

# Sack of Balbriggan

20TH SEPTEMBER 1920

“a town in a war zone”

The Freemans Journal 23rd September 1920



Bridge Street, Balbriggan c1912  
Courtesy of Fingal Local Studies and Archives

## How it all began

In early 1920 Ireland was embroiled in a war of independence with Britain. The first Dáil, where Sinn Féin was the voice of nationalist Ireland, had been in existence for just over a year with Eamon de Valera as its President. Its main objective was to free Ireland from British rule and establish an Irish Republic.



Main Street, Balbriggan c1912  
Courtesy of Fingal Local Studies and Archives

Although Fingal as a whole had a republican tradition dating back to the 1798 Rebellion, and had been active in the 1916 Rising through the activities of The Fingal Brigade led by Thomas Ashe, Richard Coleman and Richard Mulcahy, Balbriggan had little or no involvement in either the Rising or the Irish Volunteers until 1917. The election of the new Town Commissioners in January 1920, the first municipal election since 1914, resulted in all but 3 of the existing 8 councillors being replaced by candidates with nationalist aspirations. This included the new Chairman, James Derham, who was a prominent member of Sinn Féin.

Alongside this was a more noticeable increase in military activity. Gormanstown Barracks, just a few miles north of Balbriggan, had become a training base for the new Black and Tan recruits. These recruits, who began arriving in Ireland in March 1920, were constables recruited in Britain, to bolster numbers in the Royal Irish Constabulary (RIC). The majority were unemployed former soldiers who had fought in the First World War, although some were from Ireland. Over 9,000 were eventually trained in Gormanstown.

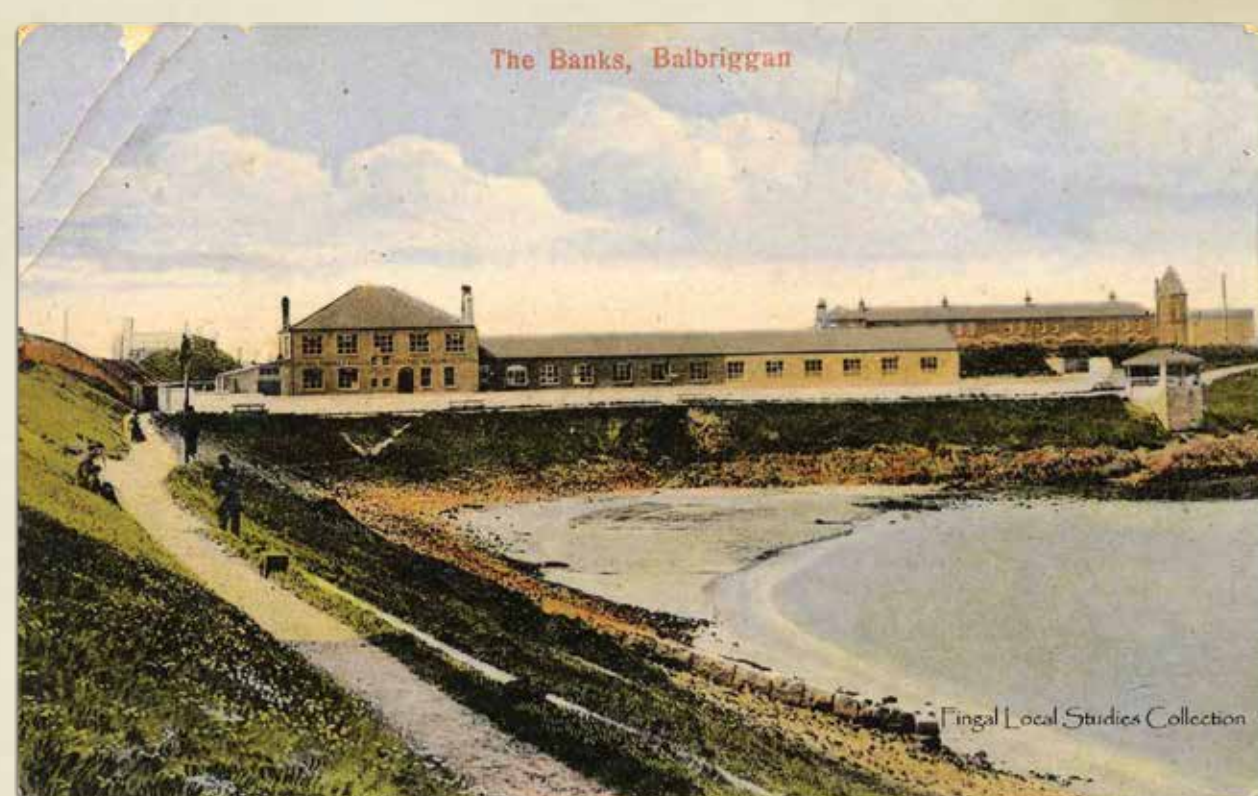
Lorries filled with the Black and Tans often passed through Balbriggan on the way to Gormanstown Barracks. They would stop in Balbriggan to allow the soldiers to socialise in the public houses. The soldiers often became abusive and menacing towards the townspeople. But despite this Balbriggan, in the late summer of 1920, was a town of much prosperity with a bright future. It had a number of hosiery and linen factories with full order books. There was the promise of continued employment and new housing developments making Balbriggan an attractive place to live particularly at a time of social, political and economic upheaval elsewhere. But this was all to change. On the night of Monday 20th September 1920 probably one of the worst acts of reprisal by the Black and Tans occurred.

