it” by republicans. See Application of Thomas J. and Annie E. Kingston to Irish Grants Committee, 31 Jan. 1927, with Statement of Claim and Proofs of Various Dates (TNA, CO 762/39/605).

139. Barry, *Guerilla Days*, 142–53; Deasy, *Towards Ireland Free*, 255–62; Abbott, *Police Casualties*, 216–17.

140. Forms A and B.1 of 1911 MCI, under Rev. Harry Becher and Zoe Louise Becher of Rosscarbery.

141. *CC*, 6 Apr. 1921.

142. Cal Hyland to author, e-mail of 10 Apr. 2009.

143. *CC*, 6 Apr. 1921. In the following June, Mrs. Becher sought £6,000 in compensation for the burning of the college. The Irish Compensation Commission nominally awarded her about £3,000 in November 1923 (*CE*, 29 June 1921; *IT*, 15 Nov. 1923).



FIGURE 3. The College, Rosscarbery: Protestant academy located adjacent to the local RIC barracks and directed by Mrs. Zoe Louise Becher, wife of the Church of Ireland rector of Rosscarbery. Photograph reproduced by courtesy of the National Library of Ireland.



FIGURE 4. Derry House, Rosscarbery: Recently acquired Big House of the well-known loyalist barrister Alexander Sullivan, His Majesty's first serjeant-at-law for the British administration in Ireland. Photograph reproduced by courtesy of the National Library of Ireland.

ure 4), purchased two years earlier by the prominent barrister Alexander Sullivan.<sup>144</sup> As His Majesty's first serjeant-at-law for the British administration in Ireland, Sullivan was highly unpopular. In fact, he had been the target of an attempted assassination in January 1920 while working as a crown prosecutor in County Kerry.<sup>145</sup> He was widely known for his denunciations of both the Sinn Féin party and republican violence.<sup>146</sup> The destruction of Sullivan's mansion removed one of the few remaining Big Houses in or very near the town as potential accommodation for police or soldiers.<sup>147</sup>

Demonstrating an impressive implacability, members of the West Cork Brigade resorted to incendiarism against two other Big Houses of Rosscarbery loyalists. In the middle of June they sent up in flames the "fine residence" of Cahermore, which "for generations" had been the home of the Hungerford family.<sup>148</sup> And a few nights later, they struck at Merton House. Revealingly described as "convenient to the destroyed police barracks," Merton and its thirteen rooms sheltered the spinster sisters Emily and Beatrice Whitley; they were the daughters of the Rev. Canon John B. Whitley, who had served "for many years" as the Protestant rector of Rosscarbery.<sup>149</sup> The sectarian divide in and around Rosscarbery during the early 1920s was not as wide or as raw as it was in and all around Bandon, where, as Peter Hart

144. *CE*, 12 Apr. 1921; *IT*, 12 Apr. 1921. Sullivan claimed £15,000 for his losses at the Skibbereen quarter sessions in late June 1921, but the judge awarded him only about £5,400 for his house and furniture. The Irish Compensation Commission increased the offer to £8,500—a rare act of generosity on the part of this body, which had almost always reduced earlier grants (*CE*, 22 June 1921; *SS*, 12 Jan. 1924).

145. *IT*, 17 Jan. 1920.

146. *Ibid.* See also *Freeman's Journal*, 20 Jan., 20 Feb., 25 June, 12 July 1920; *Kerryman*, 31 Jan., 20 Mar., 29 May 1920; *SS*, 25 Oct. 1920.

147. *IT*, 12, 16 Apr. 1921. A "company of soldiers" had occupied Derry House for an undetermined period beginning in late May of the previous year (*Freeman's Journal*, 1 June 1920), but there was no mention of their continued presence in a detailed report on the burning (*Kerryman*, 16 Apr. 1921).

148. At the time of its destruction Cahermore was owned by a merchant named Regan, who had purchased the property from representatives of the Hungerford family "some years" after the death of Henry J. Hungerford, JP (*CC*, 18 June 1921; *IT*, 18 June 1921).

149. *IT*, 21 June 1921. See also *CC*, 25 Apr. 1921; *SS*, 25 June 1921; Forms A and B.1 of 1911 MCI, under Beatrice and Emily Whitley. At the very beginning of July a Rosscarbery man named Frank Sullivan, "for some years in the employ" of the Whitley sisters, "was found shot dead," presumably by the IRA (*CE*, 4 July 1921).

controversially maintained, a kind of “ethnic cleansing” occurred.<sup>150</sup> But loyalists in the Rosscarbery district certainly felt that IRA attacks on them contained elements of both politics and religion. And these attacks were aimed not only at members of the Protestant landed elite but also at well-to-do Protestant farmers such as William Wolfe, the holder of a large farm at Maul outside the town.<sup>151</sup> Writing of his treatment both before and after the Truce, Wolfe insisted, “None of my neighbours of different politics and religion were treated in the same fashion as I was.”<sup>152</sup>

Also heavily targeted by the West Cork Brigade were the town and vicinity of Innishannon, where the IRA policy of counterreprisals starkly revealed itself in June—a month that saw as many as eighteen Big Houses go up in flames around the county, by far the most of any month during the conflict. At Innishannon the IRA had earlier executed two men, Frederick C. Stenning and Colonel Warren John Peacocke, the former at the end of March 1921 and the latter at the end of May.<sup>153</sup> Of the two, Peacocke, a war hero, was by far the better known. He was the eldest son of the late Captain W. T. Peacocke, JP, and his widowed mother, Ethel Helen, now the owner of Skevanish House. During the recent war her son had served as an officer in both the Grenadier Guards and the Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers, rising to command his regiment in the Inniskillings and earning both the DSO and the Croix de Guerre.<sup>154</sup> A recent historian has concluded that Peacocke was killed because he was, as the IRA believed, “probably central to British military intelligence operations in Munster.”<sup>155</sup> About two months before Peacocke was murdered in daylight at Skevanish, Stenning had been shot dead at point-blank range one night at the door of his residence. He was the subagent of the gentleman Hugh Moreton Frewen, the owner of the fair-sized mansion called Innishannon House, a staunch loyalist, and the

150. Hart, *I.R.A. and Its Enemies*, 273–92.

151. Wolfe declared that the IRA had “constantly victimised” him prior to the Truce in July 1921. See Application of William Wolfe to Irish Grants Committee, 31 Jan. 1927, with Statement of Claim and Proofs of Various Dates (TNA, CO 762/138/2335).

