The Women were Worse than the Men: Crime and Society in Dublin during 1916

The mobs that looted Dublin's city centre in 1916 have entered the mythology of the Rising just as robustly as the Irish Volunteers and Irish Citizen Army and, as far as I am aware, it was the only occasion in the history of the capital, and possibly Ireland, when more women were convicted of criminal offences than men, hence the title of this talk. However I also want to say something about the wider impact the First World War had on crime in the city

The Easter Rising made Dublin unique in the United Kingdom in that it was the only city where fighting took place and the general breakdown in law and order created new opportunities for breaking the law, just as the Defence of the Realm Act that was passed on the outbreak of the Great War created new laws to break. The incidence of serious crime by juvenile gangs, often abetted by adults, such as housebreaking and robbery of coal trains, became commonplace, along with fraudulent claims for separation allowances, theft of military property and greatly increased desertion rates from the British armed forces. At the same time the large scale recruitment of young adult males from working class districts into the armed forces saw a reduction in the pool of potential adult offenders and a decline in the population of Mountjoy Prison.

But to return to the looters: newspapers characterised them in vivid terms that are remembered to this day. The *Irish Times*, which managed to publish almost uninterruptedly throughout the fighting, reported on Tuesday, 25 April, 1916, that on the previous night

> 'Shop windows in North Earl Street were smashed, and the shops were looted. Noblett's sweet shop at the corner and that of Lewers and Company [children's outfitters] next to it in Sackville Street, were sacked, and youngsters male and female, might be seen carrying bundles of sweets, or caps, and hats, or shirts, of which the shops were despoiled. … A public house in North Earl Street was looted, and when the looters had partaken of the ardent spirits some of them beat each other with bottles so violently that they were under necessity of having their wounds dressed in hospital'.[1]

[1] *Irish Times*, April 25th, 1916

The *Irish Independent*, which did not appear until 4 May, reported that

> 'When darkness set in on Easter Monday the lawless element in the city set themselves out for loot. ... The revolutionaries in the GPO, did their best to stop the looting, and fired blank shots at intervals over the heads of the mob. Nothing seemed to frighten them.'[2]

Cumann na mBan member Min Mulcahy, in her Witness Statement to the Bureau of Military History, described the destruction while acting as a courier for the rebels. She particularly noticed the destruction of the Irish Farm and Produce Company in Henry Street owned by leading Sinn Féin activist Jennie Wyse Power:

> 'I remember seeing some of the looters at Norton's in Henry St. Prams were being thrown down through the windows above, for women to catch them below. By Wednesday, Mrs Wyse- Power's place was burned and looted. She was in a bad state. I think she did not let Nancy [her daughter] go back'.[3]

Another witness was Nora Marion Fitzpatrick, a VAD nurse who was in Talbot Street when she saw

> 'the mob attack the Dollymount tram.... I shall never forget the sight. It reminded me of the tales of the French Revolution. The back streets and slums had disgorged their inhabitants into the main thoroughfares. Looting had begun. The women, in many cases stripped absolutely naked to the waist from their struggles in the crowd, with their hair hanging loosely round their faces, were mostly drunk, and were doing far more damage than the men. They smashed the windows of the tram and tore the cushions and curtains to shreds. Then I heard some explosion... and the people scattered in all directions.'[4]

Initially the Military Commander of the revolutionaries, James Connolly, dismissed the looters as 'one more problem for the British' but he soon sent out members of the GPO garrison to disperse them by firing over their heads.[5] It had little effect. Nearby Liam Archer, a Volunteer Section Commander in the Church Street area, recalled on the first evening of the Rising the 'holidaymakers on their way home, and looters, [who] sought to pass through [the barricades]. The former we passed through in convoyed groups; the latter we stripped of all their loot and tried to frighten with dire threats'.[6]

Members of the Irish Citizen Army (ICA) seem to have taken a harsher view of the looters than Irish Volunteers, perhaps because their behaviour reflected so badly on the honour of a working class they sought to elevate to higher things. Yet the former secretary of the ICA Army Council Seán O'Casey, memorably described the night time scenes on O'Connell (Sackville) Street more sympathetically in his autobiography, *Drums under the Window*:

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[2] Irish Independent, April 26th to May 4th, 1916

[3] BMH, WS 0399 Mrs Richard Mulcahy.