Earlier that day Head Constable Peter Burke was returning from a meeting in Dublin to Gormanstown Barracks where he was stationed. He was with his brother Sergeant Michael Burke and a few other men. They decided to stop for a drink in Balbriggan at Mrs. Smyth's public house on Drogheda Street. As a result of an altercation that took place there - accounts vary as to what exactly happened - Peter Burke was shot dead and his brother seriously injured by Michael Rock, a member of the 1st Battalion of the Fingal Brigade. Some other RIC members who were drinking in the pub returned to Gormanstown with news of the shooting.

Head Constable Burke was well respected by his colleagues and later that night a convoy of trucks filled with troops arrived from Gormanstown Barracks into Balbriggan stopping at the RIC Barracks on Bridge Street. The men alighted from the trucks and began firing their weapons without any care. They broke windows and doors as they went along the streets. Petrol was poured on houses and set alight. By the end of what The Freemans Journal of 23rd September described as “a town in a war zone” and the Drogheda Independent of 25th September called a “hell on earth” a trail of death and destruction lay in their wake. Homes were damaged and burned to the ground, businesses were destroyed, families left destitute and 2 men lay dead on the street.

“one of the worst acts of reprisal by the Black and Tans had occurred”

David Fitzpatrick – Terror in Ireland



Sea Mills Hosiery Factory, Balbriggan c1912  
Courtesy of Fingal Local Studies and Archives

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# Sack of Balbriggan

20TH SEPTEMBER 1920

“soldiers coming from Clonard street and the street aflame behind them”

Dr. Fulman, Medical Officer, Balbriggan



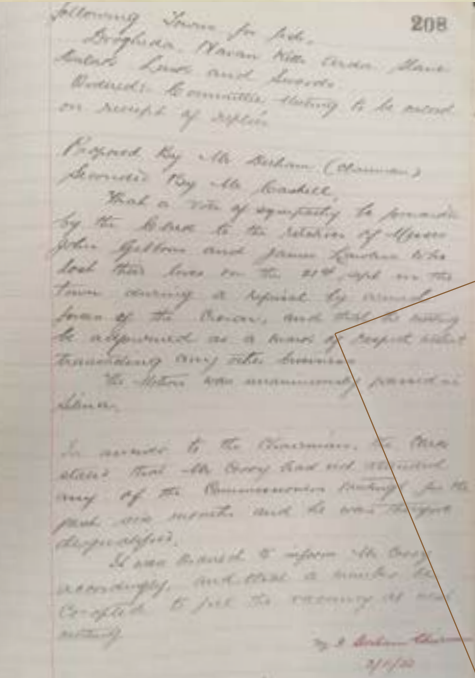
Destruction of Clonard Street  
Courtesy of Fingal Local Studies and Archives

## Death and destruction

Seamus Lawless, a local barber who lived on Bridge Street and Sean Gibbons, a young dairy farmer who lived on Hampton Street were dragged from their houses during the destruction of properties and taken to the RIC barracks on Bridge Street. Here they were questioned about what had occurred earlier that day.



Commemorative Plaque erected on Bridge Street in 1941  
Courtesy of Fingal Local Studies and Archives



Condolences from the Balbriggan Town Commissioners  
Courtesy of Fingal Local Studies and Archives

That a vote of sympathy be forwarded by the Board to the relatives of Messrs John Gibbons and James Lawless who lost their lives on the 21st Sept in the town during a reprisal by armed forces of the Crown, and that the meeting be adjourned as a mark of respect without transacting any other business.  
The Motion was unanimously passed in silence.

At dawn on 21st September the bodies of both men were found lying on the corner of Quay Street and Bridge Street. At the inquest into their deaths held the following day it was said that their bodies exhibited severe lacerations and that they had died due to shock and haemorrhage from these wounds. Both men were later interred in Balcadden Cemetery. In 1941 a memorial plaque was erected in their honour near where they were found on Bridge Street.

At the same inquest Head Constable Peter Burke's death was concluded as being due to shock and haemorrhage resulting from gunshot wounds to the chest. His body was removed to Glenamaddy, Co. Galway where he was buried in the family plot.

