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The Third Tipperary Brigade (1921-1923)

*Part 2 — From Ambushes to Executions**

by An tAthair Colmcille, O. Cist.

— 1 —

After the fall of Clonmel the Republican forces decided to revert to the guerilla tactics which had been used with such effect against the British. The large columns which had operated under Dinny Lacy in the defence of Carrick and Clonmel were broken up and the Battalion Active Service Units re-organised.

There were still in existence two large columns approximating to Brigade Columns. One was commanded by Commdt. Martin Breen; although predominantly a 4th Battalion column, it also included units of the 2nd, 3rd, 7th and 8th Battalions. It consisted of 60 men and two machine-guns.

The second large column, about 70 men and two machine-guns, was composed of men of the 5th and 6th Battalions. This column had a succession of commanders, beginning with Jack Killeen until his capture by Free State forces near Kilcash on his way to a Brigade meeting. The column was then commanded for a short time by Commdt. Paddy Dalton — “Big Paddy” — the Vice-Brigadier, later killed in action.

He was succeeded by Tom Sadlier, whose brother Dinny had been accidentally killed shortly before the Truce in 1921. Another brother, Mick, was shot while an unarmed prisoner by Free State troops near Cashel towards the end of the year. Tom Sadlier was succeeded by Jim Nugent, who was column commander when the Civil War ended.

If the Free State authorities thought that the fall of the last Republican stronghold in Tipperary meant that war there had come to an end, they were mistaken. Sniping of Free State posts had been taking place extensively at Carrick and Tipperary, and now spread to Clonmel. However, a more aggressive policy was now to be adopted; Republicans were to take the offensive.

The Rosegreen area was again selected as Field HQ of the 3rd Tipperary Brigade; from there Brigadier Lacy directed a well-planned offensive against the Provisional Government. Not content to remain in the safety of the headquarters, he travelled ceaselessly from one end of the brigade area to the other, taking part in many fights, encouraging his men to attempt difficult deeds by his own example.

Clonmel had fallen on 9 August, and Fethard and Cahir had been taken without opposition on 14 August. In these towns the local population gave a welcome to the incoming troops. It now became clear to the Republicans that this new war would have to be fought without the help of the civilian population.

One of the greatest difficulties the British had had to contend with in their military operations was a hostile populace. The people were with the flying columns, and the people’s active sympathy with the IRA played no small part in the final victory.

Now the boot was on the other foot. It was now the Republicans who had to contend with a hostile

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populace and the Free State Army which had the benefit of the people's sympathy. This more than any other factor eventually brought victory to the Free State.

On leaving Clonmel the Republican garrison, now a flying column, moved along the old Kilganey road to Derrinlaur — the road, according to some, that Hugh O'Neill used when he left Clonmel in May 1650. Here the men billeted for the night, moving next day across the hills to the Nire, the next night again to Four-Mile-Water, arriving at Grange near Knocklofty on Saturday 12 August.

Here word was received that the Free State Army under General Prout was to hold a victory parade the next day to SS. Peter and Paul's church in Clonmel. A machine-gun section set out for Scrouthea, almost directly over the Main Guard, arriving about dawn. They remained concealed in the furze until the troops were due to march to Mass.

As the soldiers, armed with rifles and preceded by a band, came up Gladstone Street, fire was opened with the Lewis gun. Pandemonium broke out in the street, soldiers and civilians throwing themselves on the ground or fleeing in all directions. Luckily no one was killed. This attack had no sanction from the Brigade, Battalion or Column commander; Killeen had not yet taken up his post as column commander.

Great tension now prevailed between the soldiers and prisoners they held in the town hall. Shortly after the firing a prisoner who cheered was ordered to draw in his head from the window; he refused, and was shot dead by a sentry. An inquest was opened but fell through; the military authorities either would or could not produce as witnesses fellow-prisoners of the dead man, Volunteer Michael Condon, D Company, 5th Battalion, from Aughavolomaun near Newcastle.

The men responsible for this attack moved into the Nire Valley and rejoined the column at Newcastle. The entire column attended Condon's funeral to the burial ground at Mollough.

The column next moved into the Derrygrath area, where on Wednesday 16 August it was in action in the first large-scale ambush of Free State troops since their occupation of South Tipperary. That day a company of Free State troops (described as units of the 3rd Tipperary Brigade) under Captain Mullaney moved towards Cahir to reinforce the garrison there. Information reached the Republican column about this party, and positions were taken up on a height over the Cahir-Clonmel road on the south side, in the townland of Kilmurry, in an avenue leading to a farm-house on a hill.

The main road was blocked and men posted in the avenue. The Free State forces came through Woodruffe demesne, dismounting from their lorries and advancing through the demesne in extended formation.

The Free State troops reached the gate leading to the main road near the little church, where three British officers had been executed a year earlier, and the attack commenced just as the order was given to re-enter the lorries. Comdt. Killeen was in command; the attack began with a burst of machine-gun fire and then the riflemen poured volley after volley into the Free State ranks. Taking cover they returned fire, and soon the fight was raging furiously.

Killeen called several times for a surrender; it was refused. After an hour he signalled his men to retire. The Republicans suffered no loss; Free State losses were three killed and nine wounded. The military returned to Clonmel with their dead and wounded.

Coming so soon after the Republican retreat from Clonmel, this ambush caused a sensation among the citizens of Clonmel, most of them strongly pro-Free State. It also showed the Free State military authorities that the war was not yet over.

Clonmel at this time was practically isolated. The troops were largely immobilised in the town because of IRA activities and were unable to secure reinforcements. After the ambush the column moved east of the town and billeted in the Powerstown and Redmondstown districts.



On 21 August information was received that a convoy was expected from Dublin by the Killusty road. The large party was believed to include some high-ranking officers from the Free State Intelligence Dept. This party did not arrive; instead, one intelligence officer, Col. Frank Thornton, accompanied by a sergeant and three privates, came.