[4] The Experiences of two V.A.D's in the Sinn Fein Rebellion By "One of them", Nora Marion Fitzpatrick 1879-1954, Dublin City Library and Civic Archive. My thanks to Dr Máire Kennedy for bringing it to my attention

[5] BMH, WS 1766, William O'Brien

[6] BMH, WS 819, Liam Archer.

> ‘The tinkle of broken glass wandered down the whole street and people were pushing and pulling each other, till through broken windows all the treasures of India, Arabia and Samarkand were open before them… They pulled boxes down on top of themselves, flung clothing all over the place; tried to pull new garments over old ones; while one woman, stripped naked, was trying on camisole after camisole, ending with calm touches that smoothed out the light blue one that satisfied her at last. All who were underdressed before, were overdressed now, and for the first time in their frosty lives the heat of good warm things encircled them.’[7]

Who were the looters?

Who were these looters, many of whom ran the risk of being shot, struck by shrapnel, crushed by falling buildings or burnt to death? It is probable that they comprised some at least of the civilian casualties in Easter Week.

We can at last identify some of them, or those at least who benefitted from the proceeds through the Dublin Metropolitan Police Prisoners Books, which have recently come to light. The most immediate fact to stand out is that possessors of loot were far more likely to be women than men, and married women or widows rather than single girls. In normal times men arrested for criminal activity outnumbered women by a factor of four or five to one in Dublin, and this did not change significantly during the war, although women were increasingly likely to be involved in ‘white collar’ crimes such as fraudulent claims for separation allowances.

Nor was the gender balance of arrests affected by the general retreat by the DMP from the streets in the Great War. Summonses served by the DMP fell by over half between 1912 and 1919, arrests fell by two-thirds and assaults on DMP constables by 80 per cent.[8] This was part of a survival strategy pursued by policemen as the city became increasingly lawless. It certainly increased opportunities for crime, most of which would go unreported and undetected. During the Rising, the absence of the police was particularly noticeable. A brief exception was the ‘housebreaking squad’ of the detective, or G Division in College Street. According to Eamon Broy, a recent recruit who later worked undercover for Michael Collins, this unit’s members ‘were revolted at the sight of so much stolen property being flaunted before their eyes’ from nearby shops such as Mansfield’s, the furriers, that they ‘sallied out and filled the cells at College St. police station’. They arrested 23 people for larceny and illegal possession on April 25th, the second day of the Rising, before being ordered back to barracks.[9]

However the constabulary returned to the streets with a vengeance after the Rising, particularly to the tenements and ‘courts’ where poverty flourished, and where those suspected of looting lived. People who lived outside these areas could generally expect to escape retribution and keep their ill-gotten gains.

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[7] Seán O’Casey, *Drums Under the Windows,* (Pan Books, London, 1973), p. 272.
[8] DMP Annual Reports and Statistical Reports, 1912-1919
[9] Eamon Broy BMH WS 1280.

We can at last sketch out the type of people who either looted in 1916, or benefitted by the proceeds from the DMP Prisoners Book for 1916-1918. It lists 'Prisoners Charged with Offences involving dishonesty'. Lesser offences such as soliciting or being drunk are not included. As a result a woman appearing in the book might be described as a 'Prostitute' by occupation but would have been charged with a more serious offence such as larceny or theft. Of course describing her as a 'Prostitute' might also assist the arresting officer in securing a conviction. Similarly a man's occupation might be given as 'Thief', 'Deserter' or 'Convict out on licence' with a similar outcome.

With these caveats in mind what does the Prisoners Book tell us about those it arrested in 1916? Firstly it indicates significant differences between males and females. Women arrested tended to be significantly older than men. They also appear to have been more likely to offend as they grew older and men less so. Females arrested ranged from nine to eighty years and males from six to seventy years but the average age for female prisoners in 1916 was 31.55, compared with 23.77 for males. The average age of those arrested for looting after the Rising is significantly higher for both sexes than those arrested in other months, but the gender differential remains. Females charged with illegal possession and related offences in May 1916 were 37 on average, and their ages ranged from 14 to 75 years. The average for males was 30, and aged between 10 to 70 years.

