

## **History of the Garda in 1922**

About the first week in February 1922 I with other members of the 1<sup>st</sup> Western Division I.R.A. were assembled on a parade. We were informed that our next duty would be the taking over of Military and R.I.C. Barracks pursuant to the terms of the Anglo/Irish Treaty.

No particular area of the operations was mentioned beyond being told that we would be away for an indefinite period and to so inform our home folk and get ourselves in readiness. We later left Ballinasloe by road transport (motor cars). After a hazardous run (it was freezing) we arrived in Killaloe, Co. Clare, at midnight.

We were met by members of the local Volunteers who welcomed us and we were distributed in pairs to billets in local houses, where evidently prior arrangements had been made.

We were instructed to parade at local R.I.C. Barracks the following morning for further instructions. On arrival at the Barracks we learned that it had been taken over the previous day. We were joined by another large contingent of Volunteers and each man was armed with a rifle and bandolier of ammunition.

We left Killaloe in open lorries, standing room only for about 100 men. No destination was given but eventually we arrived in Limerick City. When crossing the Bridge there we noticed two R.I.C. men on duty – they waved to us.

We arrived outside Castle Military Barracks dismounted and formed up four deep. After some preliminaries by the officers on both sides, the Barrack Gates opened we marched in and a detachment of British Army marched out.

Inside the Barracks we were divided into small sections – I think 10 in all with an officer-in-charge of each Section. Of this number 8 Sections were marched out each going in different directions through the City. By this time Limerick City was all agog, jubilation was running high, cheering and running to vantage points. After a short march we were halted outside what I now know was Mary Street R.I.C. Barracks. We had some difficulty approaching it through the surrounding crowd.

We were halted on the footpath in front of the Barracks while our officer entered the building. While waiting we had a hectic few minutes with an overjoyed crowd – suffice to say that our smoking tastes were abundantly catered for.

When our officer emerged he marched us in at the “The Slope” along a short path leading to the Barrack door, the R.I.C. and a couple of Tans walked out to loud cheers and singing. On looking through the front window when inside, it was very revealing to see a few of the fair sex in obvious grief as they kissed and caressed their favourite policeman. Before departing a sergeant returned to the Dayroom shook hands with each man and wished us the Best of Luck.

Our first job inside was to remove steel shutters from the windows. For the next couple of days excitement was still high in Limerick, culminating in a take over of two leading Hotels

in the City my men then described as irregulars and reputed to be anti-treaty. Excitement turned to a high state of tension and rumours that there might be a conflict between the men who had taken over the British garrisons and the members who had commandeered the hotels. We were ordered to replace the steel shutters we had removed three days previously.

As days passed rumours abounded as to what was happening or might happen, indeed some “wild men” pulled guns and there were a small number of casualties as a result.

Suddenly the Volunteers who occupied the eight Barracks in the City were ordered to pack up for transfer to Galway.

We arrived in Galway by train no or about the 20<sup>th</sup> February 1922. We marched, fully armed, from the train to Oranmore Military Barracks. The “Tommies” were still in occupation there and consequently we had a repetition of the job done in Limerick – the British Garrison marched out for the last time as we marched in.

After a few days in Oranmore a rumour was current in the Barracks that a Police Force was about to be formed in Dublin. This was what most of us had our sights set on and we so informed our Commanding Officer – one of the Brennan brothers from Co. Clare – I think it was Austin. He proved very receptive and arranged for about 12 men to sit for an examination at Glenaboy Castle, where other candidates were being attested. Having succeeded at the examination I with other successful candidates were instructed to return to our homes and procure references from our P.P. and local Volunteer Commander. In the course of a few days I received a calling up notice to report at Ballsbridge Training Centre on 25-3-22 and that Transport would meet me at Broadstone Railway Station.

I entrained at Ballinasloe Railway Station on 25-03-22 and joined a number of the boys from Oranmore who were also going to Ballsbridge. At Broadstone we were directed to a Crosselly Tender driven by a man who later became known to me as Tommy McDonagh a Clareman and now a retired C/Superintendent.