A site for an ambush was hurriedly selected on the slope beyond Kiely's house at Redmondstown, about 200 yards beyond the bridge carrying the railway over the road to Kilmore and some 20 yards beyond the turn to Ballinvoher. The road was blocked by felling a tree.

The tree had hardly been felled when a Ford car containing five Free State soldiers came along. Its occupants were called on to halt; having seen the obstruction, they were already dismounting. Both sides opened fire almost simultaneously and the whole affair was over in a minute. The driver and another soldier were mortally wounded and Col. Thornton badly wounded.

Thinking they had only met the advance party, the attackers hesitated to approach, but realising then that there was only one carload Killeen went to the wounded. Believing Thornton to be dying, they improvised a stretcher and carried him to Kiely's house, while one of them, a doctor, gave first-aid.

The men who carried Thornton were loud in their praise of his courage. Killeen gave a passing cyclist a note addressed to the Free State commander, informing him that a wounded officer lay on the roadside at Redmondstown. A passing priest from Gambonsfield administered to Thornton and to the two soldiers, who died shortly afterwards. The Republican troops helped to put the Colonel in an ambulance that arrived. The two uninjured soldiers were taken as prisoners and released after a few days.

The Republican column now retired towards Thorney Bridge and later to the Killurney and Kilcash districts. On Monday 28 August a large Free State convoy making for Kilkenny was ambushed near Mullinarinka Cross. The troops had dismounted from their lorries when fire was opened on them soon after dawn.

They took cover, and the engagement lasted until about 7 a.m. The Free State claimed that a flanking movement led to the capture of some prisoners, among whom were mentioned Brennan and Cronin of Clonmel. But a Free State captain was wounded, and in the encounter a military lorry had to be abandoned.

Republican forces were also in action north of the Galtees. A big ambush took place at Kilfeacle on Friday 18 August. A Free State force travelling from Tipperary to Thurles in three vehicles was attacked near the old moat. Brigadier Dinny Lacy was present and took command.

Just as the troops drove into the IRA positions, a shot went off accidentally. This was the signal for the general outburst of firing, the attack being opened by the Republicans. The troops jumped out of their cars and took cover.

Very severe fighting lasted for about an hour, with machine-gun and rifles used on both sides. Three Free State men, including two officers, were seriously wounded, one being Capt. McCormack. O/C Thurles. All the Free State vehicles were put out of action.

The ambushed party was in fact threatened with annihilation and in danger of being surrounded, when reinforcements arrived from Golden under Brigadier Jerry Ryan. The IRA's rear was now threatened, so Lacy ordered a withdrawal. The Republicans are said to have withdrawn so secretly that the two Free State parties kept up a fierce fire on each other, each thinking the other was the opponent!

On Tuesday afternoon 29 August another Free State party travelling from Tipperary was ambushed near Ballinahow cross-roads, two miles west of the town. They jumped out of the lorries and returned fire. The attack did not last long, the Republicans withdrawing after a brief exchange of shots.



The same day another ambush occurred on the Tipperary-Cashel road. Free State troops commanded by Brigadier Ryan left their lorries; taking up positions on the roadside, they engaged the attackers, three of whom (Free State accounts claimed) were taken prisoners. The same troops were ambushed on the return journey, a short distance outside Cashel. This however, was a disaster for the Republicans, as the whole column, with all its armament and equipment, was captured.

Meanwhile Killeen's column, which had been moving from Slievenamon to the Knockmeal-down mountains, was back in the Derrygrath area, one of its favourite spots for ambushing troops passing regularly along the main Clonmel - Cahir road. The position for a fight, an elevated one over the road, was excellent; but should information leak out as to the column's presence, it could become a trap, as it was surrounded by good by-roads which opponents' vehicles could use.

On one occasion it was nearly a death-trap for the column; as preparations were being made for an ambush, the men were observed and information relayed to Cahir and Clonmel. A small party of troops from Clonmel in a tender escorted by a car had reached a point just beyond Barne when they saw part of the column near Woodroof.

They returned to Clonmel, where plans were made to surprise and capture the column; word was sent to the Cahir garrison. Four lorries packed with troops, and a tender and two armoured cars, left Clonmel to round up Killeen's column; a large force of soldiers, including a machine-gun section, also left Cahir.

How the original Clonmel Free State party got back to the town without being observed by IRA outposts at Woodroof cannot be explained. Either no scouts or sentries were posted or they were not on the alert. Some laxity occurred.

The reinforced body of troops who arrived later also succeeded in getting to close quarters with Republican forces unobserved. Leaving the lorries, the main body moved towards the Republican positions in extended formation. The aim was to surround the column — and it nearly succeeded.

The main Republican force was stationed on the hill as on the previous occasion, but the commander with a few men was down near the road in the land of Derrygrath House. This was a bad position because a by-road ran past it. No. 1. Machine-Gun Section under Jim Nugent was on the left flank on the hill; No.2 Section under Jack Aylward was on the right nearer the road.

It was intended to allow the Free State lorries to move into the centre of the position before opening fire. However, no attempt was made to block or man the by-roads and boreens leading to and behind the Republican positions. This oversight was to have serious results.

While the lorries were still coming up the road and the column awaiting orders to fire, shots rang out on the right. Those on the left realised that something had gone wrong. The Free State troops had come up on foot and were now behind those on the right. Armoured cars now came up the by-road and, as the position became dangerous, Killeen ordered withdrawal.

When the men had withdrawn some distance they found that part of the Free State force had got behind them to cut them off. A section of the column then entered the haggard of Heffernan's house on Cuckoo Hill; from behind a stone wall they opened fire on a Free State party advancing on the house.

Mr. James Heffernan, not knowing the Republicans were in his haggard and fearing that he and his employees in the yard might be killed, rushed into the house and waved a white handkerchief, calling out that the house was unoccupied. Free State troops rushed forward to take what they thought was a surrender. The Republicans, seeing the Free State troops coming on as if to attack, opened fire at close range and the leading soldier, Volunteer Hanley of Cashel, was killed.

