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# The Third Tipperary Brigade – a Photographic Record

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By Neil Sharkey

## Editorial Introduction

*In the several articles on the War of Independence period published in the **Tipperary Historical Journal** since 1988, there had been a couple of passing references to a Lieutenant Sharkey. One recalls an amusing, but also potentially serious, anecdote by Aodogan O’Rahilly of being sent by de Valera with an urgent dispatch for Sharkey to Kilsheelan during the Civil War and of finding the village either about to be taken or just captured by Free State troops – and of O’Rahilly himself being lucky to escape. One recalls too Col. “Tommy” Ryan mentioning Sharkey as having taken photographs of men and events in 1921 shortly before the Truce.*

*Then out of the blue in 1992 I received a letter from Neil Sharkey, now living in Galway, giving the exciting news that he still possessed a large collection of his late father’s collection of photographs taken while a Volunteer officer in South Tipperary in the 1918-1923 period. Meetings followed, then a glimpse of the prized Sharkey album, and eventually an offer to allow publication of a selection in the **Tipperary Historical Journal**. To put the icing on the cake as it were, a second collection turned up on the death in Boston of a brother of Jack Sharkey.*

*I have insisted that Neil Sharkey write his own personal account of this rare visual record of the “fight for Irish freedom”, to use Dan Breen’s famous phrase. It only remains to thank Neil for his generosity and co-operation in this venture, and also to thank Willie Douglas of Galway for his expertise in producing remarkably fine illustrations from what in many instances were faded, even partly damaged, originals, all of them at least 70 years old.*

**Editor, THJ.**

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The editor has asked me to write a short background piece to my father’s photographs.

For as long as I can recall, these photographs and associated documents have been part of my life. However, until quite recently, I never considered them unique, much less of particular importance. My generation growing up in Clonmel in the 1940s and 1950s had no need of such things to remind them of the War of Independence. After all, the men who featured in those stirring times were part of our everyday lives.

Did not John Cooney reign in his Main Guard shop, with its marvellous brass weighing-scales hanging from the ceiling? Did I not pass “Buddy” Donoghue’s several times a day on my way to the High School, and often stop to watch him line up unvarnished coffins in his yard? Others of the “Third Tipp Brigade” I would see calling to our family business at 44 Gladstone Street, to have a wireless battery re-charged or to collect a repaired watch or clock.

For me, and I’m sure others of the period, the times and deeds of the Troubles were not learnt from books, articles or photographs. They were absorbed from hearing (or overhearing!)



countless anecdotes, recollections and indeed argument – the latter usually at election times! – of the happenings and the rights and wrongs that preceded and accompanied the gaining of our independence.

For some 70 years the family album of faded photographs lay at the bottom of drawers, cabinets and other out-of-the-way storage places. It took the final passing on by the 1980s of those involved, and the arrival of a more historical perspective for the period, to cause me to consider the material in a different light. For Tipperary this historical perspective – if I may call it that – probably coincided with the advent of the *Tipperary Historical Journal*. Readers will surely agree that the setting down in the Journal by participants and others of Tipperary's part in the fight for freedom has been both timely and important.

What of father's part in all of this? Jack Sharkey (Seán to his comrades) joined the Volunteers in 1918 at the age of eighteen and served throughout the period, initially as Intelligence Officer of the 5th Battalion (Clonmel and area) Third Tipperary Brigade and later as Brigade Intelligence Officer. An interest in photography meant that he always carried a camera, and so over those years he built up a photographic collection of Brigade people and happenings.

In all there are between 50 and 60 photographs contained principally, thought not wholly, in an old red album. About 100 or so Volunteers and others involved appear – the famous like Dan Breen and Dinny Lacey, as well as the minor figures now lost in time and (alas) often unidentifiable. In the album also are about 30 or 40 original documents of intelligence or of a general nature. A few examples of these are published below.

While the *Journal* will give at least some of the photographs a deserved wider audience, their real context is for me in the album itself – interspersed with family and local interest prints, marked too by the mutilation of the album when it was seized by the “other side” during one of the many raids on the family premises. Miraculously, it was returned years later.

