

# THE IRISH WAR OF INDEPENDENCE

## 1919-1921



The military wing of the Sinn Féin movement, the Irish Republican Army (IRA), engaged in an increasingly violent armed conflict with Crown Forces in Ireland between 1919 and 1921. The war was characterised by internal and international propaganda, popular protests, guerrilla tactics, IRA flying columns, ambushes and reprisals, violence and counter-violence, intimidation, assassination and intricate intelligence networks.

### 21 JAN 1919

#### DÁIL ÉIREANN

Sinn Féin's elected representatives meet in the Mansion House in Dublin to declare a republic and form the First Dáil. Cathal Brugha is elected temporary President as Éamon de Valera is in jail. By the end of its first session the Dáil approves a provisional constitution and issued a Declaration of Independence, a message to the Free Nations of the World, and a Democratic Programme.

#### SOLOHEADBEG AMBUSH

Two members of the Royal Irish Constabulary (RIC) are shot dead during an ambush by members of the 3rd Tipperary Brigade, Irish Volunteers. The attack is carried out without the authorisation of the Dáil or Volunteer General Headquarters



**DANIEL BREEN**  
Commandant of the Third Tipperary Brigade.  
5'10" in height, bronzed complexion, grey eyes, short front, about 12 stone, light hair; looks rather young; wears cap

### SPRING 1919

#### JAIL BREAK

On 3 February, Éamon de Valera escapes from Lincoln Jail in England with the help of Michael Collins and Harry Boland.

#### ARMS RAIDS

In early 1919, IRA Volunteers engage in low-level conflict with police, secret drilling and arms raids. On 19 March Dublin Volunteers raid Collinstown airfield (now Dublin Airport) capturing 75 rifles and 4,000 rounds of ammunition.

*"There is in Ireland at this moment only one lawful authority, and that authority is the elected Government of the Irish Republic"*  
Statement issued by Dáil Éireann on 01 April 1919

#### POLICE BOYCOTT

On 10 April, the Dáil confirms the policy of peaceful boycott against the RIC initiated by republicans in 1917.

#### KNOCKLONG

On 13 May two RIC officers are shot during the rescue of Tipperary IRA leader, Séan Hogan, at Knocklong Railway Station, Co Limerick. A number of volunteers are also wounded.

### LATE 1919

#### FUNDRAISING

Between June 1919 and Dec 1920, Éamon de Valera tours the US to raise funds and gain support for the Irish Independence movement.

Minister for Finance Michael Collins organises a National Loan to raise funds for Dáil Éireann. Citizens can purchase bonds to be redeemed later by the newly-declared Irish Republic. The Dáil Loan raises £371,000 in Ireland.



#### IRISH REPUBLICAN ARMY

From mid 1919, the Volunteers take an oath of allegiance to the Republic and begin using the name Irish Republican Army (IRA)

#### ON THE RUN

Dáil Éireann is declared an illegal assembly on 12 September. On 25 November the Volunteers, Sinn Féin, the Gaelic League and Cumann na mBan are banned.

#### THE 'SQUAD'

Collins' recently-established full-time counter-intelligence unit fails in an attempt to assassinate the Lord Lieutenant, Lord French on 19 December.

### EARLY 1920

#### ESCALATION

IRA General Headquarters (GHQ) officially sanctions offensive action against Crown forces from 1 January. In the same month, William Redmond, Assistant Commissioner of 'G' Division, Dublin Metropolitan Police, is shot dead by members of Collins' 'Squad'.

#### BLACK & TANS

Sustained IRA intimidation, arms raids and attacks on unoccupied barracks leads to the resignation of many RIC members. A recruitment campaign begins in England for new RIC members. Uniformed in khaki coats and black trousers, these new recruits would become known as the Black & Tans.

#### TÓMAS MACCARTAIN

On 20 March, the Sinn Féin Lord Mayor of Cork, Tomás Mac Curtain is shot dead in his home by disguised policemen. In the same month, the Black and Tans begin to arrive in Ireland.

#### COORDINATED ATTACKS

On the night of 3-4 April, IRA GHQ orders the Volunteer units to destroy 350 courthouses, tax offices and abandoned police stations. This was the first major nationwide mobilisation by the Irish Volunteers.

### MID 1920

#### MUNITIONS STRIKE

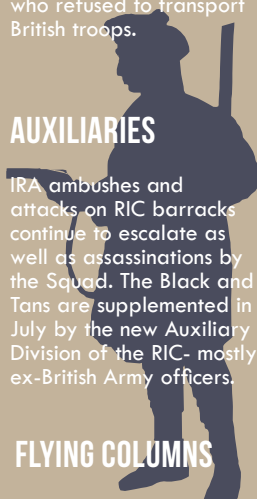
Dublin dock workers refuse to handle war material. They are soon joined by rail workers who refused to transport British troops.

#### AUXILIARIES

IRA ambushes and attacks on RIC barracks continue to escalate as well as assassinations by the Squad. The Black and Tans are supplemented in July by the new Auxiliary Division of the RIC- mostly ex-British Army officers.