Much was made in the press of the tactics of the "Irregulars" in their "abuse" of the white flag. Commdt. General Seamus Robinson sent a protest to the *Clonmel Chronicle* and another letter from Mr. Heffernan, a Free State supporter, was also published explaining the misunderstanding.



The column section which had taken up positions in the haggard got away unnoticed, crawling along a ditch. It reached Nicholastown without loss. Another section after sharp fighting got back to Lisnamuck.

This fight had lasted about two hours; at one time it looked as if Killeen's column had fought its last action. The official Free State version called the action a great success and claimed that several "Irregulars" were hit, one at least seriously. An account in the *Clonmel Chronicle* stated that the Republicans had cleared off, "carrying with them their wounded", and that "at least two of the Irregulars are believed to have been killed."

Much of this was Free State propaganda, intended to conceal the fact that the manouevre, designed to round up the Flying Column, had failed. The latter was to fight another battle almost in the same place in a few weeks. It had broken through the encirclement and fought its way to safety, without any loss or even a single casualty. On the Free State side losses were one (Volunteer Hanley) killed and one (Commndt. Tommy Ryan) wounded.

On the day of the Woodroof fight there was a flare-up at the other end of the brigade area, when Limerick Junction station and Grange signal-cabin were attacked simultaneously early in the morning. Tipperary town was also attacked, but both of the latter were only feint attacks. That at Grange crossing lasted a long time; the garrison, numbering 15, took cover behind stone walls, replying to the fire, three of them being wounded — one fatally.

On 14 September No.2 Column lost its commander Jack Killeen, captured with other officers as he was going to a Brigade meeting in Kilcash. The Free State forces from Clonmel, Carrick, Fethard and Callan were engaged in rounding-up operations in the Slievenamon district, and a large amount of war material was captured.

After Killeen's capture the Vice-Brigadier, Commndt. Paddy Dalton, came to the Clonmel area to take charge of the column temporarily. "Big Paddy", as he was called because of his fine physique, was no stranger to No.2 Column. It was under his command that the Irish army had marched into Clonmel barracks on the evacuation of the buildings by the British troops.



Commndt. Paddy Dalton ("Big Paddy"),
killed in the Civil War.

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Three days after Killeen's capture the Irish Republican Army Executive met at Ballybacon, men of No.2 Column acting as sentries. At this meeting an Army Council of five was set up by the executive — Liam Lynch, Chief of Staff; Liam Deasy, Deputy Chief of Staff; Ernie O'Malley, Assistant Chief of Staff; Tom Derrig, Assistant Adjutant General; and Frank Aiken, O/C, 4th Northern Division. Amongst the executive which set up this Council were two members of the 3rd Tipperary Brigade — Con Moloney, then Adjutant General, and Seamus Robinson, O/C, 2nd Southern Division.

As a result of negotiations between the Army and the Republican Party, the Republican deputies who had been members of the Second Dail met in Dublin on 25 October 1922 and reconstituted the 2nd Dail as the Parliament of the Republic. Eamonn de Valera was unanimously appointed President of the Republic and Chief Executive of the State; he in turn nominated 12 members of the Second Dail as a Council of State.

This Council was recognised by the Republican Army as having the right to appoint a Cabinet, which would be the supreme executive of the Republic until the parliament of the Republic could freely assemble or the people could decide freely how they would be governed, and on their political relations with other countries. The Army issued a proclamation pledging its allegiance to the Council of State.

The next important engagement in Tipperary occurred on Monday 18 September, when a Free State column numbering 35 left Tipperary town and came into conflict with an IRA detachment near Donaskeigh. The earliest press account described it as an ambush by a large party of "Irregulars" of a small party of troops in lorries and a car. A more detailed account was later issued from Free State HQ in Tipperary.

According to this version, a column of 35 soldiers entered a house in Ballinard during search operations in Donaskeigh district. On going upstairs the leading soldier was fired at from a room and toppled down, knocking the man behind him. A third soldier standing outside the door was fired at from above and killed instantly.

The search party then retreated from the house, taking up positions outside. A fierce battle then lasted for more than three hours, when the Free State column had to withdraw because of an attack from the rear.

A new stage began with the arrival of Free State reinforcements. The Republicans, outnumbered, retreated and a running battle lasted for a couple of hours. Two IRA men were shot dead — Con Hanley of Donohill and a Volunteer believed to be from Hollyford. Free State losses were given as one killed and four wounded.

The same afternoon an engagement took place at Blackcastle, when a large body of Volunteers were surprised by Free State forces under Staff Capt. Taylor. When they advanced to attack, the Republicans opened fire, retreating to a hill above a house they had occupied. Eventually the IRA were forced to retire, three of them being taken prisoners — Staff Capt. Jerry Fitzpatrick, John Lonergan of New Inn and P. Kiely of Clerihan.

Four days later Free State troops from Dungarvan were ambushed near Caherbrack Cross, close to Half-Way House. This fight lasted almost an hour, and three Free State soldiers were wounded. This Free State column was part of a combing expedition sent out with two others, one from Clonmel and one from Youghal to search the hill country.

The Dungarvan party was first to come into contact with Republicans. Fire was opened on the Free State column from the hills. The engagement was only a short one, the IRA withdrawing over the hills just before supporting columns arrived from Clonmel and Youghal.

Better fortune attended other Free State columns operating from Carrick in the Brownswood district in Co. Waterford on 27 September. These contacted an 8th Battalion column, and a fight lasting about an hour resulted in heavy Republican losses. Thirteen men, including Capt. Dinny O'Driscoll, were left prisoners in the retreat.

On 2 October the No.2 Flying Column under Commdt. Paddy Dalton went to the Woodroof district on receiving information that Free State columns were converging on the Araglen area to encircle a Cork column operating there. It was decided to ambush a column expected to leave Clonmel for Cahir on 2 October.