152. *Ibid.*

153. *CE*, 2 June 1921. See also *CE*, 3 June 1921.

154. Quoted in *CE*, 3 June 1921.

155. Murphy, *Year of Disappearances*, 224–31 (quotation on 231).

holder of fishing and shooting rights in the valley of the River Bandon.<sup>156</sup> In his capacity as subagent, Stenning had collected the rents of house property in the town, and he had also served as Frewen's gamekeeper and woodranger.<sup>157</sup> His performance of these unpopular duties, it seemed, could have played a role in his murder. But almost thirty years later, without mentioning either Peacocke or Stenning by name, Tom Barry in effect revealed that members of the West Cork Brigade had executed both men as spies.<sup>158</sup>

The killing of Peacocke at Skevanish House on 31 May was followed two weeks later by its burning. Already bereft of her distinguished-soldier son, Ethel Peacocke was now deprived on 14 June of a fine gabled Victorian Tudor mansion situated on the wooded hillside overlooking the River Bandon; the "large sum of money" spent in remodeling it about a decade earlier evaporated in the flames.<sup>159</sup> She claimed compensation of £40,000, and though nominally awarded almost £30,000 six months later,<sup>160</sup> Mrs. Peacocke had left for England with her youngest son and his wife shortly before the burning and never rebuilt or returned. As she bitterly lamented to a journalist from her English refuge in Somerset in December 1921, there was nothing to return to: "Her cattle, horses, and farm stock were stolen, and since the Truce . . . everything in her garden, all her farm implements, carriages, electric engine, etc.," had been sold off by the IRA "by public auction without any interference by the British government."<sup>161</sup>

156. Frewen had briefly been an O'Brienite "independent nationalist" MP for North-East Cork in 1910–11, but then resigned and became a signatory of the Ulster Solemn League and Covenant in 1912, an action that nationalists of all stripes would have long remembered against him. He was in "daily anxiety" about "my pretty home at Innishannon" well before its burning. See Anita Leslie, *Mr. Frewen of England: A Victorian Adventurer* (London: Hutchinson, 1966), 195. I am indebted to Dr. Ian d'Alton for this reference and for calling my attention to Frewen's political switch.

157. *IT*, 1 Apr., 27 June, 19 Oct. 1921.

158. Barry, *Guerilla Days*, 110–11.

159. *CC*, 16 June 1921. See also Bence-Jones, *Burke's Guide to Country Houses*, 260.

160. *IT*, 20 Jan. 1922.

161. *IT*, 12 Dec. 1921. In fact, local republicans, after taking control of the property in August 1921, reportedly held as many as "three auction sales on the premises and disposed of all the building materials, fittings, electric lighting plant, and salvage" before the Peacockes recovered possession of the grounds in "a state of complete dilapidation" in August 1923. See "Statement and Proofs," in Application of Mrs. Ethel Helen Peacocke, Earnest Guy Fenwick, and Charles Harry Fenwick to Irish

But the worst incendiarism was yet to come. Ten days after the destruction of Skevanish, the Volunteers returned to Innishannon and burned five more “beautiful residences” overlooking the Bandon river. One of them was not a mansion, but collectively the value of the properties destroyed came close to the figure of £100,000 mentioned boastfully by Tom Barry.<sup>162</sup> Why did this set of conflagrations occur at or near Innishannon? To begin with, a company of the First Battalion of the West Cork Brigade was centered on Innishannon, and it had numbered among its captains Liam Deasy, his brother Miah Deasy, and Denis (Sonny) Crowley. Miah Deasy and Sonny Crowley had both been captured and imprisoned,<sup>163</sup> and there seems to have been strong IRA suspicion that certain loyalists at Innishannon were feeding information to the local police or military authorities. The residences destroyed in the early morning hours of 25 June included Cor Castle (figure 5), a historic mansion occupied by Mrs. Caroline Stephenson and her daughter;<sup>164</sup> Innishannon House, owned by Moreton Frewen, as previously noted, but occupied by the retired Brigadier General F. W. J. Caulfield and his wife; River View House, vacant when burned but occupied “until recently” by the retired Colonel Francis C. Godley and one of his daughters;<sup>165</sup> Prospect House, occupied by Michael Dennehy, JP;<sup>166</sup> and lastly the house—not a mansion—occupied “until lately” by the widow and children of the murdered Francis Stenning. Accompanying these burnings was a raid on the Innishannon post office, with the Volunteers dismantling and carrying off both the telephone and the telegraph apparatus.<sup>167</sup>

In sum, three of the recent or current occupiers of the six burned residences in this area were retired military officers—Peacocke, Caulfield, and Godley. Peacocke may have been only nominally retired.

Grants Committee, 17 Jan. 1929, with Statement of Claim and Proofs of Various Dates (TNA, CO 762/200/3621).

162. *IT*, 19, 22 Oct. 1921, 20 Jan. 1922; *SS*, 3 May 1924.

163. Deasy, *Towards Ireland Free*, 10, 211, 326.

164. Caroline Stephenson had inherited Castle Cor from her mother Sophia Corcor (Forms A and B.1 of 1911 MCI, under Caroline Stephenson of Ardnaclog).

165. Colonel Godley, a native of County Cavan, had spent his military career in India. His wife Maud and his two daughters Margaret and Nora had all been born in India (*ibid.*, under Francis Clement Godley of Kilnamucky).

166. *Ibid.*, under Michael Dennehy of Laherfineen. He was a Catholic JP.

167. *CE*, 25 June 1921. See also *IT*, 27 June, 19 Oct. 1921; *SS*, 25 June 1921.



FIGURE 5. Cor Castle, Innishannon: Home of Mrs. Caroline Stephenson (daughter of Sophia Corcor) in the valley of the River Bandon. Photograph reproduced by courtesy of the National Library of Ireland.

A fourth victim—Michael Dennehy—was a first cousin of the well-known Major General Sir Thomas Dennehy of Brook Lodge near Fermoy, a distinguished army officer and administrator in India and later at Queen Victoria's court (he retired in 1900), and a county deputy lieutenant until his death in 1915.<sup>168</sup> The Stenning family was again singled out as a target; and the Volunteers disabled the Innishannon post office. All these circumstances suggest that while the Big House burnings in the Innishannon district were no doubt IRA counterreprisals, the Volunteers' fixation with Innishannon reflected their belief that this district was a nest of active loyalist enemies.