Women Worse than the Men

May 1916 is unique for the number of females arrested. In January they comprised 20% of those charged with a criminal offence, in February 17%, in March 16% and in April 18%. But in May the number rose to 58% and in June it was still 27%, before dropping to 13% in July, 23% in August, 17% in September, 23% in October, 16% in November and 21% in December. Women also accounted for 80% of all those arrested in connection with looting. In the vast majority of these cases women were charged with illegal possession rather than more active crimes such as shop breaking, larceny or theft. Consequently in May married women (including widows) overtook British Army deserters and juveniles as the largest group of offenders in the city.

Of course entry in the Prisoners' Book does not indicate women were guilty of looting but it does indicate they were its main beneficiaries. 44% of them were married and 7% were widows who, after two years of war, presumably included a significant number of War Widows. Unfortunately in the vast majority of cases no description is given of the goods found, but where items are listed there are only four cases of illegal possession of porter, as compared with seventeen of flour, twelve of household items, nine of bicycles, six of boots, two of sugar, two of footballs and one each of soap and a perambulator. Only eight women were charged with more active offences. Four of them with stealing boots, three with theft of jewellery and one was arrested with her husband for using violence to steal money. Almost all of these women came from traditional lower working class districts, some of them a stone's throw from this building such as Queen's Square and Erne Street, upper and lower

The main indicator of the value of items looted comes from the size of the fines imposed by Police Magistrates. These ranged from 5s to 40s for illegal possession and quite a number of looters were let off with a caution. However press reports of the court proceedings give us a glimpse of the cornucopia of items lifted. For instance, Mary E Bernard, a 30 year old

married woman of 10 Lower Dominick Street was fined 40s after the police found two boy's suits, an overcoat, two trousers, a jacket, a piece of tweed, a large enamel kettle and two enamel jugs worth £5 in the basement. Her neighbour, 40 year old Mary Mullen, was fined £1 for having two boy's coats and 'a pair of pants'. Another 40 year old woman, Mary Green of 4 Lower Dominick Street, was charged along with her 18 year old stepson Michael with illegal possession of two overcoats, two coats, a pair of trousers, a pair of boots, a looking glass, a small glass, a bag of sugar, and three quarters of a box of tea, worth £5. They were fined 40s and 20s respectively. He said he had found the items in the street and brought them home.

A mother and daughter, 46 year old Agnes O'Beirne and 18 year old Winnie O'Beirne, of 2 Hardwicke Place, were treated similarly but with the mother receiving two months imprisonment while the daughter was fined 20s. The mother's sentence reflects the higher value of the goods seized, which included two hair mattresses, one pillow, eight window curtains, one pair of corsets, one piece of flannelette, one quilt, one top coat, two ladies coats, half a dozen ladies hats and four chairs.[10]

Mary, Christina and Francis Lane of 23 Lower Bridge Street, were charged with illegal possession of two silver plated cruet stands, three pairs of ladies' patent leather boots, three pairs of ladies' stockings, six pairs of men's socks, two odd tan boots with the name Manfield on the tag, one pair of men's black leather boots, one pair of lady's black spats, four lbs of jam, five boxes of orange peel, five jelly squares, one box of cocoa, three soap shaving sticks and three bars of toilet soap. The 48 year old mother said she bought most of the itens on Tuesday, April 25th from a woman she did not know and 22 year old Christina, a tailoress, said she bought the boots and shoes from a boy for 2d. The court was also told that Francis had seen service in front and had been incapacitated. However he was listed as an absentee and was in military custody before the day was over. Like Mrs O'Beirne, Mrs Lane received two months, except in her case it included hard labour and the daughter was fined 40s.[11]

While old women and mothers tended to receive higher sentences than their daughters, young women were by no means immune from prison sentences. Margaret Costello and Mary Dunne, both 22 years old from 19 Old Camden Street, and described by the newspapers as 'well dressed' in court, were both given two months for illegal possession of one pair of lady's shoes, one pair of gentlemen's shoes, two pairs of children's shoes, lady's and gentlemen's underclothing, three pounds of tea, twelve boxes of sweet herbs, one bottle of 'Vim', two boxes of White's jellies, some lemonade and cornflour. When Mr Swifte asked the arresting officer Constable 121B, 'What was the Excuse?' the policeman said they replied, 'We were looting like the rest'.