No.2 Column had been billeted in Ballybacon, and the night before the fight its commander left with Lieut. Sean Cooney to arrange for mine-laying. Jack Lonergan, O/C 5th Battalion, acted as guide as he was familiar with the country. A cross-roads, "Mollsheen's Cross" about a half-mile beyond Woodroof and three miles from Cahir, was selected.

Here the main Cahir-Clonmel road was intersected by a by-road from the south from Ardfinnan, continuing north towards New Inn. The ground north of the road is higher than the road and a fence



runs parallel to the road. Here Commdt. Dalton decided on the main position.

The next evening was spent making preparations; six engineers under Cooney brought mines on a donkey-cart from Goatenbridge. With them went a dozen men for protection. As holes had to be dug and mines laid before the main column moved into position, this party left for the ambush scene several hours before the main column.

It was still dark when they passed through Ardfinnan. They waited in a derelict house near the ambush position until dawn. At the first grey streaks of dawn they got to the cross-road. The guard now divided into two sections, one going towards Cahir and other towards Clonmel. Outposts and sentries were thus at each end of the ambush position.

When the cart reached the cross-road, work started on the metalled road surface, the men relieving each other in short shifts. Two holes were soon dug and channels for cables cut as far as the fence. The mines and cables were then covered and all superfluous soil removed. Dust was sprayed over the whole spot, and a finishing-touch was put by dribbling a bucket of cow-dung along the road.

The column at last arrived, its men moving to pre-decided positions 100 yards from the north side of the main road behind the fences. No.1 Section was under Jim Nugent. The second half of the column was placed at right-angles to the first, riflemen lining the ditch facing the road. No.2 Section under Jack Aylward was on the right flank.

The mines had not been connected when suddenly a rapid burst of firing came from the Clonmel direction; it was the alarm. A Crossley tender filled with soldiers was rapidly approaching; on being fired at it put on speed, apparently intending to fly through the ambush position.

All the column was in position and every man well concealed, except two engineers still on the road in full view of the oncoming tender. Sean Cooney of the 5th Battalion and Ned McNamara of the 6th were in danger of being caught between both fires. They now sprinted down the boren towards an old cottage, reaching it just as the two machine-guns and the rifles swept the roadway.

The fight had started up at the cross. The two large mines did not explode, and it was soon evident that the Free State party intended to drive through the position. Nugent called on his men to advance on the road, firing. In the first volley Capt. Walsh in command of the Free State forces was wounded in the arm and the car-driver Patrick Lawlor badly wounded, losing control of the vehicle.

Walsh ordered his men to leave the lorry and engage from the cover; he himself was in the act of dismounting when he was shot dead. Some soldiers managed to roll under the lee of the fence; many were wounded while doing so. The heavy firing lasted only a short time; then the Republicans called on the troops to surrender. Suddenly all was silent; the fight was over; the troops surrendered.

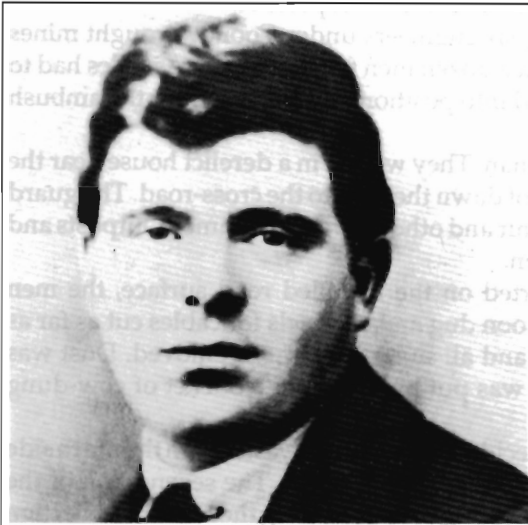
The second-in-command of the Free State force, a Lieut. Good, shouted as the IRA came to take his surrender: "I fought in Easter Week, boys". It was said later that he was kicked while lying on the road. As he was not even wounded this story was a fabrication.

It was also alleged that dead and wounded were stripped and the dead officer's private property looted. This was also denied. Admittedly 'Buck' O'Reilly, whose boots were in tatters, took Good's new yellow boots; this is probably the basis of the charges of looting. During the Civil War it became normal for the victors to take the boots of the vanquished, whenever the state of their own indicated that an exchange would be appropriate.

The military equipment of the vanquished was, of course, always taken, and after a successful ambush it was usual to burn the lorry. This was not done in this case, as there were so many wounded, with so little chance of getting attention, without a lorry. Free State casualties were one killed and six wounded, two of the latter dying later.

After the ambush at Mollkisheen the column retired towards Newcastle, where they were





"Sparky" Breen of the 3rd Tipperary Brigade, killed in the Civil War. (PHOTOGRAPH LOANED BY ANNE ALLEN, TIPPERARY).

up for inspection in Fennessy's by Commdt. Dalton. He advised moving on and his men agreed. "Paddy was a grand man", one of the column said later. Passing through towns, people would look after him, and women used to shout: "My God, isn't he a fine man". Dalton, a quiet man, would be embarrassed.

Altogether different was his friend Martin "Sparky" Breen, about five feet one inch in height, gay as a lark and brave to a fault. One day during the Truce both were walking down a street, Sparky just above Dalton's elbow. When a woman passed the usual remark Sparky nudged Paddy, "Which of us do they mean, Dalton?" Breen was the leader of No.1 Column from the start of the guerilla campaign in August 1922 to his death in January 1923.

No.1 Column kept mostly to the northern side of the brigade area, and No.2 to the southern side. The former frequently travelled through the Glen of Aherlow, crossing the Suir near Knockgraffon

and into the Rosegreen area, across by Drangan and down by Slievenamon. It was most at home in the Glen, in the area north of Slievenamon and round Kilfeacle.

A flying column man could be recognised by his rifle and revolver, and the trench coat, bandolier and leggings; also by the razor and toothbrush carried like a fountain-pen in the breast pocket. It was common in Summer and early Autumn to see flying column men washing in a river or large stream. If a man had no towel, he simply rolled in the grass! Shirts were immersed in a river to wash, and when wrung out were hung on a bush to dry.