168. Sir Bernard Burke, *A Genealogical and Heraldic History of the Landed Gentry of Ireland*, new ed. (London: Harrison and Sons, 1912), 177 (hereafter cited as *Landed Gentry*).



## BIG HOUSE BURNINGS IN NORTH CORK

What appears to have been the deliberate targeting of retired British military officers ensconced in Big Houses around Innishannon was repeated in the area of the North Cork Brigade in June 1921. The Mallow district was a particular focus of republican antagonism. The first Mallow Big House to be gutted (on 1 June) was Bearforest on the eastern edge of the town, a handsome residence worth at least £18,000.<sup>169</sup> The owner of Bearforest was Major Charles Purdon Coote. Like Warren Peacocke, Coote was a British war hero. He had gained the rank of temporary major while soldiering with the Royal Army Service Corps in World War I and had been awarded the Belgian Croix de Guerre for bravery.<sup>170</sup> Two days after torching Bearforest, Volunteers set fire to Newberry Manor, about three miles outside Mallow, and though crown forces rushed to the scene, their efforts to save the £25,000 property from destruction were utterly unavailing.<sup>171</sup> Newberry Manor was “the ancestral home” of Colonel John R. Pretymann Newman, a Cork native but now a right-wing Tory MP for a British constituency. His prominence in 1921 as president of the Cork city and county branch of the Irish Unionist Alliance and his repeated denunciations of Irish republican violence at Westminster had doubtless attracted the hostile notice of local Volunteers, quite apart from his British military background.<sup>172</sup> Also laid in ruins on the same night as Newberry Manor was Cecilstown Lodge, a much smaller residence belonging to the spinster sisters Esther Jane and Annie Jones, located five or six miles west of Mallow on the road to Kanturk. At first glance the attack on these two women appears to have lacked a clear target,<sup>173</sup> but this residence had in fact belonged

169. *CE*, 2 June 1921; *CC*, 2 June 1921; *IT*, 22 Oct. 1921.

170. For Coote’s military experience and links to members of the British peerage, see <http://thepeerage.com/p2906.htm> (accessed 11 Dec. 2009).

171. For the sums claimed and nominally awarded in compensation for the burning of Newberry Manor (£25,000 and £19,000 respectively), see *IT*, 22 Oct. 1921, 5, 12 July 1923.

172. *CE*, 3, 11 June 1921; *Guy’s City and County Almanac and Directory, 1921*, 110, <http://www.corkpastandpresent.ie/places/streetandtradedirectories/1921guycitycountyalmanacanddirectory/1921pages96to199/1921%20104-111.pdf> (accessed 17 July 2012).

173. *CE*, 4, 16 June 1921; Forms A and B.1 of 1911 MCI, under Esther Jane and Annie Jones of Cecilstown.

in 1914 to their brother, Major F. G. Jones of the Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers (killed in World War I), and his near neighbor was then the retired British military officer, Major Henry Wrixon-Becher, brother of the biggest local landowner.<sup>174</sup>

Four days after flames enveloped Cecilstown Lodge and Newberry Manor, yet another British ex-officer was made to suffer great loss—the destruction of Castle Cooke and its many priceless contents.<sup>175</sup> The residence of Colonel William Cooke-Collis and his second wife Elizabeth was “a fine building” worth about £26,000 and “occupying a commanding position in beautiful surroundings” on the River Funcheon between Kilworth and Fermoy.<sup>176</sup> In his second career after leaving the British army, Cooke-Collis became a gentleman farmer on a grand scale. One report on the burning of his castle noted that he “carried on farming on a very extensive scale at Castle-cooke and was a well-known and successful exhibitor at many southern [agricultural] shows.”<sup>177</sup> There is some evidence that his extensive agricultural operations aroused local hostility and inspired covetousness among local farmers. In May 1920 he had been threatened with death if he refused to surrender a certain farm to the previous holder, and his cattle had been driven off his land.<sup>178</sup> But his own and his family’s military eminence was probably even more important in provoking this IRA counterreprisal. Cooke-Collis himself had served in the Afghan war of 1879–80, the Sudanese campaign of 1885, and the South African war of 1899–1902, in all of which he was mentioned in dispatches. He had gained the rank of lieutenant colonel in the Royal Irish Rifles, and he also held the special honorific post of Colonel Commanding the Ninth Battalion of the King’s Royal Rifle Corps (the North Cork Militia). In the military hierarchy he was outshone by the eldest son of his first marriage, Major General Sir William

174. For the history of the Jones family at Cecilstown Lodge, see [http://www.corkpastandpresent.ie/places/northcork/grovewhitenotes/castlekevintoclenorparish/gw2\\_171\\_175.pdf](http://www.corkpastandpresent.ie/places/northcork/grovewhitenotes/castlekevintoclenorparish/gw2_171_175.pdf) (accessed 24 Apr. 2010).

175. *II*, 10 June 1921.

176. *CE*, 9 June 1921. The judge who provisionally determined the amount of compensation owed to Cooke-Collis awarded him a total of £26,500—£13,700 for rebuilding the house; £7,900 for furniture and paintings; and £4,900 for other losses (*IT*, 12 Nov. 1921).

177. *CE*, 9 June 1921.

178. *IT*, 1 June 1920.

James Cooke-Collis (1876–1941), who served with the Royal Ulster Rifles in the First World War, was mentioned in dispatches eight times, and received the DSO in 1918.<sup>179</sup> How much of all this was known to the Volunteer leaders who targeted Colonel Cooke-Collis is uncertain, but it seems very likely that there was a general awareness of the blizzard of military distinctions held by this long-established North Cork Protestant and Unionist family.