Yet the women arrested were generally treated better than the men. Relatively few women received prison sentences. For instance, James Kenna, a 27 year old labourer from 35 Francis Street was sentenced to one month for possession of 'a cartload of loot' while Mary Jane Egan, a 26 year old married woman from 36 The Coombe, arrested with the same cartload of loot was fined 20s.

[10] *Irish Times* and *Irish Independent*, May 11th, 1916, DMP Book 1916-1918, Page 35. The Irish Times reports the daughter, Winnie O'Beirne as receiving two months but the Irish Independent and the DMP Prisoners Book both record the mother as receiving the sentence. Where there are conflicts of evidence I tend to opt for the police record as the more likely to be accurate.

[11] *Irish Independent*, May 11th, 1916, DMP Book

Altogether 49 women out of 443 charged with illegal possession received prison sentences (11%), compared with 35 out of 179 men (19.5%).[12] Men also tended to receive heavier sentences with three of them receiving six months and a 17 year old labourer three years Borstal. The heaviest sentence given to women was two months with hard labour. Recipients of the latter sentence included a prostitute and a lady housekeeper, displaying a fine indifference to social rank by the Police Magistrates. The heavier sentences for men sometimes reflected aggravating factors such as larceny and warehouse or shop breaking, as opposed to the relatively passive charges of illegal possession and receiving.

A look at the occupations of those charged with looting shows much diversity. After married women and widows, who comprised 51% of all offenders, the next largest group comprised those listed as having no occupation at 14%. Two thirds of these 'vagrants' were women and many of them had no address so that they were literally the human flotsam and jetsam of the city.

Two other predictable groups were the 58 labourers and 19 dealers arrested. All but two of the latter were women, reflecting their dominance of this occupation. The number of labourers is surprisingly small, given that they constituted a quarter of the adult male population. By comparison messengers are over represented, probably reflecting the high level of Dublin's juvenile crime as well as their greater familiarity with lucrative targets that their occupation provided. Porters were another over represented group and not one commonly associated in the popular mind with the 1916 looting phenomenon, unlike prostitutes, of whom only six were arrested. The presence of skilled workers such as bricklayers, a boilermaker, engineer, printer, book binder and two cabinet makers does not conform with the traditional image of the looter either, although, as in the case of the bricklayer and the cabinet maker with no fixed abode, some of them may have fallen on hard times rather than simply succumbing to the temptation of opportunist crime. The presence of a money lender, a publican, and licensed general dealer may be an indication of a network for feloniously receiving and recycling stolen goods. The records tell us that the publican, Thomas O'Reilly, aged 40, of 146 Upper Dorset Street was fined £3 for felonious receiving, the case against the money lender, Christine McCoy, aged 45, from Hutton Place, was discharged and the fate of the licensed general dealer, Jacob Newman, aged 28, of 40 Hill Street was not recorded. It is possible they traded information for leniency.

The greatest looting splurge of all took place away from the city centre at the British and Irish Steam Packet Company warehouse on the North Wall. David Barry, the manager, told the Chief Police Magistrate, E G Swifte, that he left the warehouse intact on April 25th, but when he saw it again on May 2nd, it was 'in a state of terrible confusion. £5,000 of stock had been taken away or destroyed: pianos were broken into matchwood, and the weighbridges, telephones, electric fittings, and doors were broken. Four hundred sacks of flour, four hundred cases of tea and a quantity of sugar had been carried off. Of 35 cargo trucks all except two were gone'.[13]

The caretaker, Thomas O'Reilly described how a group of men, armed with hammers and pick axes, led by a 26 year old labourer 'Bantam' Hanlon, smashed a window to force an entrance and broke the door locks, 'The crowd then stormed in and Hanlon, having got a truck, they proceeded to take the flour away, five or six bags at a time.' Three other men,

[12] The figures are rounded to nearest decimal point. See table 'DMP Arrests by age and gender for 1916' for exact percentages