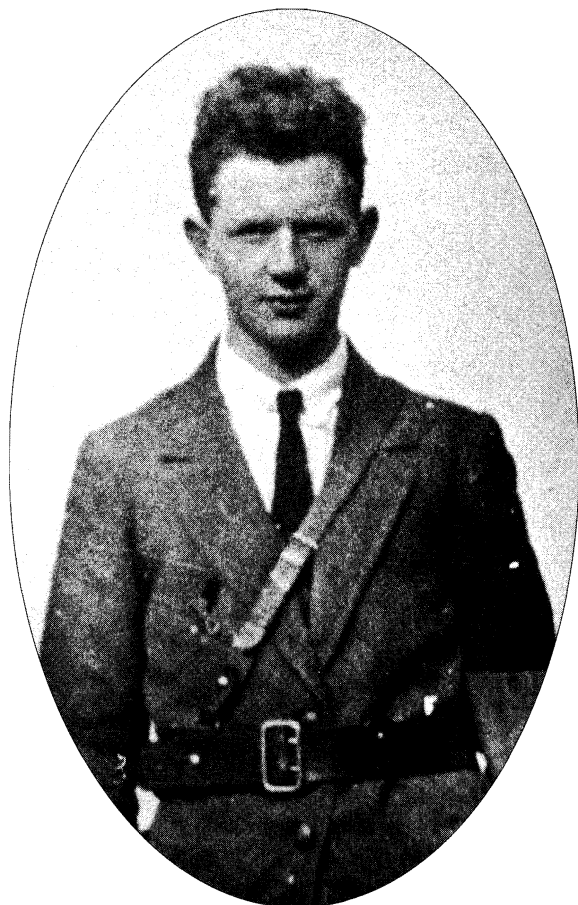
So what can we say of these Volunteers? They were the men who were brave enough to “take to the hills”, as the Tipperary Fenian John O'Leary said of their earlier counterparts. By doing so they achieved what was achieved. They succeeded when O'Leary's other ingredient for achieving political freedom was also finally obtained – a united and supportive populace. The locations of these photographs and the very fact that those in them could safely move about and gather together proves that the people and homes of Tipperary were not wanting in giving such support.

I hope therefore that these photographs will be seen as one more tribute to these men and women of Tipperary, and may help to foster and continue that great sense of history and place which is one of the county's hallmarks.





*Above: Sean Fitzpatrick of Tipperary town, Brigade Adjutant of the 3rd Tipperary Brigade. Later for many years he was Secretary of the Irish Tourist Association, subsequently merged in Bord Fáilte Éireann. He died aged 95 in 1987.*



*Right: Jimmy Flynn of Fethard, father of Mr. Austin Flynn of Fethard. This photograph was taken at the Brigade camp at Ballinard Castle, between Fethard and Cloneen. Flynn died in 1968.*





*Above: A group of Flying Column members ready to set out. Nobody in this picture is now identifiable.*

*Left: Dinny Lacey – probably the last photograph taken before his death. With him in this picture are Aine Malone (left) and (right) her sister Brighid, Mrs. Dan Breen. This photograph appears to have been taken on the day of Breen's wedding on 12 June 1921, at which the bride's sister Aine was bridesmaid and Sean Hogan (who had been rescued from an armed guard on a train bringing him to almost certain death to Cork two years earlier) was best man. Hogan died in 1968. Lacey, a native of Annacarty, was OC of the first Flying Column and was killed in action in the Civil War on 17 February 1923 in the Glen of Aherlow. Mrs. Breen died as recently as 1991.*



*Above: Another group from a Flying Column. Only four men have been tentatively identified: Tom Kirwan (fourth from left, back row); Michael Patterson (kneeling at extreme right, centre row); and in front row, Sean ("Foxy") Hayes (second from left) and Dick Dalton (fourth from right). The man standing at extreme right of centre row appears to be sporting a white scarf and black bow-tie!*



*Right: John Cooney of the Main Guard, Clonmel – whose name (in mid-1994) is still over his old shop behind the now barricaded building. A popular member of the Brigade, Cooney – known for obvious reasons as Wiggy to his comrades – was much older than the rest of them.*

*Below: Machine-gun practice at Ballard Training Camp. The three men lying prone are (from left): -- Butler, Jimmy Flynn (Fethard) and Jack Sharkey, whose camera for once was being used other than by himself!*





Two more photographs of Dan Breen's wedding day (top, and bottom right). Top: Jack Sharkey, Fr. O'Leary, OFM, Dan and Mrs. Breen. Bottom right: the bridegroom and bride again, with Fr. O'Leary.