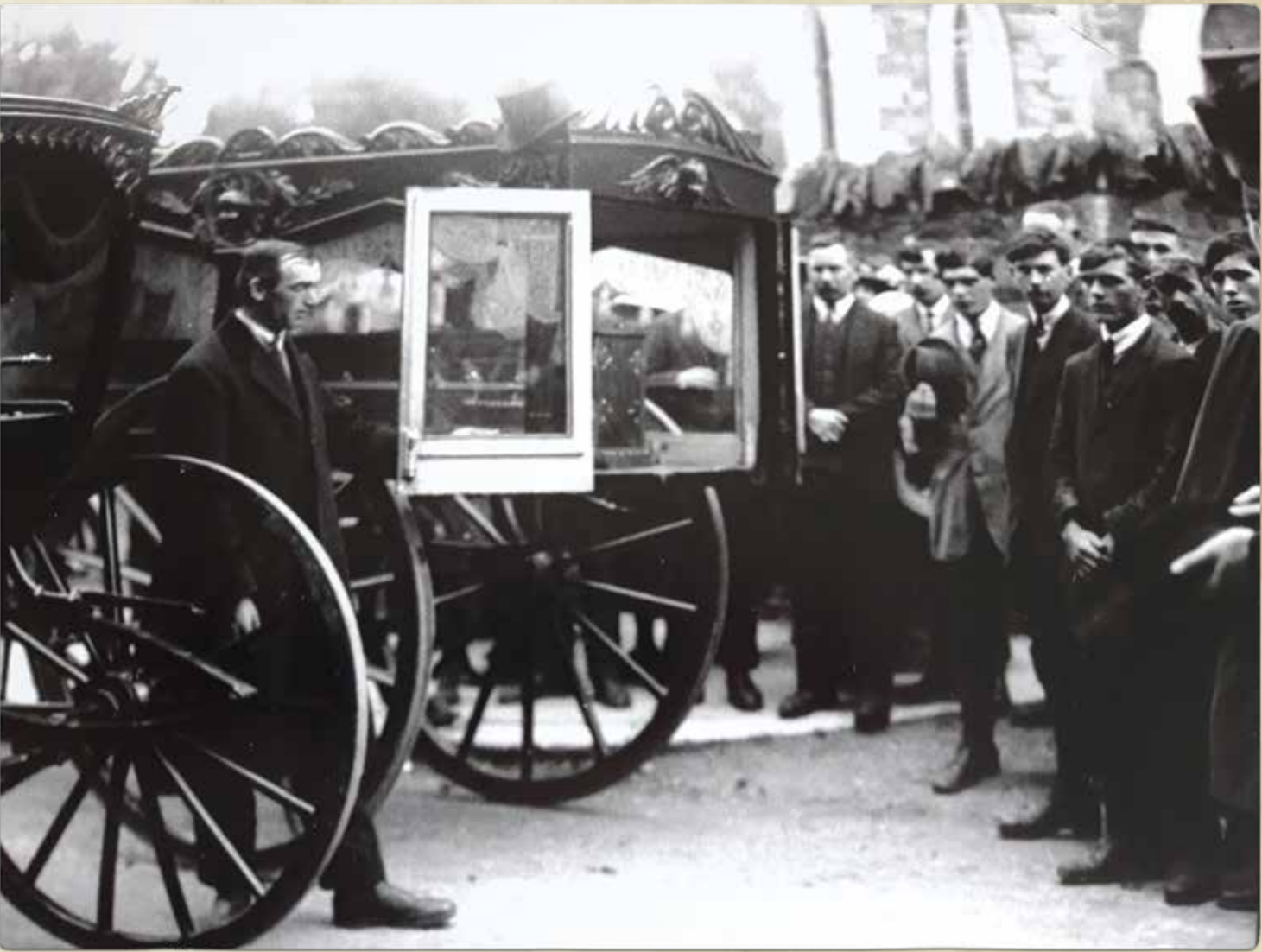
The destruction of Balbriggan began with the looting and burning of Derham's Public House on the corner of Clonard and Bridge Street. This business belonged to John Derham who was one of the Town Commissioners, as well as father of the Chairman, James Derham. The Black and Tans continued up Clonard Street, known locally as "Sinn Fein Alley", owing to the high level of Sinn Fein sympathisers who lived there.

By the time they passed through the street they had left over 30 houses, John Reynold's grocery shop and Anne Corcoran's dairy damaged or destroyed. Most of the residents of Clonard Street fled their homes either to friends in neighbouring streets or to the surrounding fields where they found shelter in farm sheds or under haystacks.

By the end of the night, within a small geographical area of Balbriggan, 75 houses, 4 public houses, 2 grocers, 1 newsagents, and 1 dairy had been damaged or totally destroyed. The Black and Tans were intent on destroying the world famous Smyth & Co. hosiery factory but owing to the intervention of several prominent locals they turned their attention to Balbriggan Sea Mills Ltd., the hosiery factory built in 1884 by the English firm Deedes, Templer & Co. It was burned to the ground with the loss of over 380 jobs.

The following morning the people of Balbriggan returned to see the destruction of the night before. Most of them, fearing further violence, gathered their belongings and left by whatever mode of transport they could to stay with relatives or friends. A local businessman, Mr. Gallan, provided financial support to those who needed it for travel to distant relatives. The trains northwards and to Dublin were crowded with refugees. Some residents chose to stay further nights in the fields or with neighbours.

Shops and businesses in the town remained closed which made it difficult for those without a roof over their head to secure the basic necessities. But slowly Balbriggan began to return to normal. Smyth & Co., which had remained closed the day before, was operating as usual by 22nd September.



Funeral of Sean Gibbons and Seamus Lawless  
Image Courtesy of RTE Archives

“fled to the surrounding fields where they found shelter in farm sheds and under the scanty shelter of haystacks”