[13] *Irish Times*, May 10th and 11th, 1916

Patrick Clarke, 17, John William Field, 46 and John Kearns, 20, were identified by O'Reilly as ringleaders. While they seemed intent on seizing food, possibly for fear that the insurrection would quickly lead to food shortages, O'Reilly said, 'The crowd smashed up everything in the stores.' When arrested later they all initially denied involvement in the attack and Field said, 'We had a lot of drink taken, girls and all were drunk'. Eventually William Hanlon, whose nickname of 'Bantam' suggested he was a local boxer or street fighter, admitted to illegal possession and was fined 30s. John Kearns was fined 29s. However Field, who was the oldest and a drayman by trade, was convicted of warehouse breaking and larceny and sentenced to six months. Clarke was also found guilty of warehouse breaking and larceny and given three years in borstal. Most of the flour seems to have been recovered by the British army. However only £1,000 worth of the goods were eventually restored to the company.

Many articles were found in Our Lady of Lourdes Church on Gloucester (now Sean MacDermott) Street. Toys, tennis rackets, cricket bats, rocking horses, cameras, jewellery, clocks, watches, rings brooches, bracelets, mats, clothes and even stolen prayer books were concealed there. A large marble clock was found in St Andrew's church on Westland Row, and among the items in St Michael and St John's church were a perambulator and clothes. Reports that the tabernacle of the Pro-Cathedral was used to conceal goods were denied in the press.

The inevitable corollary of this security sweep was that 'huge stocks' of stolen goods ranging from flour to baking powder, starch to raisins, pianos to door mats and jewellery items such as gold chains and diamond rings accumulated in the city's police stations.[14] The dispossessed were relieved of their temporary expropriation of the goods of the expropriators, although returning them to their original owners would often prove problematic the spectre of social 'revolution' feared by VAD Nurse Marion Fitzpatrick had been averted.

Deserters and Absentees

If the looting phenomenon can be related indirectly to the outbreak of the Great War other criminal activities in the city, some of which many citizens did not consider crimes at all, were directly linked to that conflict.[15] Deserters and absentees from the armed forces comprised the largest group of adult male offenders, accounting for 44% in January, no doubt with Christmas leave contributing significantly to the numbers, 37% in February, 27% in March and 37% in April. In May the figure dropped to 16% when the Rising may have skewed figures downwards but they rose again to 23% in June and 30% in July. They accounted for 38% of adult male offenders in August, 34% in September, 34% again in October, 19% in November and 42% in December. How far these figures reflect the internal dynamics of the British war effort – movement of troops, composition of units stationed in Dublin or the war itself, as opposed to the capacity or willingness of the DMP to deal with the problem, require more research to ascertain.

What is indisputable is that desertion and absenteeism were major problems for all combatants, particularly in multinational states where identification with the metropolitan

[14] *Irish Times* May 10th and 11th, 1916, *Irish Independent* and *Freeman's Journal*, May 11th, 1916, DMP Book 1916-1918, Page 35

[15] The 'deserters' category includes 'absentees'. Soldiers missing from their units for over 30 days were classified as 'deserters'.

centres of power were weak. Left unchecked these trends threatened the very fabric of armies, hence police forces prioritised the apprehension of missing soldiers and Dublin was no exception. Quite a number were men who had decamped from Britain, some of whom at least appear to have been under the illusion that the absence of conscription in Ireland somehow protected them from arrest. However the majority were Dubliners and no doubt the stories they brought back about army life and experience at the front did little to encourage further recruitment.

Deserters and absentees appear to have been looked after within their communities despite severe penalties for sheltering them. In January 1916 Annie O'Brien, a 19 year old weaver from 25 Meath Street was given six weeks hard labour for harbouring a deserter, presumably a relation or boyfriend. A soldier's wife and female accomplice were fined 10s each in March for attempting to rescue the former's husband from police custody. In April a 59 year old postman and his wife were arrested for harbouring their son and assisting his escape but, as in a significant minority of cases, no record is given of the outcome. Very few deserters or absentees were arrested as a result of begging or sleeping rough. It seems nearly all soldiers on the run had someone to put them up despite the risks. Many of these men were arrested as a result of committing other offences such as causing malicious damage, assault, larceny, or being drunk and disorderly. The prevalence of such anti-social behaviour may reflect psychological problems deriving from their war time service. It is certainly well in excess of arrests for similar offences involving soldiers in peacetime. Normally soldiers were handed straight over to the military authorities. Very occasionally a soldier who committed a serious assault or robbery would receive a prison sentence before being handed over thus, perversely, providing an incentive to commit serious crimes if a soldier's main motive for not returning to his unit was to avoid being sent to the Front. Only a handful of sailors appear to have jumped ship in Dublin, probably because it was not a naval base. One case in January 1916 involved a boy sailor, Jonathan Joseph Stewart arrested in the north inner city. He was put back on board his ship, *HMS Orcona*, before it left Kingstown.[16] While the total number of absentees and deserters is only 835 this is equivalent almost to a regular infantry battalion of the period or a month's intake of recruits from Dublin during 1915 and a fifth of the intake for 1916.