#### LINKED COUNTERREPRISALS IN THE MACROOM DISTRICT

In the month before the Truce, as the IRA sought with some success to intensify its attacks on the forces of the crown, British military leaders launched what became known as the “big roundup”—a large-scale campaign to lay down a wide circular net around IRA guerrillas in West Cork and southeast Kerry and then to draw the string on this net in the hopes of trapping scores of Volunteers “on the run” and attached to the Flying Columns inside the closed ring. Though this effort failed in its main objective, there were some successes, a number of which appear to have been connected with the burning of certain Big Houses in the Macroom district. On the evening of 8 June 1921, as part of this larger operation, a combined force of Auxiliaries and soldiers belonging to the Essex Regiment, under the command of the brutal Major A. E. Percival, killed a man named Daniel Buckley at Tooms, not far from Ballyvourney. Republican and newspaper sources have left the impression that this killing was either the result of wanton firing or the intentional murder of an unarmed youth only eighteen years old. Without any real conviction the correspondent of the *Cork Examiner* took brief note of the official report that Buckley had been shot “for refusing to halt”—a much-used excuse for many extrajudicial killings by police or troops in these years.<sup>180</sup> But Daniel Buckley, despite his youth, was a Volunteer of some local consequence. His name appears on the Republican Monument in the town square of Macroom, where he is listed as a section commander of the

179. See <http://thepeerage.com/p26249.htm#i262490> (accessed 11 Dec. 2009).

180. *CE*, 10 June 1921. According to this report, Auxiliary cadets shot Daniel Buckley dead. See also Ó Suilleabháin, *Where Mountainy Men Have Sown*, 136–37; Twohig, *Green Tears for Hecuba* (Cork: Tower Books, 1994), 304.

IRA.<sup>181</sup> Besides killing Buckley, Percival's men took two notable prisoners. "For some days" Seán O'Hegarty, commandant of the Cork No. 1 Brigade, had been staying at Tooms "in conference with [local] Commandant Dan Corkery and Adjutant Charlie Browne of Macroom, [along] with Captain Billy Powell of Crookstown." O'Hegarty and Corkery managed to escape from Percival's clutches, but Browne and Powell were captured.<sup>182</sup> Whether the killing of Buckley and capture of Browne and Powell were what prompted local guerrillas to destroy the property of loyalists of the district is not certain, but these British actions seem to have played a significant role in what now transpired.

On the same night (13–14 June) Volunteers burned both Rye Court, the ancestral home of the Tonson Rye family, and Crookstown House, owned by Robert Warren. These two Big Houses lay close together. Rye Court adjoined the Crookstown station on the Cork and Macroom Railway line, and Crookstown House was situated a little more than a mile from the same station. Rye Court, like Mount Massy, had been a local tourist attraction, with "many excursions having been run to the Ryecourt demesne from time to time" by the managers of the Cork and Macroom Railway before 1919. For the destruction of Rye Court, the Volunteers reportedly mobilized in force; they turned out the caretaker Robert Bain and his wife and burned the house to the ground.<sup>183</sup> It could perhaps be argued that the Tonson Ryes had earned a measure of popularity in certain quarters for their Sunday "promenades" and military-band concerts, but what might once have gained them esteem had passed completely out of fashion by 1920–21. When Captain Richard Bailie Tonson Rye died in his early forties as a result of a tragic accident at Rye Court in February 1920,<sup>184</sup> it was noted he "was an all-round sportsman and extremely popular with all classes." During the First World War he had served with the South Irish Horse Regiment and "gained dis-

181. For a photograph of the Republican Memorial, see Twohig, *Green Tears for Hecuba* (Gaelic Press ed.), between 32 and 33. Buckley was the second Volunteer to be killed at Tooms by members of the crown forces under very similar circumstances (CE, 8 Mar. 1921).

182. Twohig, *Green Tears for Hecuba* (Tower Books ed.), 305.

183. CE, 15 June 1921. See also CC, 15 June 1921.

184. CE, 7 Feb. 1920.

tion.” He was the grandson of Captain Richard Tonson Rye, JP, who for some years before his demise in 1907 “was the master of the Muskerry Hounds.” To his sporting prowess and his military honors the grandson added the title of deputy lieutenant—a title held by his father and grandfather before him.<sup>185</sup> But none of this family or personal history would have counted at all favorably among Cork republicans in 1921—quite the reverse.

No hint of popularity attached to Robert Warren, the other victim of Volunteer incendiarism near Macroom on this midsummer night.<sup>186</sup> Warren understood perfectly why he had been singled out for attack. As he later told the Irish Grants Committee, his mansion had been burned “in pursuance of the policy of counter reprisals—my house being selected as one of the loyalist’s houses [*sic*].” From this point forward, Warren was ceaselessly targeted in one way or another. It eventually became impossible for him to reap any reward from the lands that he still farmed. Once the Civil War started in July 1922, his lands “were virtually taken over by the I.R.A. and used as the pasture ground for cattle commandeered by them in the locality.” He and his family quickly tumbled down the social scale. When asked to state his “present financial position” toward the end of 1926, he answered that he was “engaged as steward” to Captain T. A. Clarke of Farran near Macroom and had some “income from investments.”<sup>187</sup> His association with Crookstown demesne had forever been broken.

Four days after Rye Court and Crookstown House had been destroyed, it was the turn of Warren’s Court, the considerably larger mansion of Sir Augustus Digby Warren, located about five miles east of Macroom. Endowed with thirty-two rooms and considered “one

185. Another reason why the Tonson Ryes doubtless had alienated some local republicans was that the family still owned and directly exploited a considerable amount of land. Before his death Captain Richard Tonson Rye “farmed extensively and was a large property owner” (*ibid.*). At the time of the burning the owner of the mansion and demesne—John R. C. Tonson Rye—was legally a minor, and it was to his trustees that the Recorder of Cork nominally awarded compensation of £16,350 in October 1921 (*IT*, 20, 22 Oct. 1921).

186. Warren listed himself as a farmer in the 1911 census and actively worked the extensive Crookstown demesne. Crookstown House had twenty rooms (Forms A and B.1 of 1911 MCI, under Robert Warren of Inchirahilly West).