Columns on active service were required, so far as possible, to be billeted in mansions, these presumed to be the property of persons hostile to the Republic. So stated an Order issued from Field HQ in Carrick on 24 July, 1922. In practice they were generally billeted on farmers, as mansion after mansion was destroyed by the Republicans.

However, some mansions that escaped were used to the end of the war. One of these was the Earl of Donoughmore's at Knocklofty. The Earl, to use the words of one IRA officer, "was not a bad skin", and at his place there were always beds available and plenty of good food.

Another Big House used was Coole House, Knocklofty, owned by a Mr. Fitzgerald, who did not support the Republican side, but who laboured under the impression that the fighting men were led astray by unscrupulous leaders. One day after breakfast he brought those billeted into his garden to a statue of the Blessed Virgin. Taking rosary beads from his pocket, he led the men in the decades. At the end he stood up, saying: "I am going to make you a promise. None of you boys here will be killed in the war." According to an officer who told this story, the promise was fulfilled.

When billeted the men had frequently to sleep three in a bed; two was a luxury and one almost unheard of! Although none suffered from insomnia, some developed what became known as "the Republican itch!"

Most columns had a machine-gun section attached; some had two. The guns used were mostly the Lewis, the Thompson and some Hotchkiss. The gun-crew took turns carrying the gun. The Lewis, weighing about 33 lbs, was carried on the shoulder. Thus a man's coat became frayed at that spot. One man of 8th Battalion, when captured, was asked what section he belonged to. "The Red

Cross", he replied. "I suppose", remarked the old ex-British soldier questioning him, "it was carrying the bandages that wore that hole in your coat?"

About the beginning of October 1922 suggestions were made by people of various political views for a truce. The Free State Government issued a proclamation promising an amnesty and a pardon to all who gave up guns and ammunition in their possession before 15 October and undertook to cease armed activity against the Government.

These ideas came to nothing. However, they provoked an interesting letter from the father of two well-known officers of the 3rd Tipperary Brigade, Patrick Sadlier of Rathkenny, Fethard. In the *Clonmel Chronicle* of 7 October he wrote: "... soldiers on either side do not want to take the lives of their opponents, but ... the Republicans cannot honourably surrender their arms... Why then not have the arms stored in armouries under guard of men elected by themselves?"

This suggestion was substantially the same as that made by the Archbishop of Cashel in March 1923 — that arms be stored until after a general election, and delivered up to whatever government was returned to power. This proposal was adopted by Mr. de Valera in conditions sent to the Free State Government on 7 May, 1923, but (like all others then and later) was rejected by that Government.

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The character of the war changed on October 1922 with the setting up of military courts empowered to inflict the death sentence on anyone convicted of taking part in or abetting an attack on Free State forces, or of possessing arms or explosives. Even before this a new bitterness had crept into the struggle on both sides after the death of Michael Collins in August.

On 26 August, 1922 three youths — two of them in Fianna Eireann and the third an IRA member — were murdered in Dublin. A week later a prominent IRA member was dragged from his home in Dublin and murdered on the Naas road. The same day two more Republicans were found shot dead in a field at Stillorgan, the body of one being naked.

These murders and others of a similar kind were believed to have been the work of members of the Free State Intelligence Dept. Added to these crimes were the murders of unarmed prisoners carried out by Free State forces — such as the shooting out-of-hand after surrender of Brigadier Seamus Devins TD and Divisional Adjutant Brian MacNeill.

Then came the military courts and the death penalty for various offences, which were to lead to the execution of 77 prisoners of war and to provoke drastic retaliation by the IRA, including the shooting of TDs who had voted for the execution of Republic prisoners.

Meanwhile the fighting continued, and nowhere more severely than in South Tipperary. On 12 October large bodies of Free State troops went through the Glen of Aherlow searching for Republicans. At Glencushnabinna on the slopes below Galteemore one party was attacked, and in a fight lasting half-an-hour one Free State soldier was killed. Another Free State detachment was searching Rossadrehid area when, on entering a house, they were fired on by a Volunteer who escaped after wounding an opponent.

Probably the most important development in the whole Civil War was the Catholic Hierarchy's pastoral letter ordered to be read in every church on 22 October. This defined the bishops' attitude to the Civil War and charged the IRA with deliberately setting out to make the country, as far as possible, a heap of ruins.

"They carry on what they call a war, but which in the absence of any legitimate authority to justify it, is morally only a system of murder and assassination . . . the guerilla warfare now being carried on by the Irregulars is without moral sanction . . . the killing of National soldiers . . . is murder . . . ;



the seizing of public or private property is robbery; the breaking of roads, bridges and railways is criminal destruction... All who ... participated in such crimes are guilty of the gravest sins and may not be absolved in confession nor admitted to Holy Communion..."

The bishops also declared that Republican leaders knew that the methods they were using were unCatholic and immoral. All priests were forbidden, under pain of suspension, to advocate or encourage the revolt, whether publicly or privately.

It may easily be imagined what consternation this document caused in IRA ranks, the vast majority of men being Catholics. As Dorothy Macardle remarks in her history of the period: "To the rigours of the fight was added ... the penalty of virtual excommunication; many a man was going into danger ... knowing that if he fell in action or was captured and executed he might be refused the Last Sacrament."

Notwithstanding this, the Republicans fought on, believing in the justice of their cause. They believed that the Government of the Republic had been overthrown by a *coup d'etat* organised by men who, without a mandate, had illegally usurped authority as a government, and at the instigation of a foreign government began a civil war. To quote a Republican Government proclamation, the Provisional Government had "entered into a conspiracy with other enemies of the Republic to ... subvert the Republic which they were sworn to defend" and had "fomented a rebellion against the Republic."

The destruction of opponents' communications was regarded as almost indispensable for the successful operation of the Republican forces. The destruction of railways and roads and the blowing-up of bridges undoubtedly disrupted communications. In practice this was unavoidable, as was the disorganisation of economic life.