The Irish Times 23rd September 1920



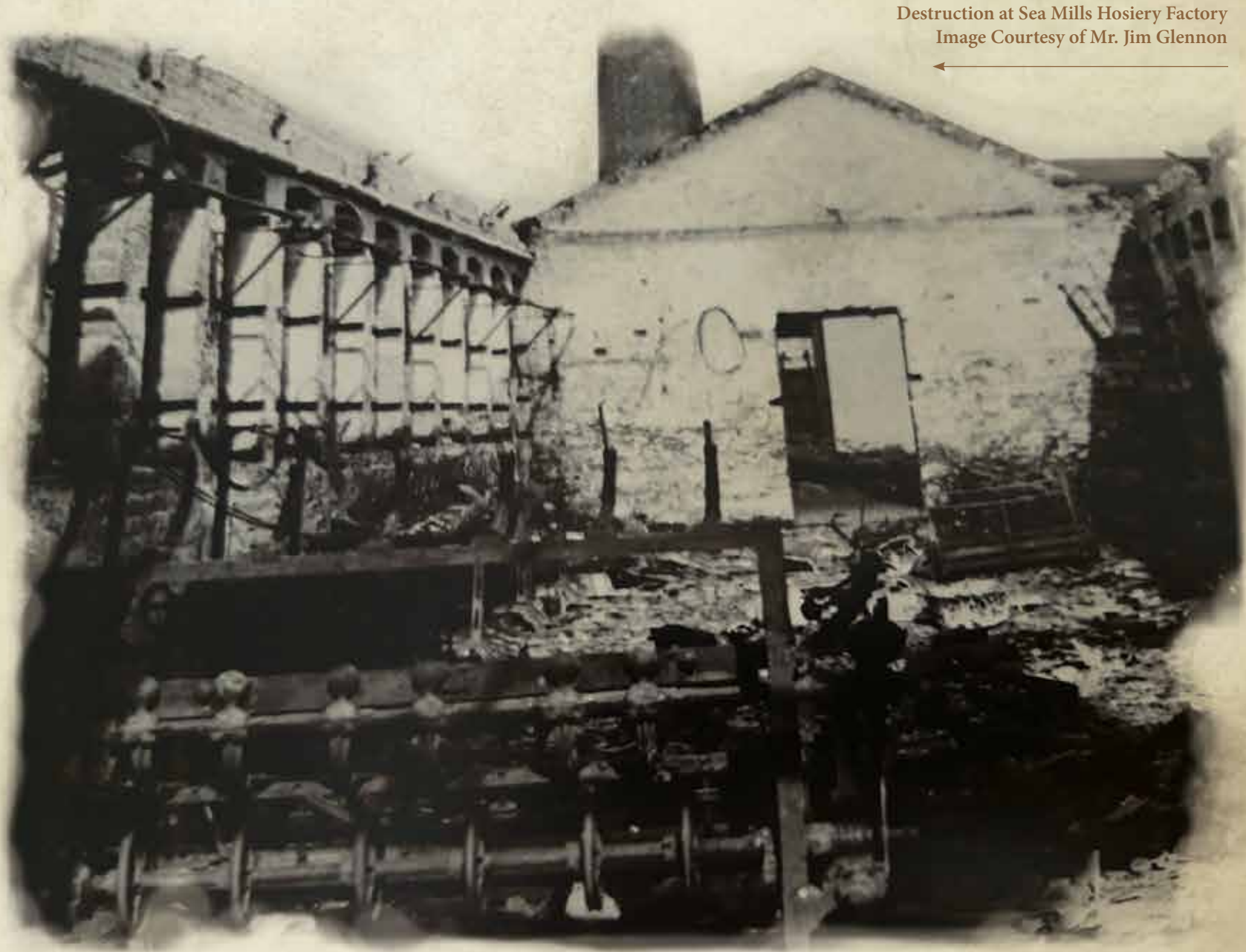


# Sack of Balbriggan

20TH SEPTEMBER 1920

“the relief money was subscribed for those who suffered materially in the fire... would have to husband the funds carefully or they would not have a fraction left before long”

Dr. Fulman, Medical Officer, Balbriggan



Destruction at Sea Mills Hosiery Factory  
Image Courtesy of Mr. Jim Glennon

## Help was at hand

On the morning of 21st September the people of Balbriggan discovered that a large number of their inhabitants were destitute, without food, clothes or a place to sleep due to the destruction that had taken place the night before. The complete destruction of the Sea Mills hosiery factory resulted in over 380 people becoming unemployed with no other means of making a livelihood.

Residents began giving money and other items to church representatives to be used by those in greatest need. As news of the horror that had taken place in Balbriggan became widely known, monetary donations were sent to the newspapers to pass on. The Irish Times, The Irish Independent, The Freemans Journal and The Drogheda Independent all recorded the receipt of letters with donations, some quite substantial. By early 1921 the newspapers between them had collected over £23,000.

It became evident that someone needed to take responsibility for the distribution of the Balbriggan Relief Fund, as it became known. A meeting was held in the Town Hall on 22nd September where the Balbriggan Relief Committee was established with Mr. Whyte, manager of Smyth & Co., as Chairman. The Committee began a structured dispersion of the fund from Monday 27th September. Each morning it sat in the Town Hall and anyone seeking help came in and stated their case. The Committee adjudged the request and provided the applicant with a voucher for food, clothes, or kitchen utensils.

At the beginning most applicants needed food in the short term, but those who had lost everything, including their jobs, needed substantial financial help in the long term.

The Balbriggan Relief Committee renovated Walsh's old flour mill as a temporary hostel for those who were homeless. As many of the homeless were tenants in the cottages on Clonard Street owned by Balrothery Rural District Council, 5 of which were totally destroyed, the Committee asked them for help in furnishing the mill. Balrothery RDC provided 16 iron beds, 16 mattresses, 16 bolsters, 42 blankets, 20 pillow cases, 16 quilts and 18 sheets.



Family standing in ruins, Clonard Street  
Image Courtesy of Mr. Jim Glennon



Map of Destruction – destroyed/damaged property (red), RIC Barracks, Bridge Street (blue), Mrs. Smyth's Public House (green)  
Courtesy of Fingal Local Studies and Archives

