



## Republican policing during the Independence struggle, 1918~21

The formation of the notorious Black and Tans during the Independence struggle resulted in a series of atrocities committed by this force across Galway, including the burning of Tuam on 19 July 1920 and the notorious murders of Fr Michael Griffin, the Loughnane brothers and Mrs Eileen Quinn later the same year. In March 1921, the RIC County Inspector for Galway West wrote: “The life of the police is scarcely bearable. They are shamed and boycotted and for the most part cannot get the necessities of life unless they commandeer them. The people generally are out for a republic and they propose to get it.”

The actions of the Black and Tans left the reputation of the RIC in tatters and an editorial in the *Tuam Herald* pleaded for a respite from police reprisals as “the country is bleeding to death, bleeding at every pore”. During the same month, Archbishop Gilmartin of Tuam wrote: “if the full tale of flogging, burning, terrorism and looting could be told, the whole picture would make even savages ashamed”.

While the RIC was boycotted by the community, the Irish Volunteers began performing the role of the police and republican courts were particularly effective in reconciling disputes over land. Volunteer John Feehan recalled:

*Wholesale sheep stealing was prevalent throughout Connemara at this time and the RIC were taking no action. We made a roundup of the Twelve Pins with a force of Volunteers and farmers concerned, and collected the sheep into one area where the farmers could collect their stolen sheep.*

Volunteer Thomas Mannion recalled that in north Galway:

*Some disputes between neighbours never went into the courts but were settled by the Volunteers. Such cases still hold good. The people then had a very great regard for the sincerity of the Volunteers and sank their small differences out of respect for them.*



A mixture of local RIC, Black and Tans and the D Company Auxiliaries were responsible for policing in 1920. Courtesy of the National Library of Ireland.  
Grúpa ina bhfuil meascán den RIC, na Dúchrónaigh agus Póilíní Cánta Chomplacht D a bhí freagrach as póilíneacht sna 1920idí. Le caoinchead Leabharlann Náisiúnta na hÉireann.  
Second from top: West Connemara flying column. Permission to use provided by Leonard



West Connemara flying column.  
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Colún reatha Iarthar Chonamara.  
Le cead Bhailiúchán Leonard (úinéir cóipchirt).



Volunteers from the 2nd Battalion (Claregalway, Annaghdown and Kilcoona) of the Mid-Galway Brigade IRA at Killeen Castle, Castlegar, 1921.  
Courtesy of Cathy Fahy. Colourized by Brendan McGowan.  
Óglaigh de chuid an 2ú Cathlán (Baile Chláir, Eanach Dhúin agus Cill Chuanna) de Bhriogáid Lár na Gaillimhe den IRA ag Caisleán an Chillín, An Caisleán Gearr, 1921.  
Le caoinchead Cathy Fahy. Daite ag Brendan McGowan.



The UCG Volunteers, 1918; Many of these young men were involved in republican land courts and policing during the independence struggle. Courtesy of the Hardiman Library, NUI Galway.  
Óglaigh Choláiste na hOllscoile, Gaillimh, 1918; bhí baint ag go leor de na fir óga seo le cúirteanna talún poblachtaigh agus i bpóilíneacht le linn choimhlint an neamhspleáchais. Le caoinchead Leabharlann Hardiman, Ollscoil na hÉireann, Gaillimh.

## Póilíní Poblachtánacha agus an Troid ar son an Neamhspleáchais, 1918~21

Rinne na póilíní go leor ainghníomhartha i nGaillimh le bunú na nDúchrónach míchlúiteach le linn na Troda ar son an Neamhspleáchais, lena n-áirítear loscadh Thuama an 19 Iúil 1920 agus dúnmharuithe scannalacha an Athar Michael Griffin, na nDeartháireacha Loughnane agus Eileen Quinn uasal níos déanaí an bhliain chéanna. Seo mar a scríobh an Cigire Dúiche i nGaillimh Thiar i Márta 1921: “The life of the police is scarcely bearable. They are shamed and boycotted and for the most part cannot get the necessities of life unless they commandeer them. The people generally are out for a republic and they propose to get it.”

Scríos gníomhartha na nDúchrónach cáil an RIC go hiomlán agus impíodh in eagarfhocal sa *Tuam Herald* go bhfaighfí faoiseamh ó dhíoltas na bpóilíní mar go raibh an tír ag fáil bháis de dheasca cailleadh fola, ag cur fola ó bhaithis go bonn. Le linn na míosa céanna, scríobh an tArdeaspag Gilmartin, Ardeaspag Thuama, a leanas: ‘if the full tale of flogging, burning, terrorism and looting could be told the whole picture would make even savages ashamed’.

Ó tharla go raibh an pobal ag déanamh baghcat ar an RIC, ghlac Óglaigh na hÉireann ról na bpóilíní orthu féin agus bhí na cúirteanna poblachtánacha éifeachtach go maith ó thaobh aighneas faoi chúrsaí talún a réiteach. Chuimhnigh an tÓglach John Feehan ar a leanas:

*Wholesale sheep stealing was prevalent throughout Connemara at this time and the RIC were taking no action. We made a roundup of the Twelve Pins with a force of Volunteers and farmers concerned, and collected the sheep into one area where the farmers could collect their stolen sheep.*

Chuimhnigh an tÓglach Thomas Mannion ar an méid seo a bhain le Tuaisceart na Gaillimhe:

*Some disputes between neighbours never went into the courts but were settled by the Volunteers. Such cases still hold good. The people then had a very great regard for the sincerity of the Volunteers and sank their small differences out of respect for them.*