However, it is a mistake to imagine that the Republicans' purpose was to starve the people. So far from its being a campaign against the people, this had been envisaged as early as 1918 as an essential measure in a war against England. Sean Treacy, in a letter written on 3 May, 1918 (and quoted by Desmond Ryan's biography), stated: "Smash stone bridges on to railways. Tear up rails at stations and throw empty trucks across lines. ... smash signals. Cut ... wires as often as possible. Destroy signal cabins. Burn wooden bridges ... Barricade roads .. by felled trees..."

Attacks on railways, bridges, stations and cabins became a feature of Republican activities in late 1922 and early 1923. The Free State had to take special measures to deal with these. Armoured trains were sent to patrol the lines and repair gangs were accompanied by military patrols.

The first armoured train in south Tipperary operated on the Thurles-Clonmel line. However, it soon became apparent that they were not going to stop the 3rd Tipperary Brigade. On 4 October an armoured train left Thurles with a repair gang and escort to repair the line to Clonmel. Col. Russell was in charge. When work started between Laffansbridge and Farnalee the party came under fire. Troops replied and captured two attackers.

The train then went towards Fethard to repair a bridge near Fethard; when the party descended from the train they were fired on. A party of soldiers sent to make a sortie failed to return and the train left without them. It returned the next two days and each time was attacked by the IRA. The lieutenant and eight men who had disappeared on the sortie turned up in Fethard a week later.

An armoured train could not, of course, be expected to be in two places at the same time. Hence destruction was possible on one part of the line while the train was elsewhere; scarcely had rails been repaired on one section, when they were torn up elsewhere.

Many towns were now virtually cut off. Clonmel was like a beleaguered town and food supplies ran low. Eventually a transport company was set up by local traders under the Mayor, Mr. Frank Drohan, to transport goods by water from Waterford. But this new venture, known as The Suir Transport, Trading & Finance Co. was only partly successful.



One effect of the venture was to transfer to the river Suir the attention of the Republicans. Two cargo-boats leaving Carrick for Clonmel were held up by trees thrown into the river. The boats were then halted by an IRA column and ordered to the river bank. The IRA selected what goods they needed and allowed the craft to proceed.

One bridge on the Thurles-Clonmel line had to be repaired 16 times. To the end of January 1923 200 bridges in South Tipperary, including 11 of the 13 Suir crossings, were destroyed. Eventually in the Spring the Free State maintenance corps got the upper hand. A line of blockhouses was established at all important points. This, with the growing disintegration of the Republican forces, finally won the battle of the railways for the Free State.

On 26 October the 3rd Tipperary Brigade suffered a heavy loss in the death of its Vice-Brigadier, Commdt. Paddy Dalton, killed in action at Donohill. Popular with people of all shades of opinion, there was widespread sorrow at his death. He had been staying with some of his men in the Donohill and was in Dwyer's publichouse when a party of 15 Free State men arrived in two lorries. The officer ordered his men to dismount.

When Dalton and his men saw the soldiers apparently about to surround the house, they rushed out through the front door, firing as they came. Dalton took shelter in a cowshed, firing from it. He then retreated, still firing and crossed over a ditch to the haggard. When crossing into the field behind this he was shot dead.

Thus died one of Tipperary's bravest sons, falling as he would have wished in defence of the Republic. At his funeral to St. Michael's Cemetery, Tipperary on 29 October, the attendance numbered about 4,000. Military honours were accorded by a party of six Volunteers.

Following close on Dalton's death came news of that of another 3rd Tipperary officer, Commdt. Michael Sadlier, the O/C 2nd Battalion. Soon after midnight on 2-3 November a party of Free State soldiers from Cashel on a house-to-house search arrived at the house of William Heffernan of Marlhill, which they surrounded. Sadlier was sleeping there with a fellow officer, Paddy Loughlin, when they woke to hammering on the door.

The housekeeper delayed opening the door, but on going downstairs they found escape impossible. If they fought, it would be two against 50. They hid under the stairs, giving their guns to the housekeeper according to her evidence at the inquest. A man found with arms was then liable to the death penalty.

On being discovered, the two were ordered by the officer to come forward with their hands up. One soldier was holding a lighted candle, which was suddenly extinguished; it was not clear at the inquest whether this was accidental or deliberate.

Shots then rang out. According to the Free State version, Sadlier rushed at the officer, grappling with him and tried to shoot him but was shot by the officer. His companion then surrendered. According to the housekeeper, the two Republicans had no guns at the time. It was a fact that the Free State officer was wounded in the hand, but at the inquest a military witness stated that this was caused by a ricochet from the rifleman's own rifle. It was also alleged by one of the raiding party that Sadlier called for mercy.

Sadlier was rushed to Cashel hospital, and died the next night. He made a dying statement to his father that he was unarmed when shot. "I had no gun; I fired no shot. They shot me the same as they would a dog ..." He added that he had given his gun to the girl. His father's comment was: "My son is gone, but the only regret I have is that it is a sad time when Irishmen should turn their guns on each other. I hope this time will end soon."

Mick Sadlier was buried beside his brother in Drangan. All business was suspended in Fethard as the funeral passed through. A unique tribute from his opponents was the flying of the Tricolour at half-mast over Fethard Garda station.



On the day Sadlier was killed his brother Tom, now commanding No.2 Flying Column in succession to Paddy Dalton, was in action near Ballymacarbery in the Nire Valley. Scouts reported the arrival there of a fairly large Free State party. Sadlier decided to engage them. He picked the best position he could on a steep gradient, and as the troops came up Nugent's machine-gun section opened fire; soon machine-guns and rifles cracked at each other along the hill.

After a short time the Republicans were ordered to retire uphill. This left a boreen clear for their opponents to creep up under cover; shortage of ammunition was also a problem for the Republicans. Finally the order came to retreat from the main position; while retreating, Volunteer Jim Dahille was seriously wounded and had to be allowed to fall into Free State hands.

