



Decade of Centenaries grant report

Recipient name:	Brian Hanley
Amount and year awarded:	€7,500 in 2022
Title of project:	Dirty War in Dublin

Summary of project:

This is a five part podcast series (episodes approximately 50 minutes in duration) which looks at the so-called Free State 'Murder Gang' during the Civil War. It is researched, written and narrated by Dr. Brian Hanley and edited and produced by Kevin Brannigan. Episode one ('Kid Gloves') examines the career of Paddy O' Daly, generally regarded as responsible for the Ballyseedy massacre in Kerry. It looks at O'Daly's background, the Dublin IRA, the formation of Michael Collins's Squad and the role of the Dublin Guard during the Civil War. It also looks at attacks on women in Kerry, notably the 'Kenmare Incident' in June 1923.

Questions about the role of O'Daly are followed up in episode two ('The Red Cow Murders') which looks at the various unofficial killings by Free State personnel in Dublin: who carried them out and the background of these men during the War of Independence. All of those implicated in the atrocities had been very active IRA men and all were closely associated with Collins.

Episode three ('The Wild Chap') examines the murder of two Jewish men in Dublin during 1923. These killings were carried out by army officers and members of the 'Murder Gang' who were able to escape punishment because of their connections to the state.

Episode four ('Scapegoats') details several killings of republicans after the war had officially ended, including that of Noel Lemass. In two cases men were punished for these activities, in circumstances that suggested that they were sacrificed to protect others as deeply implicated as themselves.

Episode five ('The Men Who Worshipped the Gun') looks at political violence in the context of post-war Europe and the culture which glorified its practitioners. It examines how PTSD and other forms of trauma may have influenced the violence that these mostly young men carried out. It also notes how they almost all escaped any form of retribution. It discusses whether Michael Collins and the culture he promoted among his closest allies bares any responsibility for the activities of the Murder Gang.

There are six historians interviewed during the series: Katrina Goldstone, John Borgonovo, John Dorney, Mary McAuliffe, Liam O'Callaghan and Liz Gillis. The series contains new material based on recently released Military Service Pension Files and is aimed at a general audience. Each episode will include an appropriate illustration that will be used in online publicity. Below is a portrait of General Paddy O'Daly which was painted by Sean Keating and is held by the Dublin Municipal Gallery (the Hugh Lane). We received permission to use this with episode one. We are awaiting permission from the National Museum for several other images.



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Objectives of the project:

To inform a popular audience about the unofficial violence of the Civil War.

To examine the background of those involved in the so-called 'Murder Gang' and begin discussion about their backgrounds and previous roles.

To tell the story of the victims of this violence. To inform discussions about the Civil War more generally.

To look critically at the way Michael Collins is remembered.

To discuss the culture of commemoration and also 'forgetting' with regard to the Civil War.

Methodology used in conducting the research:

Dr. Brian Hanley is an authority on modern Irish republicanism. He looked at a range of archival material from the Richard Mulcahy papers in UCD Archives, to Garda reports in the National Archives and particularly the recently released Military Service Pensions in order to create the narrative for the series.

Findings of research and milestones achieved:

Those involved in the Civil War atrocities carried out by government forces were almost all IRA veterans, mostly closely linked to Michael Collins, through the Squad or GHQ Intelligence.

They were mostly Dubliners, often very young and usually from skilled working class or white-collar backgrounds.

They often acted out of desire to avenge close comrades.

They were regarded as an elite and often at loggerheads with other members of the state forces.

They had developed a fearsome reputation as fighters during the War of Independence, but had also been seen as undisciplined or as drinkers.

They were key to the state forces successes in the early part of the Civil War.

They suffered almost no retribution after the war ended and indeed were somewhat celebrated in a folksy manner by the 1970s.



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By 1924 tensions within the state forces saw this group marginalised and ultimately most of them left the army after the abortive mutiny that year. However, a number of senior and long-standing political and military figures were implicated in war crimes and never faced any kind of court.

Dissemination of the project outcomes:

Five-part podcast. X account. Articles to follow in History Ireland and the Irish Times. Interviews with Second Captains after launch of podcast.

Published work/plans:

Ultimately a book. However, that is still in the early stages.

Lectures given/outreach activities:

Lecture to be given to launch podcast.

Plans for continued communication of the project's results:

Dr. Brian Hanley intends to write further on the culture of political violence with the Murder Gang at the centre of the narrative.

Plans for furthering the project:

The ambition is to stimulate discussion and hopefully publish further.

How the bursary enhanced professional development:

Dr. Brian Hanley had published widely, but this is the first occasion he had worked on this type of broadcast media.