187. Application of Robert Warren to Irish Grants Committee, 1 Dec. 1926, with Statement of Claim and Proofs of Various Dates (TNA, CO 762/61/950). See also *IT*, 18, 22 Oct. 1921; 15 Nov. 1923.

of the most notable residences” of West Cork,<sup>188</sup> Warren’s Court “was a beautiful home of the old-fashioned type, with a church organ in the vestibule. It is remarkable for the taste with which its grounds are laid [out], with three lakes forming a miniature of Killarney, on which are many swans and wild fowl.”<sup>189</sup> Once again, as in numerous other cases of this kind of IRA incendiarism, there was no likelihood of resistance.<sup>190</sup> Though Dowager Lady Agnes Warren was normally in occupation, she had just left the residence for Dooniskey railway station when in broad daylight on 17 June the home of the Warren baronets for generations was set ablaze by Volunteer raiders (“a party of six strangers”).<sup>191</sup> The devastation of the mansion and its contents was almost total: “Everything except a small quantity of furniture and a few articles of jewellery was destroyed,” including “many valuable works of art.”<sup>192</sup>

The family history of the Warren baronets and the recent experience of their Big House counted heavily against them in 1921 and afterward. These Warrens boasted impressive British military credentials. Two of the sons of the first baronet, Sir Robert Warren (1723–1811), had attained the rank of major general in the British army. More recently, the fifth baronet, Sir Augustus R. Warren (1833–1914), had served with distinction in the Crimean War and the Indian Rebellion of 1857. Upon his death at the advanced age of eighty-one in April 1914, the members of the Macroom Urban District Council, then dominated by Redmondite Home Rulers, offered their condolences to his son and heir by resolution, with its sponsor John Fitzgerald remarking that old Sir Augustus, once the chairman of the Macroom Board of Guardians, “was one of the best types of landlords, was always most popular amongst the tenants, and was in his time a great soldier as well as a good man in every sense of the word.”<sup>193</sup> The seventh baronet, Sir Augustus Digby Warren (1898–1958), who co-owned Warren’s Court when it was burned in 1921, had spent almost no time there in recent years. He was still legally a minor at his suc-

188. *CC*, 18 June 1921.

189. *IT*, 5 Nov. 1921. See also Forms A and B.1 of 1911 MCI under Leonard and Maud Mescel of Kilbarry.

190. *IT*, 20 June 1921.

191. *CE*, 18 June 1921.

192. *CE*, 20 June 1921.

193. *SS*, 11 Apr. 1914.

cession in 1914 to the title, mansion, and demesne. Until almost the end of World War I he was at school, and then at the Royal Military College at Sandhurst as a “gentleman cadet,” being on the verge in December 1917 of a commission in a famous cavalry regiment, the 7th Queen’s Own Hussars.<sup>194</sup> His absence from 1918 to 1923 as a serving army officer in Mesopotamia and India underlined the family’s British imperial allegiances. So too, probably, did lively memories of those many railway excursion trains that had once carried visitors to the demesne for the Sunday concerts of military bands, as at Rye Court, Crookstown House, and Mount Massy.<sup>195</sup> Under all these circumstances the destruction of Warren’s Court during the frenzy of Cork Big House burnings in June 1921 was hardly surprising. Nor did the Truce bring any relief to this “well known loyalist family”; on the contrary, “from July 1921 a determined effort to seize the lands and drive out Lady Warren and her son was made.” Unceasing deprivations by local republicans against the gardens, woods, fishing, and demesne farm of about 700 acres robbed the owners of any profit. “My income from the lands in Cork ceased entirely,” lamented Lady Agnes early in 1927, “and I had to sell them at a great loss.”<sup>196</sup>

#### THE DESTRUCTION OF CASTLE BERNARD AND DUNBOY CASTLE

Among the Big Houses in West Cork that Tom Barry claimed as trophies of his brigade’s campaign of counterreprisals during the same embittered month when Warren’s Court vanished in ashes were two of the grandest in Ireland—the “new” Dunboy Castle (figure 6) and

194. Supplement to *London Gazette*, 20 Dec. 1917, no. 13335.

195. A report about this burning noted that “in days when railway travelling was not a luxury, excursions were frequently run to Warrenscourt by the Cork and Macroom Railway Co.” (*CE*, 18 June 1921).

196. Application of Lady Agnes G. Warren and Sir Augustus G. Digby Warren to Irish Grants Committee, 27 Jan. 1927, with Statement of Claim and Proofs of Various Dates (TNA, CO 762/101/1711). The statement quoted from the Dowager Lady Warren appears at the close of her application; the other quotation about post-Truce events appears in her solicitors’ “Statement of Claim and Proofs” (*ibid.*). All attempts to sell the property by auction or privately were abortive owing to “boycott or intimidation” until 1925, when the owners secretly effected a “forced sale” to a risk taker named Duggan, who got the lands for £5,500, or little more than half their appraised value of £10,000. See “Item No. 8: Loss on Forced Sale of Property”; “Statement of Claim and Proofs” (*ibid.*).



FIGURE 6. Dunboy Castle, Castletownbere: Vast mansion and summer retreat of Henry W. L. Puxley, former Royal Navy cadet, at the edge of Bantry Bay. Photograph reproduced by courtesy of the National Library of Ireland.

Castle Bernard (figure 7).<sup>197</sup> Dunboy was completely gutted by fire on 9 June 1921. In taking note of its destruction the next day, the *Cork Examiner* pointed out that it had been built “in an exquisite situation on the edge of Bantry Bay,” at the western side of Berehaven harbor. Erected by the brothers Henry and John Puxley in the late 1730s, their new residence was initially called Puxley Castle. But in time it acquired a more illustrious name, since it lay “within two hundred yards of the ruins of the celebrated Dunboy Castle,”<sup>198</sup> indelibly remembered as the site of “the prolonged siege of its chieftain O’Sullivan Beare and his Spanish garrison in 1602,”<sup>199</sup> and as “the last stronghold in Munster that held out for Spain against Elizabeth” until its utter destruction and the massacre of its garrison.<sup>200</sup> The

197. Barry, *Guerilla Days*, 214.

198. *CE*, 10 June 1921.

199. *II*, 10 June 1921.

200. *IT*, 5 Nov. 1921.



Puxleys had climbed the ladder of financial success through hefty profits gained from smuggling and especially from copper mining at nearby Allihies.<sup>201</sup> Their descendant Henry Lavallin Puxley began an extraordinary Gothic extension of Dunboy Castle in 1866, but the works were cut somewhat short by the devastating impact of his wife's death in 1872 at the age of only thirty-six. Thereafter the unfinished but still immense new residence was generally used only as a summer retreat. It was shortly before the arrival of his grandson Henry W. L. Puxley, a recent Royal Navy cadet, for a planned summer visit in 1921 that IRA incendiaries hollowed out this famous Big House.<sup>202</sup> Contemporary rumors abounded that Dunboy "was about to be occupied by the military," perhaps even to become a regional base of British operations—a concern that was inevitable since it had for so long been left vacant for most of every year.<sup>203</sup> Having blocked

201. David Dickson, *Old World Colony: Cork and South Munster, 1630–1830* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2005), 407. Though the Allihies copper mines had been closed in 1884, an expensive but eventually futile attempt was made to revive them in the 1920s under the ownership of Messrs. Kelly Brothers of Dublin, who reportedly invested about £100,000 in up-to-date machinery, plant, and miners' housing (*CE*, 4 July 1921).