BALBRIGGAN.		
THE TERRIBLE CALAMITY which has visited our town has rendered about fifty families homeless and destitute in Balbriggan, and has deprived over four hundred persons of their means of living. We need not impress upon you the necessity for an immediate and practical effort on behalf of these poor people. It is the plain duty of those who have escaped disaster to help their less fortunate brethren. At a preliminary meeting held in the Town Hall on Friday, the 24th, an influential Committee was appointed to collect funds and provide a scheme for the relief of the existing destitution. The following is the Committee: Lewis Whyte, J.P. (Chairman); D. J. Nolan, S. J. Moorehead, Joint Secretaries; C. J. Gallen, R. S. Gorman, T.C. Balbriggan: Very Rev. Canon Byrne, P.P., Balbriggan: Rev. W. J. Jameson, Rector, Balbriggan; Rev. W. Murphy, C.C.; Rev. E. O'Sullivan, C.C.; Rev. H. B. Good, Rector, Balrothery; Very Rev. J. Williams, P.P. Donabate; P. J. Curran, Co. G.; W. F. Fullam, M.D.; W. L. B. Cochrane, G. Scriven, J.P.; W. Bannon, T. M. Gashel, T.C.; W. J. Cumiskey, Francis Thunberger, Col. R. F. Woods, J.P. D.L.; Capt. E. R. Taylor, J.P. D.L.; M. J. Sharkey, J. Larkin, Prof. E. B. Burke, J. P. Cullen, P. Wright, A. Graham, M. O'Rourke, P. Daly, Joseph Sharkey, Wm. Butler, J. A. Douglas. We solicit your subscription for this most deserving object. Subscriptions will be received by any member of the Committee, the Munster and Leinster Bank, Balbriggan, or the Northern Banking Co., Balbriggan. We append a list of the subscriptions received at the meeting. Signed, C. J. GALLEN, R. S. GORMAN, T.C. Joint Secretaries.		
SUBSCRIPTIONS:		
Most Rev. Dr. Walsh, Archbishop of Dublin	£100	0 0
Lewis Whyte, J.P.	50	0 0
W. L. B. Cochrane	50	0 0
Very Rev. Canon Byrne, P.P., Balbriggan	25	0 0
W. J. Cumiskey	50	0 0
Mrs. Cumiskey	5	0 0
Mrs. M. Murphy	5	0 0
Miss Eva Murphy	0	10 0
John Magee, Clonard	5	0 0
Mrs. Gallen	10	0 0
Chas. J. Gallen	10	0 0
J. P. Cullen, Breinore	5	0 0
E. F. Reynolds, Munster and Leinster Bank, Dublin	1	1 0
Thos. Robinson, Drogheda, per G. Mongey	1	1 0
J. F. Smith, per J. P. Cullen	1	1 0
Anon.	1	0 0
Very Rev. J. Williams, P.P., Donabate	10	0 0
Father Timmons, Liverpool Diocese	5	0 0
Mr. Fullerton, Dundalk	2	2 0
Mr. Swan, Kingsdown	1	0 0
R. S. Gorman	1	0 0
D. J. Nolan	10	0 0
Prof. E. B. Burke	15	0 0
George Monney	10	0 0
P. McCormick	10	0 0
W. H. Graham	1	0 0
Michael Sharkey	5	0 0
Mrs. M. Sharkey	3	0 0
Master Brian Sharkey	1	0 0
Miss Beppa Sharkey	1	0 0
Rev. W. Jameson	3	3 0
Philip Wright	5	0 0
Joseph Sharkey	5	0 0
Wm. Bannon	2	2 0
John Cullen, Dublin Street	1	0 0
P. J. Curran	0	10 0
Miss K. Cumiskey	50	0 0

Balbriggan Relief Fund in The Drogheda Independent October 2nd 1920  
Courtesy of Irish Newspaper Archives

BALBRIGGAN RELIEF FUND.		
FIRST LIST DROGHEDA SUBS.		
His Worship the Mayor	£10	0 0
Peter Lyons, West Street	10	10 0
Robert Webster	10	0 0
Richard Magrane, Balbriggan	10	0 0
Drogheda Chemical Manure Co.	8	0 0
M. McQuillan, West Street	5	5 0
Frank Knowles	5	5 0
Miss M. A. Lyons, James' Street	5	5 0
Robert Murdock, T.C.	5	0 0
J. W. Harbison	5	0 0
Anonymous	5	0 0
Augustine Murphy	5	0 0
Rt. Rev. Monsignor P. Segrave, P.P.	5	0 0
Rev. J. Nulty, P.P.	5	0 0
P. Anderson	5	0 0
L. J. Elcock, T.C.	5	0 0
Mrs. Markey, Reynoldstown	5	0 0
Abbey Motor Service	5	0 0
Dr. W. Bradley	5	0 0
"P. and B."	5	0 0
William Curran, Rose Hall	5	0 0
A. Davis and Co., Ltd.	5	0 0
Augustinian Fathers, Shop St.	5	0 0
Drogheda Athletic Club	4	0 0
Sean MacEneaney, T.C.	3	3 0
E. McArdle, West Street	3	0 0
N. T. Murphy, Hill of Rath	3	0 0
Drogheda Painters' Society	3	0 0
Duliner Bros., Shop Street	2	2 6
£2 2s. each—Rev. C. H. W. Hammick, P. Tallan, solicitor; John Corcoran, R. H. Taylor, "Drogheda Advertiser"; Dr. Thomas Parr, J. A. Inglis, P. J. McNamara, T.C.; Dr. O. Hamill, J. W. Broderick, Thomas Sheridan, West Street; A. A. Donnelly, V.S.; J. J. Grayson, John J. Callan, Robert Moore, James H. Dixon, 24 James St., Dublin; T. Duff, Munster and Leinster Bank; S. Henley, Fair St.; E. Q. Whitty, Belfast Bank.		
£2 each—Charles McKenny, Rev. Chancellor Ledoux, P. Connolly, Shop Street; James Noonan, West Street; Lawrence Stanley, West Street; John Boyle, Bull Ring; James Gray, West Street; B. McDonnell, James Collins, Shop Street; J. Smart, Weir House; Patrick Carroll, T.C.		
£1 1s. each—Rev. T. R. Brunsell, Mrs. Schwer, J. R. Pearson, Provincial Bank; Sympson, John Corcoran, Dr. L. V. Hunt, Fair Street.		
£1 each—J. C. Thornhill, T.C.; Rev. John Linnahan, J. A. Gannon, Wm. Moore, Railway Terrace; J. W. Hillis, L.L.W., Thomas Carroll, T.C.; Mrs. Doyle, James' Street; G. Murphy, West Street; P. Barker, Chord Road; W. Dillon, John Street; Joe McHugh, Rev. Father McCooey, James Irwin, Beamoro Road; James Bellew, Killineer; J. J. Burke, J. Carr, J. Doherty, Palace Street; Alderman J. McDonnell, John Hatch, Dulock; Thomas Mollay, John P. O'Brien, Sunnyvale; Hugh O'Reilly, St. Mark's Terrace; Rev. Fr. Dolan, C.C. Collon; Mrs. Mahon, Collon; Mrs. Brown, do. 10s. each—Rev. A. Hall, Andrew Wogan, J. A. C. Noonan, Fendar McCann, T.C.; Thomas Hughes, P.L.G.; M. Carroll, Cushinstown; P. Bateson, T.C.; — Murphy, Irish Packing Co., William Wissett, M. Bogue, James J. McQuillan, Fair Street.		
8s.—H. Balfe, T.C.		
7s. 6d.—Patrick Segrave.		
6s.—Bernard Carbery, Collon.		
5s. each—James Deery, P.L.G., Doneycarney; A. B. Kelly, Thomas O'Kenehan, Alderman T. Halpin, P. Lennon, Fair Street; H. Cunningham, "Argus" Office; Mrs. Callan, Collon; T. McQuillan, Collon; Mr. Gargan, Collon; Anonymous, Collon; Miss Willison, Irish Packing Company.		
4s. each—Liam Buckley, B. Carbery.		
2s. 6d. each—T. Kierans, Walter Coombes, Anonymous, Michael Meagher, Francis Street; Mr. Healy, Collon; Mr. Waters, do.; Mrs. Hoy, do.; Mrs. Mathews, do.; Mrs. Little, do.; Mrs. Campbell, do.		
2s. each—M. Rourke, Mr. Bellew, Collon; J. Hanratty, P.O., Collon; J. Calderworth, do.; Miss Hass, do.		
1s. each—Mr. Sherlock, Collon; Miss Mite, do.; R. Gray, do. Box Collection, Sunday, 29th September, £25 14s. 11d. Total—£286 19s. 11d.		