Bottom left is Maurice McGrath, a native of Mothel, Co. Waterford, and OC, 8th Battalion. McGrath died in an accidental shooting in Carrick-on-Suir during the Truce. Sharkey took this photograph while awaiting the arrival of Comdt. Denis Sadlier, who was accidentally killed that morning.





Above: A group from the 4th Battalion at Ballinard Training Camp. Back: Maurice McGrath, "Big" Pat Dalton (killed in the Civil War, OC, A Co., 5th Battalion), B. Tobin, -- --, F. Kirwan. Centre: --- ---, --- ---, J. Reilly, R. Dalton. Front: T. Quillinan, - Fennessy, P. Brennan, J. Dahill.

On the right is Gerry Lyons, who was shot dead during the Civil War in Clonmel Barracks while being interrogated by Free State forces on 3 April 1923. Also shot by the same soldiers the same day in the same controversial incident was Richard Lynch of Rosegreen.



Below is another group at Ballinard camp, only five of whom can now be identified; in back row: Dr. Ryan, -- --, Jack Sharkey, --- ---, R. Dalton, and in front: P. Fitzgerald, -- ---, J. Purcell.



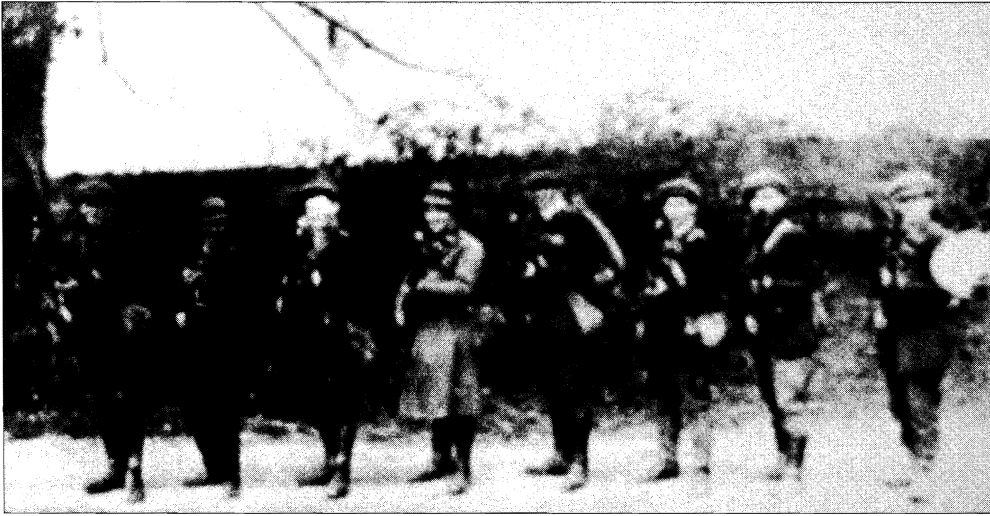




*Top left: a photograph taken at Third Tipperary Brigade HQ in 1920. From left: Fr. O'Leary, OFM, Dan Breen and Jack Sharkey.*

*Top right: the last photograph taken (in Summer 1921) of Comdt. Denis Sadlier, killed in action in Grangemockler a week later.*

*Bottom left: Aine Malone, Sean Hogan (holding a long Luger revolver by its barrel), Fr. O'Leary and Jack Sharkey.*



*Above: The caption to this blurred picture reads "Section of Hogan's Flying Column, 1921, taken at Dillon's of Powerstown". Seven of the eight (presumably from left) are named: F. Pyne, B. Keating, T. O'Gorman, Jack Butler, Dave Maher, J. Doherty, --- ---, E. Dwyer.*

*Below: This picture was taken at Davin's farm at Rathsallagh, a popular hiding-place for the Brigade. Back row: Aine Malone, Dan (holding a child) and Mrs. Breen, Sean Hogan, Mr. and Mrs. Looby, Mr. and Mrs. Con Maloney. Front row: "M. Cooney", Michael Fitzpatrick (brother of Sean), Dinny Lacey, unnamed child, and another "M. Cooney". Before the Civil War Con Maloney was Adjutant, 2nd Southern Division, and during the Civil War he was Deputy Chief of Staff of the Republican forces. His father, P. J. Maloney, a chemist in Tipperary town, was a member of the first Dáil Éireann in 1919.*