202. See "Edwin Rowland Guinness," [http://www.gallot.co.nz/Guinness/Edwin\\_Rowland\\_Guinness.htm](http://www.gallot.co.nz/Guinness/Edwin_Rowland_Guinness.htm) (accessed 13 Apr. 2011). The Puxley brothers—Henry W. L. (born 1898) and John P. L. (born 1900)—both had Royal Navy ties. Henry had spent his adolescent years as a cadet at the Royal Naval Colleges of Osborne and Dartmouth or at sea, while his slightly younger brother seems to have done the same and eventually became a lieutenant commander in charge of a smaller naval vessel (*ibid.*). It is not certain whether their Royal Navy ties were widely known around Castletownbere, but there is reason to think that some local republicans would have been aware of them. The caretaker of Dunboy Castle at the time of the 1911 census was the Englishman Alfred E. Thompson, a Royal Navy pensioner. He was young enough (forty-three in 1911) to be still in the post in 1921. See 1911 MCI under Alfred Thompson of Killaconenagh.

203. *II*, 10 June 1921. See also *CC*, 10 June 1921. For earlier British military reprisals against at least five alleged "supporters of armed rebels" on the Berehaven peninsula (their houses were destroyed on 23–25 May), see *CC*, 28 May 1921. As part of the "big roundup" in June, British troops were scouring the districts around Castletownbere and bringing suspected IRA activists back to the Castletown pier, where they were taken by steamer to the British military camp and prison on Bere Island, a mile offshore (*CE*, 14 June 1921). During the First World War, Bere Island had been the home port of the British Atlantic Fleet; the common saying then was that from the island "you could walk to Castletownbere across the decks of anchored warships." Any major reinforcement of British troops in West Cork in 1921 was likely to come by sea into Bere Island and through Castletownbere.



FIGURE 7. Castle Bernard, Bandon (Garden Front): Mansion of the 4th Earl of Bandon and Georgina, Countess of Bandon. Photograph reproduced by courtesy of the National Library of Ireland.

all the roads leading to the castle to frustrate any attempt to save it, the incendiaries created what was for decades “one of Ireland’s most spectacular ruins.”<sup>204</sup> Puxley sought as much as £130,000 in compensation, though he was nominally awarded only £60,000 at the Skibbereen quarter sessions in the following October.<sup>205</sup>

The most heralded or lamented Cork Big House burning (depending on one’s political stance) in the final weeks of the conflict was that of Castle Bernard, home of the Fourth Earl of Bandon and his wife Georgina, on 21 June.<sup>206</sup> The value of the property destroyed was alone eye-popping. With thirty-seven rooms this mansion was among the biggest in all of County Cork, and it was stuffed with a variety of very costly fittings, paintings, antique furniture, silver plate, special collections of old china and lace, and a library full of rare

204. “Dunboy Castle Hotel,” <http://www.cornerstoneconstruction.ie/dunboy.html> (accessed 13 Apr. 2011). See also *CC*, 10 June 1921.

205. *II*, 22 Oct., 5 Nov. 1921. See also “Edwin Rowland Guinness,” [http://www.gallot.co.nz/Guinness/Edwin\\_Rowland\\_Guinness.htm](http://www.gallot.co.nz/Guinness/Edwin_Rowland_Guinness.htm) (accessed 13 Apr. 2011).

206. *CE*, 22, 23 June 1921; *CC*, 23 June 1921.

books.<sup>207</sup> The total compensation nominally awarded some months later was nearly £122,000, of which £62,000 was for the castle itself, and the rest for all its lost or damaged contents.<sup>208</sup> It is easy enough to understand why Lord Bandon finally became a target. His position as the most prominent and decorated Unionist in County Cork caused republicans to view him with considerable hostility.<sup>209</sup> He enjoyed a titular eminence above that of all others still refusing to resign as British magistrates or officials. He was also “the honorary colonel of the Royal Cork City Artillery.”<sup>210</sup> During the First World War he had been an enthusiastic local recruiter for the British army, addressing many public meetings around the county to promote enlistment.<sup>211</sup> And on the resignation of Lord Barrymore of Fota Island in April 1919, he had been chosen as the new president of the Cork city and county branch of the Irish Unionist Alliance.<sup>212</sup> It would be an exaggeration to say that Lord Bandon was a figure of hate among West Cork Volunteers. Rather, he was a magnified symbol of the staunch loyalism that these republicans were fiercely determined to smash, and his eminence gave him the potential to be the ideal hostage against the execution of any more IRA prisoners.

His value in this capacity was what brought a party of nine or ten Volunteers led by Seán Hales, commander of the IRA’s Bandon battalion, to Castle Bernard in the first place. Hales and his men originally had no intention of destroying the grand mansion. They searched it for the earl, but the sheer enormity of the place initially defeated them. At that point Hales reportedly told his comrades, “As the bird has flown, we will burn the nest.” Only after the blaze had been set going did two of Hales’s men locate Lord and Lady Bandon in a different wing of the residence altogether. Thus the fire that reduced Castle Bernard to a shell was a spur-of-the-moment decision.<sup>213</sup>

207. *IT*, 5 Nov. 1921.

208. *IT*, 8 Oct. 1921. These sums were later revised downward by the Irish Compensation Commission, which allowed a total of only about £80,000—£37,500 for the destruction of the castle and £42,300 for the loss of its contents (Clifford Lloyd and Son to editor, *Irish Times*, 9 Oct. 1924, quoted in *IT*, 10 Oct. 1924).

209. Tom Barry castigated the earl and his ancestors (*Guerilla Days*, 218).

210. *IT*, 22 June 1921.

211. *IT*, 19 May 1924.

212. *IT*, 7 Apr. 1919.