Balbriggan Relief Fund Drogheda List in The Drogheda Independent October 2nd 1920  
Courtesy of Irish Newspaper Archives





# Sack of Balbriggan

20TH SEPTEMBER 1920

“see that the acute distress among its inhabitants is relieved at once and the mill restored as soon as possible”

People of Philadelphia – The Drogheda Independent 30th October 1920



American Commission for Relief in Ireland on Clonard Street  
Image Courtesy of The National Library of Ireland

## International help

### The American Commission for Relief in Ireland arrived in Dublin in February 1921.

John Derham had travelled to Washington some months earlier to give evidence to them outlining the destruction that took place in Balbriggan on 20th September and the financial support needed. The American Commission paid a visit to Balbriggan on 14th February to assess the damage themselves. They were met by some of the Town Commissioners and Mr. Whyte, Chairman of the Balbriggan Relief Committee, and were escorted through the town visiting the ruins of the hosiery, other damaged businesses and the burnt-out cottages of Clonard Street. They discussed the need for the factory to be rebuilt as well as the building of model homes for the factory employees. Mrs. Despard, one of the American Commission, sent a message to the USA where she outlined that the women and children were suffering the most and recommended “school feeding on a large scale” and “the rebuilding and re-establishment of the ruined factories”.

It was reported that the city of Philadelphia had adopted the town of Balbriggan and would “see that the acute distress among its inhabitants is relieved at once and the mill restored as soon as possible”. Philadelphia had a thriving hosiery industry which could explain this action. In fact, by 1930 a number of hosiery workers from Balbriggan had emigrated there and were the “best hosiers over there as they had all the higher jobs”.

The Balbriggan Relief Committee, with the help of the White Cross, installed several knitting frames in a surviving shed at the Sea Mills factory ruins. They also helped fund the building of cottages on Hampton Street. Finance for this came from £4,000 left by the late Archbishop Walsh to the White Cross to be used for the relief of Balbriggan. Archbishop Walsh stipulated that £2,500 be used on housing and the rest for ordinary relief.



Clonard Street  
Image Courtesy of RTE Archives



American Commission for Relief in Ireland at Sea Mills Hosiery Factory  
Image Courtesy of The National Library of Ireland

IRISH WHITE					CROSS REPORT.				
SECTION					I.				
(A.) Income and Expenditure Account for the Period					From its Inception to 31st August, 1922.				
EXPENDITURE.					INCOME.				
August 31st, 1922.					August 31st, 1922.				
To Relief Grants:—					By Subscriptions through				
Branch Committees					American Committee for				
(Of which £788,315 14s. 3d. has been distributed to date.)					Relief in Ireland				
Funds allocated for continuation of Relief of Disabled Persons					" U.S.A. direct				
(Of which £11,478 0s. 0d. has been distributed to date.)					" Canada				
Orphaned Children's Fund					" Ireland				
(Of which £1,830 10s. 0d. has been distributed to date.)					" England				
Hospital Grants, etc.					" Scotland				
General Distress in Famine Areas					" Other Countries				
(Of which £31,428 10s. 0d. has been distributed to date.)					" His Holiness the late Pope Benedict XV.				
Special Allocation for Balbriggan					" Bank Interest				
Reconstruction Commission					" Sale of Stamps				
Employment Schemes									
Administrative Expenses:—									
Premises and Furniture									
Travelling Expenses and Investigation Fees									
Office Salaries and Wages									
Publicity									
Printing and Stationery									
Architect's Fees and Expenses—Belfast Housing Scheme									
Audit Fee									
Legal Expenses									
Carried forward,					Carried forward,				
£15,283 1 10					£1,274,796 1 10				
£1,351,069 8 9									