Juveniles

Juveniles ran deserters and absentees a close second in most months and overtook them as the largest group of offenders in February, March, May, June and July 1916.[17] Offences ranged from stealing sweets to housebreaking, which was the most common serious offence committed by juvenile gangs. Housebreaking by teenage gangs exceeded such activities by adults and in some cases were clearly organised by adults, usually women.

The other major criminal activity involving juvenile gangs was larceny of coal, which rose from 22s a ton in July 1914 to 40s by February 1916. All imports soared in cost, not only because of the demands of the British war economy but because the German U-Boat campaign drove up the price of marine insurance rates. Home grown agricultural products also increased as farmers took advantage of higher prices in Britain. Not surprisingly, men

[16] DMP Prisoners Book 1916-1918, Page 1

[17] Juveniles here include young offenders up to 16. Although most child offenders in Dublin left school by 14 they often operated in gangs which included older boys who were unemployed, homeless or worked in jobs such as Messenger. The latter occupation probably facilitated opportunities to case premises for breaking and entering. Housebreaking was the most common offence committed by these juvenile gangs.

working on the railways, docks or in warehouses were frequently charged in conjunction with juveniles with larceny of such goods in transit to Britain.

Dublin Police Magistrates have received a bad press as agents of the Crown, locking up labour agitators and militant nationalists, but they dealt with juvenile crime largely through bail and the Probation Act rather than sending offenders to institutions such as Glencree, Carriglea, Summerhill or Artane. Usually the parents were made liable for bail in the hope that the significant sums involved, as much as £10 in some cases, would ensure a mother or father policed their children more effectively than the DMP. Most offenders, girls as well as boys, were still at school or unemployed. If there is a strong association between the job of messenger and housebreaking in the case of boys, the most common occupation of girls charged with larceny is that of domestic servant. Opportunity and poverty appear to have been the major factors influencing a predisposition to commit crimes against property.

The Wages of War

The wartime growth in the armed forces inevitably led to a proliferation of military property, which was considered fair game not alone by professional criminals but militant nationalists and soldiers anxious to supplement their pitiful wages. Arrests for feloniously receiving items such as Khaki shirts and handkerchiefs, military blankets, boots, buckles or even in one case an army donkey are recorded. A flourishing new area of female white collar crime was defrauding the War Office by making false claims for separation payments. Fraudulent enlistment, always prevalent in Dublin, increased during the war. Penalties were severe. A married woman received three months hard labour in January for defrauding the War Office and a man convicted of fraudulent enlistment in February was sentenced to two months hard labour. Even minor offences such as the theft of a pair of army drawers attracted the options of a month in prison or a 40s fine, as well as £10 bail. A man convicted of wearing a Lieutenant's uniform in February received three months hard labour.

The treatment of militant nationalists was often less severe. A total of 19 people were charged with activities that might be construed as subversive before the Easter Rising. Of these only four were charged with breaches of DORA, all of which involved distributing anti-war literature. Two were pacifists, the author Jerry Dunlop, a 39 year old veteran anti-war campaigner who lived at 32 Rathgar Road, who received six months and Malachy O'Connor, a 24 year old grocer's assistant from Harold's Cross who received two months.[18] The third was a farmer from Moycullen whose case was transferred to Dublin. He received three months. The fourth was a brass turner from Kingstown whose conviction, if any, is unknown. Nor have I been able to trace their political leanings.

The attitude to subversion began to change after the Rising. During the last eight months of 1916 a total of 40 people were charged for what might be construed as subversive activities.