At Ballsbridge we were unloaded outside and entered the Receiving Office where our arrival etc. was recorded and I learned that I was the 480<sup>th</sup> member to register and that the name of the Force I had joined was the Civic Guard and that our salary would start 70/- per week – a princely sum at the period. The entire party of latest “Rookies” were then guided out to the horse stalls in the Enclosure. Each man was handed an empty mattress cover made of stiff canvas. Each candidate was directed to fill his mattress with straw from the Stalls, then back to the Main Hall where we laid our “O’Dearest” mattress on 3 boards stretched on 2 wooden trestles and standing about 6 inches from the floor, there were about 1000 men so accommodated on the floor of the vast hall and surrounding balconies. Some of the boys didn’t spare the straw when packing their mattresses – result – when they stretched their weary bodies the first night some of them rolled out on the floor or in on top of the bloke sleeping in the next bed.

Each morning reveille sounded at 7 o’clock and from that time until 8 a.m. it was bed making, shaving, etc. Breakfast at 8 a.m. The day’s work comprising Drill and Police Duty

classes started at 9 a.m. The curriculum was somewhat dis-jointed due to lack of proper accommodation and instructors. Each night brought its quota of accidents due to the “Country Boys” jumping of moving trams outside the Building when rushing back for Roll Call at 10 p.m.

After about 3 weeks in Ballsbridge I was one of a party moved to an armed outpost in College Street. It was a big building and known as the “Treaty Rooms”. Now a Bank was used by General M.I. Collins, A. Griffith and other members of the Provisional Govt. in connection with the ensuing General Elections. We were armed with rifles and revolvers and at times were called on to escort ministers. A similar party was sent to Green St. Courthouse.

The “Treaty Room” Party were in charge of Sgt. Tom Egan, Galway Championship footballer. The Green Street Garrison was in charge of Sgt. Jos. Keaney, one wild man. I should say that all members were then in “their own” clothes as the distribution of uniforms had not commenced. This was a very trying and unpleasant period for us, as soon after leaving Ballsbridge we received no pay because of a mutiny in the Force but more about this later.

After about 2 months or towards the middle of June we were again on the move, this time to Newbridge, Co. Kildare. While we were in the Treaty Rooms the Anti-Treaty Forces took over the Four Courts and there were units of the British Army and the R.I.C. still in the Castle.

By this time there was a big intake of recruits into the New Force. Due to lack of accommodation recruits were scattered around in 3 or 4 centres such as Clonaskea Castle, Henry Street Warehouse, Kildare Military Barracks and a building in Collinstown – now the Irish Airport. Some members were getting wages others were not. The members not getting paid were regarded as mutineers because they resented the intake of 2 or 3 recruits who were ex members of the R.I.C.

We moved into an old Military Barracks at Newbridge – earlier vacated by the British Army – and were posted to No.6 Coy. I must here pay tribute to the local traders who gave us credit in their shops, because we were penniless. While in Newbridge I remember seeing contingents of the Irish Army from the Curragh flying through in lorries to the siege on the Four Courts – it was a very unfortunate period.

I think it was in June when the mutiny affair was sorted out. About 1500 men were without pay for about 2 months. The chief difficulty was food and were it not for the trusting traders at Newbridge and Kildare our plight would have been bad indeed. Within a few days of their back pay all traders’ accounts were fully paid up.

The cause of the mutiny in the first instance was due to veteran I.R.A. men in the Force objecting to ex R.I.C. men being taken in and promoted to Officer Rank. For a full report on this Episode I would refer readers to Vol. 1. No. 1. of An Siocadoir, the official organ of the Garda Pensioners Association January 1962. It may be possible to get a copy in the Depot Library.

It was about the second week in August the entire party in Newbridge were moved back to Dublin by special train. From Kingsbridge Terminus we were marched to Dame Street and halted in front of the Castle Gates. There was a milling crowd of cheering sightseers there as the Castle Gates opened we marched in as the last units of the British Army and R.I.C. marched out. The Castle & Ship Street Barracks were taken over. Later the members from Kildare and Henry Street arrived. By this time General Eoin O'Duffy was appointed Commissioner.

The state of law and order could scarcely be worse with Bank Robberies, train robberies, etc. A number of men were armed and 2 armed Guards placed inside all City Banks during business hours. The writer was in various Banks throughout the City. This move had the desired effect.

Two great tragedies occurred during August namely the sudden death of Arthur Griffith and the assassination of General Michael Collins, Commander-in-Chief of the National Army. We were detailed for duty in and outside the City Hall during the Lying-in-State of General Collins. By this time the force was several thousand strong and they presented a very fine turn out at the subsequent funeral to Glasnevin. By this time most men were uniformed. Up to this period and until the writer was sent out the country I must say there was nothing more than haphazard training of any kind.