213. Deasy, *Towards Ireland Free*, 296–97. See also *II*, 22 June 1921. The abduction of Lord Bandon was part of a larger set of IRA kidnappings that at first included

While there is abundant documentation about the burning of Castle Bernard and the abduction of Lord Bandon, too little is known about the destruction a week later of two neighboring Big Houses—Mayfield, the residence of Hewitt R. Poole, JP, and Kilcolman, occupied by Mrs. E. M. A. Longfield, the widow of John Edmund Longfield, JP. Though not so opulent as Castle Bernard, Mayfield and Kilcolman were among the biggest mansions in the Bandon district; Mayfield boasted twenty-one rooms and Kilcolman as many as thirty.<sup>214</sup> The burning of both on the same night (28 June) provided an exclamation point, if one were needed, to the devastation of Castle Bernard, and that was no doubt part of the intent.<sup>215</sup> In addition, the Longfields of Kilcolman had old and strong connections with the British army. The recently deceased John Edmund Longfield had risen to the rank of captain in the King's Royal Rifle Corps; his father had been a British army general (his mother was the daughter of a former Anglican rector of Desertserges).<sup>216</sup> The Pooles too had military associations. The father of Hewitt R. Poole had been a major in the Royal Munster Fusiliers.<sup>217</sup> The British loyalism of these two families, compounded perhaps by their military traditions, may be sufficient to explain why the West Cork Brigade destroyed their mansions in the early morning hours of 28 June. Less than a week earlier, IRA GHQ

three other neighboring magistrates (*CE*, 23 June 1921). The earl's long ordeal finally came to an end shortly after 6:00 p.m. on 12 July, when a driver selected by the IRA returned him by motorcar to the now ruined Castle Bernard. For accounts of Lord Bandon's ordeal, see *IT*, 22 June, 9, 14 July, 8 Oct. 1921, 21 Jan., 6, 8 Mar. 1922; Ryan, *Tom Barry*, 135; Father James Coombes, *A History of Timoleague and Barryroe* (Timoleague: Muintir na Tíre [Friary Preservation Committee], 1969), 78–79. Despite damage to his health, Lord Bandon at least did not end up among “the disappeared,” as was the fate of the retired British officer Major Henry de Berry of Reenadisert near Bantry, the Skibbereen-district magistrate Eugene A. Swanton, and the judicial official D. M. J. O'Connell of the Baltimore district, all of whom never returned from IRA captivity. For an official British list of the “disappeared,” see *IT*, 22 Aug. 1921.

214. Forms A and B.1 of 1911 MCI, under John Edmund Longfield of Cashel (Kilcolman townland), Bessie Poole of Ballymodan, and Ellen Somerville of Myross; Burke, *Landed Gentry of Ireland*, 570.

215. *CE*, 29 June 1921; *CC*, 29 June 1921; *IT*, 29, 30 June 1921. From Mayfield only “two van loads of furniture” and some family portraits were saved. See Rosemary ffollott, *The Pooles of Mayfield and Other Irish Families* (Dublin: Hodges Figgis, 1958), 282. I wish to thank Dr. Ian d'Alton for calling my attention to this last source.

216. Burke, *Landed Gentry*, 417–18.

217. *Ibid.*, 570.

in Dublin had authorized not only Volunteer counter-reprisals on a one-for-one basis in all brigade areas but also, in regions of persistent British reprisals, a whole series of such actions, “stopping only when the district concerned has been entirely cleared of active enemies of Ireland.”<sup>218</sup> Of all regions in County Cork in the final months before the Truce, Bandon fell most readily into this category for especially severe IRA retaliation.

### THE LAST PRE-TRUCE BIG HOUSE BURNINGS

The last two Cork Big Houses wrecked before the Truce—Forest House and Lohort Castle—were among the most unusual of the more than forty ruined during the conflict. Burned down on 7 July 1921, Forest House was the property of James Gollock, whose family had been settled in the Coachford district for many generations.<sup>219</sup> Ever since the abortive Dripsey ambush, the consequent executions of six IRA men, and the retaliatory Volunteer killings of Maria Lindsay and James Clarke in February and March 1921, the Coachford area had been a frightening place for local Protestants and loyalists. Long before these recent troubles, the Gollocks had turned the demesne lands around Forest House into the home ground of the Muskerry Hunt Club, which boasted the oldest pack of hounds in the whole country (established in 1742). The thirty-six out-offices of Forest House in 1911 included seventeen stables, a harness room, and a forge along with twelve kennels and five other buildings. Living in a modest house on the demesne in that year was the Englishman Thomas Davies, the “stud groom”; he headed a household that included seven ordinary grooms, a huntsman, and one male farm servant.<sup>220</sup> Moreover, the tenant occupier of Forest House in 1921 was the British war hero Lieutenant Colonel Isaac W. Burns-Lindow, the master of this famed hunting club.<sup>221</sup> It is unclear whether the

218. Quoted in O’Donoghue, *No Other Law*, 332.

219. *CE*, 9 July 1921.

220. Forms A and B.1 of 1911 MCI, under Thomas Davies of Cannaway.

221. Burns-Lindow had already been master of the South Union Hounds near Cork city from 1908 to 1917. As a captain in the 8<sup>th</sup> Hussars Regiment, he had served throughout the Anglo-Boer War of 1899–1902, in which he suffered severe wounds. He returned to the colors with the eventual rank of lieutenant colonel (commanding) in the South Irish Horse Regiment (SIH) during World War I, when he received

IRA in early July of that year tried to destroy the stables and kennels as well as Forest House itself, but it is probable that, besides personal animosity toward the high-ranking and pro-imperial officer Burns-Lindow, there was trouble over the horses, which Volunteers all over the county made a habit of commandeering from loyalists for republican use.<sup>222</sup> In addition, the Muskerry Hunt Club constituted the social cement for what remained of the old Protestant gentry of the locality, and a resort of military officers in the vicinity, and Forest House may have been targeted partly on that account.