In what was possibly the first public demonstration in support of the rebels on 18 June a group of young men and women were charged with 'Doing an Act likely to prejudice the Defence of the Realm; Assaulting the Police etc.' They were described as two labourers, Percy Forrester aged 19 and Patrick Kenny, aged 15, a 19 year old clerk Richard J Gibney, a 24 year old packer John Halpin and three women. The latter were Catherine Bolger, a 29 year old shop assistant, and Christina Caffrey and Mary Gahan, aged 22 and 17 respectively, for neither of whom an occupation is given. It may have just been a general affray and does not

[18] DMP Book Page 28, *Irish Times*, March 9th, 1916

appear to have been reported in the press. However a parade organised by a group of 400 'girls' on 26 June carrying a 'Republican flag', appears to have been overtly political. They marched from Christchurch Cathedral towards the city centre, collecting a crowd of 2,000 supporters as they went. Participants booed sentries outside Dublin Castle and the Bank of Ireland in College Green before being intercepted by the DMP outside the Ballast office as they were about to enter O'Connell Street.[19] In the fracas that followed seven people were arrested, four men and three girls. DMP Constable Henry Kells was injured. He was later assassinated by the IRA in the War of Independence. The Chief Police Magistrate, E. G. Swifte, decided to treat the march as a public order incident rather than under the draconian provisions of DORA because of the 'relative youth' of the prisoners. All three girls were acquitted but three of the male prisoners were convicted of acts prejudicial to public order and received sentences ranging from six weeks for John O'Farrell a 30 year old chauffeur of no fixed abode, to 14 days for 16 year old newsboy Patrick Monaghan and a caution for Denis Fitzpatrick, a 16 year old labourer from 6 Lower Buckingham Street.[20]

On 28 June three printers at the Marinco Printing Works in Temple Bar printed a copy of Thomas McDonagh's alleged Court Martial speech on the firm's equipment and were fined £5 each, equivalent to over two weeks' pay. One was William Henry West, who had printed the *Irish Worker* in 1913, and was one of that unsung band of small jobbing printers who helped sustain the mosquito press over the revolutionary decade for little or no reward and at the risk of losing their press and livelihood. On 29 June, Jonathan Butler, a 31 year old tobacconist in Amiens Street, was fined £20 and given the option of three months for unspecified breaches of DORA.

Firearms

A total of 12 people were arrested for firearms offences before the Rising and these were treated relatively leniently considering that the British Empire was locked in a life and death struggle with its' German rival. In January 1916 a forty year old widow, Mary Freer of 27 Coombe Street was fined £2 for unlawful possession of a service rifle and two men were charged with receiving a rifle. One was a barber against whom information was refused and his co-accused, a porter with no fixed abode, received two months hard labour. John Lemass, a 16 year old student living at 2 Capel Street was charged with manslaughter after accidentally discharging a gun that killed his 22 month old brother Herbert. Again, information was refused, a not uncommon occurrence. In February a greengrocer's assistant was charged with receiving military arms and sentenced to six months and two soldiers arrested for larceny of rifles were handed over to the military authorities to be dealt with. In March John Brophy, a 15 year old Telegram Messenger of 103 South Circular Road and John Byrne, a 13 year old schoolboy from 35 Reginald Street were arrested for illegal possession of a revolver and rifle cartridges. The older boy was put on £50 bail, while his 13 year old accomplice received a caution. In April a grocer's assistant, 19 year old James Byrne of 70 Ballybough Road and Lawrence Fox, a 40 year old grocer's porter from 36 Bayview Avenue were given six months and two months respectively for receiving a military rifle. These cases were a drop in the ocean of a city bristling with guns, where weapons were acquired regularly on an illegal basis by members of the Irish Volunteers and Citizen Amy.

[19] DMP Book, Page 59. They were fined between £5 and 40s, with Halpin also having to find £10 bail or serve a month's imprisonment

[20] DMP Book Page 61, *Irish Times*, June 27th, 1916

A regime that devoted more resources to dealing with fraudulent claims for separation allowances than disarming private militias was clearly afflicted by a lethal form of political myopia. While the DMP did bring individual cases before the courts the policy of the Chief Secretary Augustine Birrell and the Under Secretary, Matthew Nathan, was to avoid confrontations with the Irish Volunteers, ICA or Hibernian Rifles that a mass seizure of weapons might provoke.