#### FLYING COLUMNS

The Restoration of Order in Ireland Act, passed at Westminster on 9 August, allows for the internment and court martial of civilians. This leads to more IRA Volunteers going 'on the run' and joining mobile IRA units called 'Flying Columns'. Led by men like Tom Barry, Liam Lynch and Ernie O'Malley, the flying columns use hit-and-run guerrilla tactics against Crown forces.



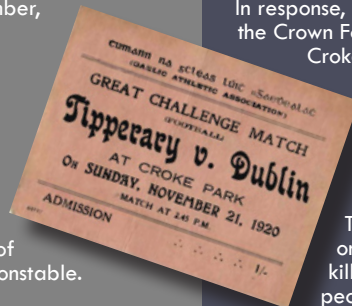


## LATE 1920



### THE SACK OF BALBRIGGAN

On 20 September, Balbriggan in County Dublin is attacked and property destroyed by Black and Tans and Auxiliaries as a reprisal for the death of an RIC head constable.



## NOV-DEC 1920

### BLOODY SUNDAY

**MORNING**  
Just after 9:00 am on 21 November 1921, twelve suspected British Intelligence officers in various locations in Dublin are executed by members of the Squad.

**AFTERNOON**  
In response, members of the Crown Forces raid Croke Park during a Gaelic Football match between Dublin and Tipperary. They open fire on the crowd killing fourteen people.

## EARLY 1921

### MARTIAL LAW

A system of official reprisal is introduced and martial law proclaimed in counties Cork, Kerry, Limerick and Tipperary on 10 December 1920. Martial Law is extended to counties Clare, Waterford, Kilkenny and Wexford on 29 and 30 December. By the end of January 1921, 1,463 civilians have been interned.

### FATALITIES

Casualty figures on both sides continue to rise. In February and March 1921 alone, 4 Auxiliaries are killed in an IRA ambush in Clonfin, Co Longford, 11 RIC officers and Black and Tans are killed by IRA in Dromkeen, Co Limerick and 12 members of the IRA's east Cork flying column were killed and 8 arrested at the Battle of Clonmult. Nine soldiers and one Auxiliary were killed by Tom Barry's west Cork flying column at Crossbarry.



**EVENING**  
Leading IRA figures, Dick McKee and Peadar Clancy who had been arrested earlier in Nov, are shot dead in Dublin Castle. Innocent prisoner, Conor Clune, is also executed.

## SPRING 1921

### ARMY OF THE REPUBLIC

Initially slow to accept responsibility for the actions of the IRA over which they had no control, in April 1921, the Dáil accepts responsibility for all IRA actions up to that date.

### ELECTIONS

The Government of Ireland Act, passed in December 1920, creates the provinces of Northern Ireland and Southern Ireland, each with its own Home Rule parliament. In the general election for the parliament of Southern Ireland in May 1921, Sinn Féin wins 124 of the new parliament's 128 seats. The elected members abstain and from the 2nd Dail.

## MID 1921

### CALLS FOR PEACE

At the Commonwealth Conference in June, South African Prime Minister, General Smuts, urges the British government to find a peaceful, diplomatic solution to the conflict. In the same month, King George V addresses the first session of the parliament of Northern Ireland and appeals to all Irishmen to join in making "a new era of peace."

The high cost of lives and inability of the IRA or the British government to win a clear victory, convinces the leaders on both sides to seek a negotiated peace.

On 22 June 1921, British Prime Minister Lloyd George invites Éamon de Valera to open negotiations.

### TRUCE

On 8 July 1921 Éamon de Valera meets Sir Neville Maccready, Commander of British forces in Ireland. They agree a truce will come into effect at 12:00 on 11 July 1921.

## TERENCE MACSWINEY

The Sinn Féin Lord Mayor of Cork, Terence MacSwiney, dies in Brixton Prison on the 73rd day of hunger strike.



## KEVIN BARRY

On 1 November, eighteen year-old medical student Kevin Barry is hanged in Mountjoy Jail for his part in an ambush on a lorry load of British soldiers in Dublin.

Graphic descriptions of the deaths of Kevin Barry and Terence MacSwiney are distributed nationally and internationally by Dáil Éireann's Publicity Department under Desmond Fitzgerald.

## KILMICHAEL AMBUSH

The west Cork unit of the IRA under Tom Barry ambush a patrol of 18 Auxiliaries, killing seventeen.

## CORK CITY BURNED

In an act of reprisal, Crown Forces set fire to the commercial centre of Cork city.

## TOURMAKEDY AMBUSH

On 3 May, Tom Maguire's south Mayo flying column ambush British troops at Tourmakeady killing six. The Volunteers are pursued by Crown Forces guided by airplanes. One volunteer is killed and Maguire badly wounded, before they manage to escape.



### CUSTOM HOUSE

Dublin units of the IRA attack and burn the Custom House in Dublin on the 25 May. They are quickly surrounded by Crown Forces. Five IRA volunteers and three civilians are killed and almost 100 members of the Dublin Brigade, IRA arrested.