*Top: another unidentified Flying Column 'snapped' as they set off for action.*

*Bottom: entitled "At Purcell's, 1921", the following are named in this photograph. Back: Dinny Lacey, - Davin, - Moloney, - Delahunty, - (M?) Fitzpatrick. Middle row: S. Cooney, Fr. Murphy, - —, Dan Breen, - —, Sean Hogan, Fr. O'Leary, OFM. Front row: - Purcell, Sean Fitzpatrick, - Sheehan.*





*Finally, two photographs of unknown provenance. Found among the Sharkey collection, they were indubitably not taken by Sean Sharkey, who after the capture of Clonmel by Free State forces had been interned – and, as his son puts it, was “hardly [likely to be] hanging round asking Free State soldiers to stand for the camera!”. Behind the sandbags in the top photo can be seen the burnt-out shell of Clonmel (now Kickham) Barracks. In the bottom picture a local newsboy (unidentified) joins an informal group of National Army soldiers during what appears to be a tea-break, judging from the cup and plate in one soldier’s left hand!*



# Appendix

Selection from 14 intelligence documents of 3rd Tipperary Brigade, 1919-1923, found with Sharkey photographs.

## Document No. 1

(Nature: This is a small 3" x 2" pencil-written note.  
It has a number (92) stamped on it.)

Transcript:

23/10/21

Int. Dept.  
"A" Coy.

To No. 28

Int. Dept.

A Cara

Make a list of the following as soon as possible.

1. Complete list of officers in Mil. Bks and if possible their records.
2. List of dangerous suspects and records. Send this in immediately as Bn are waiting on it.

---

## Document No. 2

(Nature: Letter on squared paper.)

Transcript:

Int. Dept.  
"A" Coy Bn 5  
9/1/21

A Cara

Information wanted regarding the whereabouts of a certain man named Connors having the following descriptions:

Height 5 ft 9 ins

Age 21 years

Complexion Black

Curley Hair

Freckled face

Long nose

Wearing grey cap, black coat long trousers.

If said man is found in this area communicate with me immediately and place him under arrest.

Is mise  
I/O



### Document No. 3

(Nature: A note on faded lined paper, written in purple pencil.)

Transcript:

A Coy 5th Batn.  
3rd April

You will mobilize the following men to be on parade in gymnasium IRA Barrack at 8 o'clock Thursday night.

T. Halley Acting O/C

Frank Norton, J. Ryan, Tom Britton, D. Ryan, James Daly, H. Comerford, Tom Daly, L. Delaney, Tim Shaughnessy, ? Mockler, M. McKenna, T. Cooney (Wood Rd.), J. Grady (Kilmacomna), D. Patteson, Chris Smith, T. Casey, T. Connors, B. Shanahan, J. Byrne, Tom Norris, W. Slattery, Patk. Phelan, J. Farrell (Co-op), P. Farrell and M. Walsh.

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### Document No. 4

(Nature: A 4-page carbon copy of an intelligence note.)

Transcript:

To 28 & 29                      21/9/21                      Int. Dept.  
Int. Dept. "A" Coy.                      "A" Coy. Bns.

1. Compile a list of:
  - (a) Motor Cars
  - (b) Motor Bikes
  - (c) Push Bikes
  - (d) Lorriesin Coy area. State make, no. and where kept.  
Compile a list of Government officials –  
Post Office etc. Compile list of ex RIC in area also names addresses and occupations of any members of family.
4. Names and addresses of any locals who have joined RIC (State where stationed and character of family).
5. Freemasons in your area.
6. In the event of truce breaking you are to ascertain the following re enemy supplies:
  - (a) nature of same.
  - (b) mode of conveyance
  - (c) time and date
  - (d) route generally taken.
  - (e) Enemy supplies that may be of use to the IRA.
7. Compile a list of the following:
  - (a) houses frequented by Tans.
  - (b) girls keeping company with Tans.
8. Report any houses the property of loyalists and of good value that could be destroyed in the event of reprisals on our people.
9. Report on all suspicious characters in area and say what you heard about them.
10. Compile a list of girls – giving names and addresses – who frequent Comrades Dance. Let me have same as soon as possible.
11. Watch movements of Ex Sergt. Hanrahan's son and report anything known against him.

I.O.

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**Document No. 5**

(Nature: Letter on squared paper.)

Transcript:

Tipp No. 3 BDE  
15/4/21

To L of S  
Bn 5

1. Will expect maps tomorrow.
2. Dick wishes me to say:-  
Send word to L/Col. No. 2 where the car is and what is the best time to take it.
3. He also wants you to send him half a dozen films.