After the Rising large quantities of arms were collected from the Volunteers, many of them surrendered voluntarily. In the remaining eight months of 1916 there were just two men arrested for attempting to buy military rifles. Each was fined £5. It was the false dawn of successful pacification which may have encouraged the British government to accelerate the release of internees in Fron Goch.

Sexual Offences

Few sexually related offences were reported in. Although middle class citizens of all persuasions were so alarmed by the threat posed by the British Army to the moral welfare of the population that they set up ecumenical Women's Patrols (two-thirds Catholic and one third Protestant according to the Constitution) on the outbreak of war, all the evidence suggests that wartime prostitution was a much overrated threat to morality, public health or public order. Prostitution had been in decline since the 1890s because of significant new sources of employment for women. Between 1912 and 1919, prosecutions for soliciting fell from 1,067 to 198 and prosecutions for brothel keeping were erratic, rising from one in 1912 to 14 in 1916 but declining again to four by 1919. In 1916 only 35 prostitutes were charged with offences other than soliciting. Of these ten had no fixed abode and were probably homeless. The addresses of a further 15 suggest they lived in brothels and all those with an address lived in a tenement or court. 18 were charged with larceny, seven with stealing money or valuables, three with malicious damage, two with receiving, two with assault and one each with receiving, housebreaking and making base utterances. Their average age was 32 and the small number of cases suggest that police interest was largely prompted by complaints from clients claiming to have been robbed or by public morality campaigns.

Arrests for more serious sexual offences were rare and invariably involved men. The low level of incidents reported almost certainly reflected public attitudes that regarded any form of sexual activity with such repugnance that it was felt better to ignore breaches of the law than deal with the consequences. As with other offences, those arrested were mainly from the lower social orders. For instance, in January a 21 year old labourer, John Keogh of Ring Street, Inchicore, received three years penal servitude for unlawful carnal knowledge and another labourer, 42 year old Charles Doherty of no fixed abode received two months hard labour for indecent exposure. In February a soldier convicted of gross indecency on a boy received two months, while a butler was given four months hard labour for indecent assault at the Royal Hospital Kilmainham. Also in February, a 74 year old pensioner in Dolphin's Barn was convicted of unspecified unnatural practices and received three months. In March an unemployed man received four months for indecent exposure, a van man received twelve months hard labour for attempted unlawful carnal knowledge, presumably of a minor, and a soldier accused of indecent assault had the case discharged. In April a twelve year old boy was arrested in the Royal Barracks for loitering and his case was discharged. Three youths aged between thirteen and fifteen were put on eighteen months' probation in November for 'frequenting the Royal Barracks'. In May a soldier accused of unlawful carnal knowledge had the case discharged and in June a sergeant and private at Straffan Camp were both fined 5s

for ‘buggery’. In June a hospital attendant faced the options of a £3 fine or six weeks for the same offence. The high proportion of soldiers involved in this relatively small number of sexual offence cases compared with civilians might have been taken as confirmation by some nationalists of the depravity of the British Army but a more likely explanation is the lack of privacy in barracks and concern for ‘good order and discipline’ by the military authorities. By contrast the only middle class offenders arrested were a 65 year old barrister, John Wallace of 133 Strand Road, charged with sending ‘indecent communications’ through the post and Nicholas Dempsey, a 48 year old sea captain convicted of rape. Wallace was committed to the Richmond Asylum, which suggests the ‘communications’ were of a serious nature, but this route avoided a criminal conviction. Dempsey received five months imprisonment and had to produce £50 bail or face another five months. Both men appear to have been treated relatively lightly compared with the two labourers, Keogh and Doherty, although it is impossible to know for certain without more details of the cases.

Finally, there is an odd dichotomy between the public concern voiced by bodies such as the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, female suffrage campaigners, trade union leaders, city councillors and the churches at the widely acknowledged risks of abuse that existed, particularly for child street traders and beggars, and the relative absence of action to prevent it. It appears that in a city at war such concerns about public morality were often expressed but rarely acted upon. As with everything else, the crime problem fuelled popular resentment in the city at the hardships imposed by John Bull’s war and its native apologists. The impending release of the DMP books on line by UCD should greatly increase our knowledge of crime in the city between 1905 and 1918.