The burning of Lohort Castle and its outbuildings two days earlier made uninhabitable the former Irish residence of the Earls of Egmont and (more recently) the home of the famous sportsman Sir Timothy O'Brien.<sup>223</sup> By about 1830 the Earls of Egmont (the Perceval family) had turned Lohort into "a square keep, about 90 feet in height, consisting of kitchen, armoury, drawingroom, [and] bedrooms, [with] a beautiful view being had from the battlements." In the 1860s the sixth earl had "expended a considerable sum in converting this historic castle into a modern residence."<sup>224</sup> But within a decade of recovering the property from the heirs of their former agent in 1863, the Percevals' fortunes collapsed in the early 1870s, when a wealthy Dublin publican named O'Brien purchased the castle and estate. His son Sir Timothy O'Brien, who inherited the property from his father in 1882, achieved great renown on the cricket ground. He "was a famous batsman with the English cricket team and financed and organised the setting up of the Lords Cricket Grounds in London." In addition, "he had the unique distinction of representing both [the] Ireland and England cricket teams at international level." His enthu-

the DSO (in 1915) and was mentioned in dispatches four times. He relinquished his commission in the SIH in 1922 when his regiment was disbanded. He apparently retreated to Cumberland on the Scottish border in the 1920s and died there in June 1946. See "Lieutenant-Colonel I.W. Burns-Lindow, D.S.O., South Irish Horse," <http://www.royalmunsterfusiliers.org/07lindow.htm> (accessed 17 July 2012). For his obituary, see *The Times*, 21 June 1946. See also *Guy's City and County Directory, 1921*, 113 (under "Hunt Clubs"), <http://www.corkpastandpresent.ie/places/streetandtrade/directories/1921guyscitycountyalmanacanddirectory/1921pages96to199/1921%20112-117.pdf> (accessed 17 July 2012).

222. See, e.g., *CE*, 12 July 1921.

223. *CE*, 7 July 1921. See also *II*, 8 July 1921.

224. *IT*, 5 Nov. 1921.

siasm for cricket, however, far exceeded his interest in his Cork estate, and though he had earlier made a great name for himself among the North Cork gentry as a member of the Cecilstown Cricket Club and the Duhallow Hunt Club, the tumultuous years 1919–21 found Sir Timothy spending his time socializing in London or Dublin and neglecting the property. He could easily afford to do so, having sold the surrounding woodlands in 1918—in the midst of what was almost “a timber famine in Ireland”—to Eustace and Company, a Cork city firm of timber merchants, at an inflated price.<sup>225</sup> Because the castle stood unoccupied, the British army had taken it over and used its battlements almost ninety feet above ground as an observation post. Deciding in the waning days of the war to deny their enemy this prized intelligence facility, local Volunteers set fire to the structure on 5 July and succeeded in badly burning the top half of the castle—the half that mattered most.<sup>226</sup> Sir Timothy claimed compensation of as much as £101,500, but with a sale pending, the judge who adjudicated this claim nominally awarded the pittance of only £14,000 to the prospective new owners since he believed that “it was most unlikely that they would attempt to re-build the structure.”<sup>227</sup>

## CONCLUSION

This examination of Big House burnings in 1920–21 does not offer any significant support to the view that members of the embattled Protestant landed elite of Cork were victimized because of their religion. What especially invited the hostility of the IRA were the political and social entanglements of particular landed families with the crown forces. Offers to provide billets, or (worse) the actual provision of accommodation, to soldiers or police commonly prompted burnings, as did gentry refusals to abandon service as magistrates or as deputy lieutenants and various other forms of collaboration with British rule. Admittedly, a few Big Houses were probably burned simply because of rumors of possible military occupation. On the other hand, there can be no doubt that among the targets of this type

225. “Sir Timothy O’Brien (1860–1928),” <http://www.iol.ie/~edmo/obrien.html> (accessed 6 May 2011). See also *IT*, 5 Nov. 1921.

226. *CE*, 7 July 1921.

227. *IT*, 5 Nov. 1921. See also *IT*, 22 Oct. 1921.

of IRA violence, gentry families headed by retired British military officers or boasting a tradition of British military service were highly conspicuous. Their prominence strongly suggests that the staunch Unionist political beliefs and fervent loyalism of these Big House owners or of their tenant occupiers often found concrete expression in active assistance of one kind or another to the crown forces. For Volunteer leaders like Tom Barry, Colonel Warren Peacocke of Skev-anish House was representative of a much wider problem: “There was a large number of retired British military and naval officers resident in West Cork, and some, while posing as civilians, worked feverishly to destroy the I.R.A. Nominally retired, they were back again in the active service of king and country.”<sup>228</sup> The leaders of the Mid and North Cork IRA brigades doubtless shared Barry’s views in this matter. Even if some of these former British officers did not collaborate in the ways perceived by local republicans, the category into which all such ex-officers fell provoked deep suspicion and pervasive hostility among Volunteers, whereas a mere Protestant (or Protestant and landed) identity usually did not—or at least not to the same degree.

The tribulations of Cork Big House owners whose mansions were burned down, and the sufferings of others of their class and political persuasion who escaped this fate, did not close with the Truce. Many in both categories continued to be hammered financially by Cork republicans as a matter of IRA policy or local practice for some years afterward. Though a host of landed Cork Protestants fled to Britain or Ulster in the early 1920s (Protestant departures were hardly limited to the landed),<sup>229</sup> the republicans of the county in some ways obstructed the process of final separation. Before and after the Truce Tom Barry and his IRA colleagues “completely banned all sales of residences and properties [belonging to ‘British loyalists’] unless by permit from the West Cork Brigade. All sales came to a standstill consequent on the posting throughout West Cork of notice to this effect. No auctioneer would attempt to sell and no buyer could be tempted to purchase loyalists’ residences and land even at ‘knock down’ prices.” Barry’s dictum was, “Let those Britishers flee, but they would leave without

228. Barry, *Guerilla Days*, 106.

229. Hart, *I.R.A. at War*, 223–40; Murphy, *Year of Disappearances*, 247–48, 324–30; David Fitzpatrick in *Dublin Review of Books*, 17, [http://www.dr.b.ie/more\\_details/11-03-17/History\\_In\\_A\\_Hurry.aspx](http://www.dr.b.ie/more_details/11-03-17/History_In_A_Hurry.aspx) (accessed 31 Aug. 2011).



the proceeds of their Irish properties.” In euphemistic language that turned what loyalists considered an outrageous species of theft into a seemingly altruistic cause, Barry recalled that “we encouraged local landless men to settle on the lands and use them.”<sup>230</sup> In fact, the general command issued by IRA GHQ on 22 June 1921 not only sanctioned burning the Big Houses of “*actively anti-Irish*” loyalists but also deemed it “desirable” that the members of such families should be ordered out of the country and “have their lands confiscated.”<sup>231</sup> This mercenary aspect of the Irish Revolution and its aftermath in County Cork deserves extended treatment on another occasion as a sequel to the events analyzed in this article.

230. Barry, *Guerilla Days*, 117.

231. O’Donoghue, *No Other Law*, 332–33.