A Free State soldier was also wounded before the IRA column retired to Harney's cross and billeted for the night at Derrinlaur. The next day two Free State columns set out for the Blackcastle district to search the area where Brigade HQ was located. One column came from Fethard, the other from Clonmel. They advanced through Blackcastle and Graigue, combing the countryside.

Eight IRA men were captured. They were together in a tent. With them went arms and ammunition — four rifles, three revolvers, one Thompson, bombs and assorted ammunition. The captured men were: Gus McCarthy (Fethard), Andy Moloney, James Flannery, Patrick Ahearn, Patrick Maher, Thomas Griffin (Clonmel), Gerald O'Connor (Tralee) and James Davin.

On 6 November Clogheen Workhouse, which had been handed over as a borstal institution by Free State troops, was burned to the ground by Republicans. The Governor, Major Dobbyn, was ordered to have all the boys and staff out in 20 minutes. They then removed to Cahir.

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A new phase of the Civil War opened on 17 November 1922, when four Republican prisoners of war were executed in Dublin on a charge of possessing revolvers. This was the prelude to the execution of more important men. On 24 November Erskine Childers, against whom a deluge of propaganda had been let loose by authorities, was shot by firing-squad while his appeal was still pending — an event that shocked public and legal opinion, which regarded his execution as judicial murder.

The courts which tried these men were secret, and executions usually followed in hours. The Republicans now decided to take steps to see that this practice stopped. After Childers's execution the Republican *War News* issued a list of members of the Provisional parliament who had voted for the execution of Republican prisoners.

On 27 November a letter was sent by the Republican Chief of Staff, on behalf of the Republican Army Council, to "the Speaker of the Provisional Parliament of Southern Ireland". It accused the authorities of barbarous treatment of Republican prisoners of war and of having tortured, wounded and murdered them. It also alleged that many Free State senior officers were members of parliament. Warning was given that, unless the Free State army recognised the rules of warfare, the Republicans would adopt "very drastic measures".

Three days later an instruction was sent to all Battalion O/Cs by the IRA Chief of Staff, ordering all members of the Provisional Parliament who had voted for the "Murder Bill" to be shot at sight. It also instructed all Free State officers and men who had joined the Free State army to be shot.

The Free State had deliberately embarked on a policy of terrorism; the Republicans replied with a similar policy. On 7 December Brigadier Sean Hales, who had taken a prominent part in the War of Independence and who as a member of parliament had voted for the execution of prisoners, was shot dead in a Dublin street.

The following morning four senior IRA officers who had been prisoners since the fall of the Four



Courts — Rory O'Connor, Liam Mellows, Joe McKelvey and Dick Barrett — were taken from their cells and shot without trial as a reprisal for the shooting of Hales. The Free State Government called this "a solemn warning" to the mens' associates. Archbishop Byrne of Dublin condemned the reprisal.

Meanwhile the war went on; but in Tipperary as elsewhere the tide of success was with the Free State. They had the men, the money, the war material, the support of the bulk of the population all behind them. Daily the IRA was dwindling; men were being killed or captured, with no one to replace them.

In South Tipperary Brigadier Lacy made heroic efforts to re-organise, but with even the ordinary Volunteer accepting defeat was inevitable, Lacy was unsuccessful. Towards the end of November Free State troops scouting the Slievenamon area took many prisoners. Jim Hayes of the 7th Battalion, a brother of Commdt. Sean Hayes, was shot dead in a fight between Republicans and a Free State column going from Moyglass to Cashel.

December opened with a fierce fight between opposing columns in the Carrick area. Free State forces were attacked in the Glenbower-Kilcash area. Soon after noon on 3 December troops going along the road came under heavy fire from the hills. They were forced to take cover and an intense battle raged for over three hours.

Two Republicans were killed and four more claimed wounded by the Free State. On the latter's side three soldiers were wounded. The two Republicans killed were P. Butler of Grangemockler and Patrick Bennett of Ballingarry.

Early in December Republicans forces in South Tipperary began moving towards the eastern end of the brigade area to carry out one of the most daring coups by the IRA during the Civil War — the capture of the military post in Carrick-on-Suir. The units taking part under the command of Commdt. General Tom Barry, O/C of Operations, GHQ Staff; Brigadier Lacy also took part.

The column mobilised at Ballyneety near Ardfinnan, and moved to Castlegrace, being joined by Lacy on the way. Then they marched through Polecarew demesne to Burncourt, where sentries were posted and scouts sent out to ensure a rest. In the evening the column marched from Burncourt to Skeheenarinka, thence to the Lodge of Galtee Castle, where a halt was made for the night. Local Volunteers took turns with the column men on sentry.

Early next morning the men marched up the mountain by a Board of Works road; crossing Galteemore, they came down into the Glen of Aherlow. Here they expected opposition, as it was rumoured that the Glen people were pro-Free State. Two men wearing captured Free State uniforms were now placed in the advance guard, in the hope that the column would be welcomed.

The result was nearly disastrous. Commdt. Martin Breen's column was billeted locally when No.2 Column came down the mountainside. Inhabitants seeing the uniforms gave the alarm, and the men initially met with a hostile reception.

In spite of this misunderstanding the men got billeting eventually. Both columns joined forces now and, led by Lacy and after a night billeted at Ardane, crossed the Suir the next night on farm-carts over a ford near Knockgraffon. They rested near Whitelands and the next day resumed the march, reaching the Rosegreen area.

Moving through Tullamaine, they billeted beyond Farnaleen; next evening they got to Rathkenny near Drangan, where some enjoyed the hospitality of Pat Sadlier, the Commander's father. The following morning, while men of the 7th Battalion under Harry Bushe engaged Free State troops, the column lay low lest its presence be detected.

Then they moved on again towards Slievenamon, billeting in the Grangemockler district. They had now been joined by Tom Barry, under whose personal command the Carrick attack was to be mounted.