Irish White Cross Report 1922  
Courtesy of Fingal Local Studies and Archives





# Sack of Balbriggan

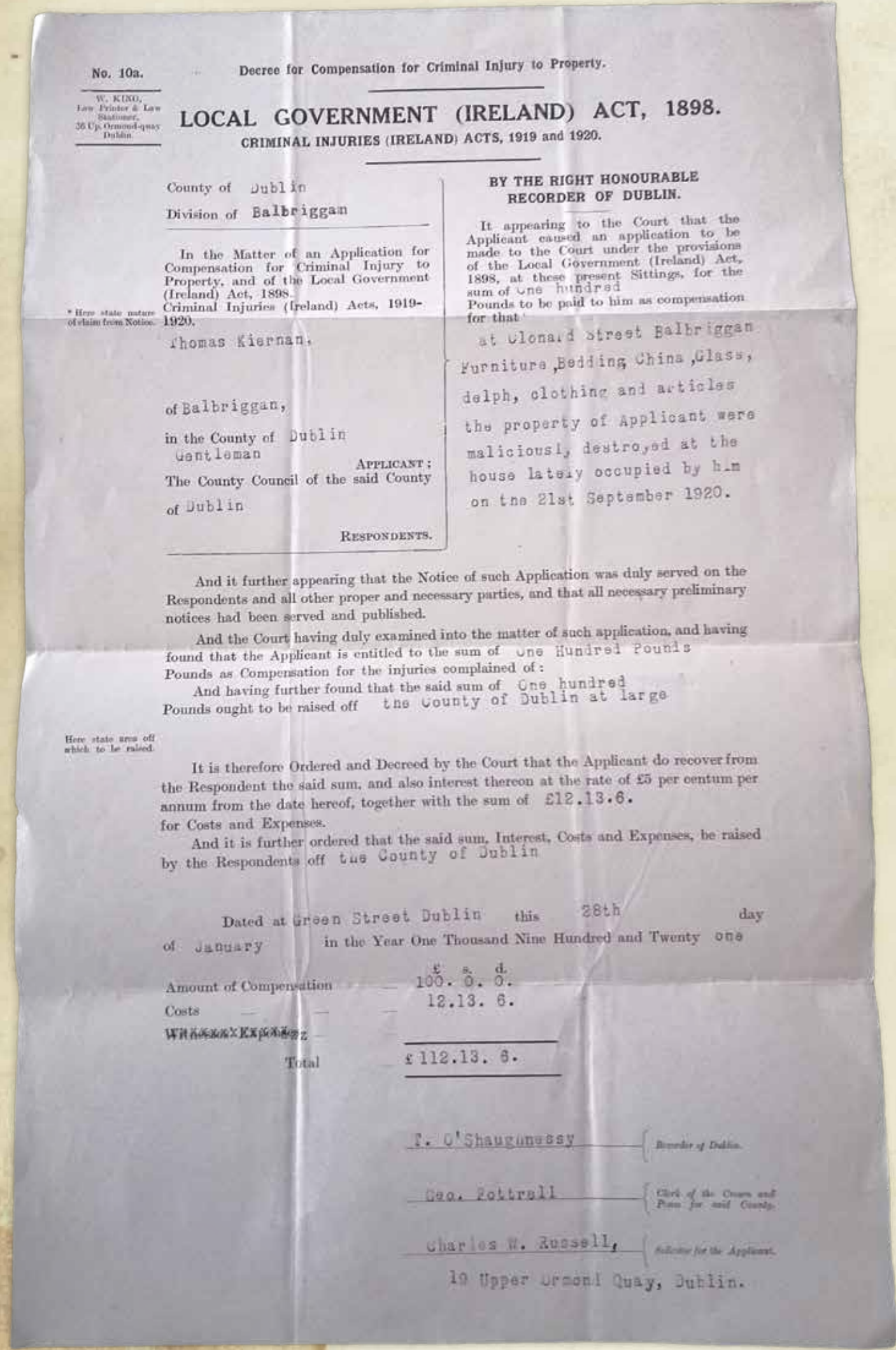
20TH SEPTEMBER 1920

“they had destroyed my family home. We had no choice but to move to Drogheda, our home and our street was uninhabitable”