There was not enough accommodation – in fact men had to stand on their beds when dressing and undressing.

About the first of September examinations were held for the rank of Sergeant and Inspector in preparation for the first transfers to the country. By October there were mass promotions of new Sergeants and about 10 Inspectors.

On 13<sup>th</sup> October the undermentioned were transferred to Carrigallen, Co. Leitrim:-

1. Sgt. Jim Littleton (Clare)
2. Gda. P. Campbell, 480, (Galway)
3. “ Tommie Boland, 520, (Clare)
4. “ Jim Carroll, (Galway)
5. “ Mick McGrath (Tipp.)
6. “ Pat Scully “
7. “ Joe Hughes (Leix)

The party were detailed to move 3 or 4 days earlier but could not do so because a section of the railway track was blown up.

We entrained at Broadstone Station (long since closed down) arriving at Killeshandra where we were told that we would have to finish the Journey by road. After some searching we succeeded in getting a truck or small lorry with solid tyres. On this we loaded our iron beds, straw mattresses, wooden tables, wooden forms, sheets and blankets, and, finally our own bodies.

On arrival in the village we were left standing on the street until approached by a man who introduced himself as the local school teachers. Our sergeant told him we were the new Civic Guard – we were then in “Civies”. He extended a welcome to us and we were heartened by even this reception. When told by our Sergeant that there didn’t appear to be any accommodation arranged for us, he said that we would have to be looked after and told us he would contact the local P.P. and if necessary secure the local school. He later returned and invited us to look at a small vacant 4 roomed terraced house in the village – the owner was willing to rent it to us. In addition he had arranged for our meals in a dwellinghouse opposite. We decided without more a do to move in as we were becoming the objects of much curiosity by this time.

During the next day or two we were engaged in arranging our furniture (??) and effects and the sergeant informed H.Q. that we had arrived and were still all alive.

Next we got into our uniforms and let the residents of the area have another look at us by moving out on an occasional patrol. I must say we received some handshakes and words of welcome from many residents.

It wasn’t long until the Daily Papers carried accounts of raids on Guards Stations through the country and shots fired at members of the force.

Our time came very soon when one night armed men entered and lined us up with hands over our heads – some remarks by one of the raiders in which Tans were mentioned. While two men with rifles guarded us the remainder searched the little building and stole some property such as small sums of cash and a couple of watches also a violin and case belonging to Tommie Boland. After a strict warning that we were to clear out they took their departure.

We stuck it out and in a couple of weeks later we were again raided by a number of armed men. They lined us up as on the previous occasion. Some of the gang removed the mattresses from the beds to the street, sprinkled them with petrol and set them alight. With buckets of water we tried to save them but had to retreat under rifle fire from the raiders. Before leaving the leader of the gunmen warned us that if we didn’t clear out immediately we would not be warned again. Our bedding was replaced but I am unable to recall where it came from.

We still had our uniform and continued performing patrols. By this time we had a couple of summonses issued for breaches of the licensing laws. The night before the first sitting of the District Court the armed Irregulars as they were then known arrived and kidnapped us. Before moving away they climbed to the roof of what we called our Barracks and with sledges smashed in the slates and broke up the windows. They collected our new bicycles and cycling along side us they marched us about 7 miles to a farmhouse in Co. Longford arriving there around 3 a.m. From that until our release the following night we had an anxious time as rumour reached us that the army were out searching for us and we feared being caught up in crossfire. During our period of captivity we were treated reasonable well but on release we were again warned to clear out. We were released in different directions without our bicycles which we never saw again. We re-assembled in Carrigallen.

During all these happenings our sergeant was in touch with H.Q. and taking instructions. The last such instruction being that we were to billet in publichouses – 2 men to each house. One night the man of the house where Tommie Boland and I were staying came to our room around 2 a.m., to inform us there were armed men at his door demanding admission. We told him to let them in before they smashed in his door. He did so and within a couple of minutes 2 men arrived in our bedroom armed with rifles and demanded to know why we hadn't left. We replied that we were awaiting instructions from our H.Q. and after further parlying they left the room and went downstairs. They collected the local Bank Manager and Cashier from their homes and forced them to open the Bank and give out whatever cash they had. From that time until we were recalled to the Depot on 13/4/23 we did not perform any duty. We were replaced by a large detachment of military. I should say that outside Dublin H.Q. there was no proper chain of command for country stations for the first six months.

.....  
Campbell  
Esc Sgt 480  
11-10-77