XXXXX  
BDE CMDT.

*(Note by Jack Sharkey:*

*"Dick" is Dan Breen. Car required to take envoy to Dublin to offer exchange of Trainor (condemned to death) for D. I. Potter, then a prisoner with Lacy's column. As the British would not agree – they hanged Trainor – Potter was executed by the IRA.)*

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**Document No. 6**

(Nature: Letter on squared paper.)

Transcript:

Tipp No. 3 BDE  
19/4/21

To L of I (?)

1. Read maps of Ballyporeen and Cahir.
2. 6" maps of Ck on Suir not rcd.
3. 6" maps will do instead of 25" maps.  
Will you order same and forward bill to BDE ADJT.

XXXXXXXXXXXXX  
BDE V>CMDT

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**Document No. 7**

(Nature: A note written in purple pencil on faded white paper.)

Transcript:

Hd. Qrs  
Batt 8 (Rosegreen)  
29-8-20

To Qtr. M Batt 4 Clonmel

I didn't get your note re. rifles and ammunition until yesterday as I was'nt at home. I will send them in at the first opportunity. I was down in Newcastle on Monday night also and had your company there out for a patrol. Tis a pity if you don't get a good move on there as there is fine material there. What about having a go at B----- there we would give ye a hand – ask Comdt. I think we would succeed quite easily.  
Slan leat till I meet you.

XXXXXXXXXX

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**Document No. 8**

(Nature: What appears to be a blue carbon copy of a letter.)

Transcript:

SOUTH TIPP. BRIGADE

The Commdt.,  
South Tipp Bde.

22/10/'20

A Cara

You will find enclosed a statement of the accounts of the recent Arms collections. You are already aware of my reasons for resigning. You will note that there is a balance due of £443:11:9. Please let me know who I will make this payable to. A letter to the Head Office on next Thursday will find me.

I hope you are in good form after recent adventures. I need scarcely say how deeply I regret the loss of Sean. I would have been at the funeral but knew nothing about his death until I saw it on the Sunday paper.

Beir buadh agus beannacht.

Mise  
The late Acting Bde. Qr. M

*(Note: A note by Sean Sharkey states that "Sean" was Sean Treacy. Seamus Robinson was the Qtr. Master and the letter was possibly written to Dan Breen.)*

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**Document No. 11**

(Nature: A purple carbon copy of a typed letter.)

Transcript:

SOUTH TIPP. BRIGADE

Batt. 2 area

30/8/'230

The Commdt.  
South Tipp. Bde.

A Cara

I am sending on today two automatics, one Peter the Painter and one Parrabellum. I gave these some time ago to the local Company to have them forwarded to Brigade Headquarters but they seemingly misunderstood matters and worse still they seem to have been kept in a hay rick that was heating and they had all rusted considerably so you could have them attended to immediately. There is a box of ammunition also.

As regards my recent letter I would like to have a talk with you on the entire matter whenever you are in the locality again, as it is important that we should know what are to be the future movements in this and other localities so that preparations for a general shift of a number of families can be made. The other matter as regards economic reprisals in England ought to be attended to. I refer to the counterfeiting business.

Hope you are all to breagh slan.

Mise,

Do Chara,

The Acting Bde. Qr. Master.

P.S. Please note that the Drangan Company is to be given credit for £50. I turned this amount over to Dan when in the city. I gave also £150 to D.P. on the 17th.

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**Document No. 12**

(Nature: A short letter written in pen.)

Transcript:

F. C. No.

2

To Lt. Int. Bn. 5

- (1) Bearer will give you camera – film still in it but taken. Send out another roll in it and a couple of spare ones. You forgot to leave book after you the other evening, give it to bearer.
- (2) Will you try to get a green shirt for me – a heavy one if possible. Tell Cooney to send out the boots this evening.

JJ H. O. C. Column

P. S. Hope you will be pleased with the snaps next lot will be better.



**Document No. 13**

(Nature: A copy of a handwritten note, in blue carbon.)

Transcript:

Ref 14a            8/11/21

Int. Dept.  
"A" Coy. Btn.  
9 am

No. 29

Int. Dept. P

"A" Coy.

A Cara

1. You will report the following at once.
2. The exact strength of Yorks and Lincs in Bks.
3. The total strength of R.I.C. at present in Bks.
4. Names of all the Sergeants in R.I.C. Bks.

Is mise

No. 1. I/O

"A" Coy.

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