On the night of Saturday 9 December the people of Clonmel were startled by bugles blowing, calling troops to arms. Large bodies of troops then left the town in the Carrick direction. The attack took place around 9.30 p.m.

The IRA columns, now augmented by 7th and 8th Battalion Volunteers, paraded at Rathnaveen to receive orders. One of those present recalled it as a hard bleak day, with a biting wind blowing across the parade field. Amongst the officers with Barry were Dinny Lacy, Bill Quirke (who had become Vice-Commdt. in succession to Paddy Dalton) Michael Sheehan and "Sparky" Breen.

Barry, addressing the men, said there were 120 officers and men inside, with several machine-gun sections. Armed patrols on the streets at night would also have to be dealt with. The men were divided into four sections. The first two would rush the barracks; the third would attack the patrols, and the fourth would barricade the Clonmel road.

After dark the columns moved through Glenbower. At the fork at the old RIC barracks one section went right towards Clonmel, while the rest went left towards Carrick. At the next cross-road the main column took a by-road towards Ballyneale.

Soon the column was heading for the barracks. The sections to rush the building had got orders to remove their boots to deaden the sound of their approach. Barry and Lacy advanced towards the sentry at the main gate. Following usual procedure, he called on them to come forward for recognition. Barry overpowered him as Lacy and the others went into the guard-room. Quirke's section had now rushed the main building; soon the barracks was in Republican hands.

The taking of Carrick barracks and the disarming of the garrison was done with a minimum of casualties. There were no Republican casualties. Free State forces suffered one dead and three wounded, and in a street in Carrickbeg when firing began a girl was seriously wounded. Most of the soldiers were disarmed without a shot being fired.

Lorries were commandeered from Dowley's and Power's stores and loaded with captured material — about 70 rifles, revolvers, ammunition and even uniforms. A Crossley tender was used to carry off some material. Armed sentries were posted at every street corner; just before midnight all the captured troops were assembled and numbered off. The victorious IRA then released them all but Capt. Balfe, the O/C. They left the town with him.

Taking the Clonmel road to confuse their opponents, they turned off into by-roads at the railway bridge outside the town, and eventually retired to the Ballingarry area. Stopping for a short rest at Ballyneale, and passing through Grangemockler in the small hours, the columns rested at Nine-Mile-House. Here the men went back to their own columns, and Nos.1 and 2 Columns were reformed under Breen and Sadlier.

After the Republicans forces had left Carrick, Free State dispatch riders were sent to surrounding towns to report what had happened. Reinforcements came from Clonmel that night and next day. A general tightening-up of regulations followed the raid, and curfew was more strictly enforced. The authorities feared that the same tactics might be used elsewhere.

On 13 December a notice in the local press from Col. Commdt. Heaslip, O/C of Clonmel garrison, required civilians to be indoors between 11 p.m. and 6 a.m. In Carrick civilians were required to be indoors by 9 p.m. The commandeered lorries were returned to their owners a day later; the tender, being spoils of war, was retained. Capt. Balfe was released unharmed after some days.

On 12 December Free State forces with armoured cars scoured the Fethard-Killenaule-Ballingarry districts. One engagement with IRA men resulted in four prisoners. The same day a clash occurred in the Ballingarry area that lasted about an hour. During this fight another Free State column appeared from the Callan direction. During severe fighting Sean O'Riordan of 4th Battalion was shot dead and seven more Republicans taken. Some of these eleven, being captured with arms, were sentenced to death; but the sentence was never carried out.



The next important events in the history of the Brigade, the taking of Callan, Thomastown and Mullinavat, were not attacks in the proper sense. The three Co. Kilkenny posts surrendered without a shot, their garrisons surrendering under an arrangement with the IRA. There the Free State officers, like many others, had become disillusioned. Realising that their side was fighting to suppress what the 1916 men had fought for, they decided to rejoin the IRA — even though they knew that if they were captured they faced death. Already men were being executed for desertion to the IRA side.

These successful swoops, in which three towns with their garrisons fell to the Republicans, showed that the IRA was not yet at the end of its resources in Tipperary. The lesson was not lost. Guards were doubled; patrols were more frequent; scouting and raiding parties of Free State troops were sent through the countryside to round up the flying columns of the Third Tipperary Brigade.

After Callan was taken, most of the column which had been operating under Lacy retired towards Nine-Mile-House, crossing the Suir above Carrick to Windgap. From there they went to billets in Ballymacarbery, where the next week-end they were joined by Lacy and the rest of the men.

The Brigadier spent Christmas Eve in Burncourt, and on Christmas Day crossed the Galtees with the men of his own area, leaving those of the 5th and 6th Battalions in their old quarters between the Galtees, Knockmealdowns and Comeraghs.

KICKHAM COUNTY WEEK-END Lectures and Lecturers (1987 - 1991)*

1987	Rural Unrest in S. Tipperary in the 18th Century The Story of Hurling Up To the Formation of the GAA The RIC Man in Hayes's Hotel	Dr. Thomas Power Dr. L. P. O Caithnia Marcus Bourke
1988	The Confession Priest Bishop Butler: Lord Dunboyne The Derry-naflan Hoard	Dr. L. P. O Caithnia Lt. Col. Con Costello Eamonn P. Kelly
1989	Kickham's Knocknagow Folklore & Folk History of the S. Tipperary - Kilkenny Border Country History, Topography, Songs & Literature of the Decies	Dr. T. G. McGrath Dr. Dáithí O hOgáin Tadhg O Réagáin
1990	Sources for History of Education in S. Tipperary 1800-1870 Changes in Education Policy 1870-1910: Effects on a Rural Community Songs of S. Tipperary	Dr. Susan Parkes Barbara Fleming Seamus MacMathuna
1991	From Davis to Kickham From Parnell to Pearse	Breandán O Cathaoir Dr. T. P. O'Neill

* A similar list for 1982-1986 appeared in the *Tipperary Historical Journal* 1989, p. 122. Any information required regarding the above list will be supplied by Sheila Foley, Parkmore, Mullinahone, Co. Tipperary.