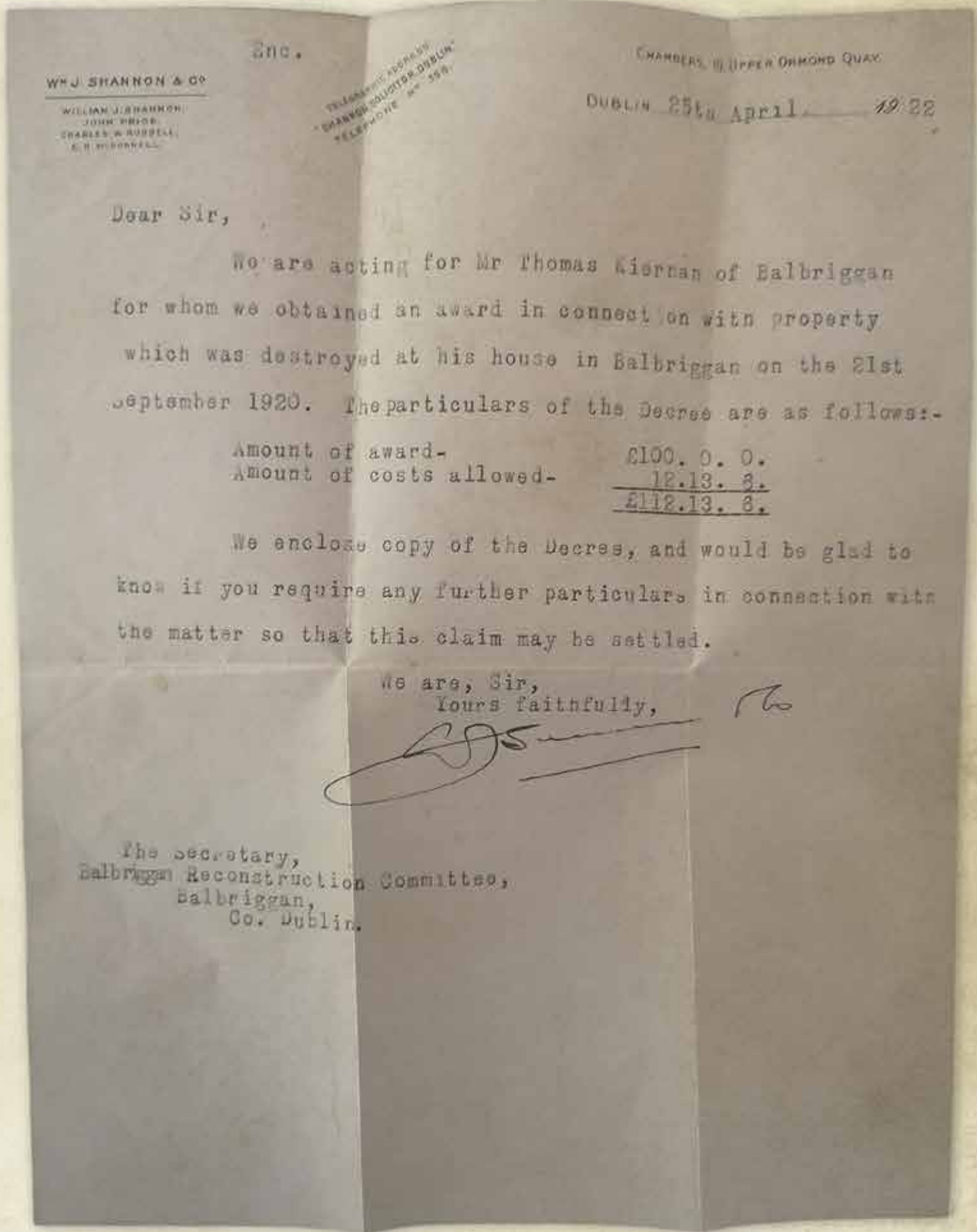
William Gildea, Clonard Street

## The compensation claims

By 23rd September Mr. William Cochrane, a Balbriggan solicitor, had begun to prepare compensation claims for many of those whose property had been damaged. Along with the Balbriggan Relief Committee he organised a public meeting to which all claimants were invited. Assistance was given with the paperwork associated with filing a claim.



Decree for Compensation awarded to Mr. Thomas Kiernan, Clonard Street  
Courtesy of Fingal Local Studies and Archives



Solicitors Letter accompanying the Decree for Compensation awarded to Mr. Thomas Kiernan, Clonard Street  
Courtesy of Fingal Local Studies and Archives

The Relief Committee offered temporary loans to cover legal costs pending settlement of the claims. Twenty claimants availed of these loans. Balrothery RDC had also received claims from their tenants and had, through their solicitor, Mr. Thomas Early, lodged them. In total seventy-four Malicious Injuries Claims were lodged on behalf of seventy-one individuals with Dublin County Council and The Under Secretary, Dublin Castle amounting to over £130,000, with the Deedes, Templer factory accounting for £100,000.

The first hearings of the Balbriggan claims began on 28th January 1921 in Green Street Courthouse, Dublin. The Recorder listened to the evidence brought before him in relation to property damaged on the night of 20th September 1920. The brutality of that night was recounted by Dr. Fulham, Medical Officer, Balbriggan, who had been out on the streets trying to help in any way he could. He recalled seeing soldiers coming from Clonard Street and “the street aflame behind them”. Among the claims heard that day were:

Anne Corcoran – claimed £3,300 in respect of her dairy/house, furniture, a quantity of hay, banknotes to the value of £25 and 2 watches all of which were destroyed when her property was set on fire. It was estimated that it would cost £2,370 to rebuild – awarded £2,850

Mary and Joseph Costello – a claim of £700 in respect of damage to their general store – awarded £600. Joseph Costello some weeks later was in court in Balbriggan for failing to have his name over his premises. He told the court that his premises had been burned on 20th September and that he was operating from a shack at the back of the ruin with no proper walls left standing on which to put his sign.

Balrothery RDC – claimed £3,100 for the destruction of 5 labourers’ cottages and damage to 15 others – awarded £2,088.

Owen Costello – claimed £250 for items destroyed. The Recorder disputed some of his claim especially £35 for pictures. “Were they oil paintings”? he asked – awarded £100

The most substantial claim of £100,000 lodged by Deedes, Templer & Co. was heard on 7th March 1921. This claim included the cost of rebuilding the factory and reinstating the special machines destroyed by fire. The Recorder awarded £62,324.



Green Street Courthouse  
Courtesy of The Courts Service of Ireland

The Recorder continued to hear the Balbriggan claims over the next few weeks. On 8th March 1921 the following claims were heard:

Margaret Derham, wife of John Derham, claimed £8,600 for the burning of their property – award given was £7,800 with a stipulation that the premises be rebuilt.

James and Terence O'Neill claimed jointly for 6 cottages belonging to them that were destroyed by fire – awarded £2,600

Claims by the relatives of Seamus Lawless and Sean Gibbons were also lodged. Because Rose Gibbons, mother of Sean Gibbons, had died since the claim was lodged the Recorder awarded £500 to be shared amongst his 3 sisters. He awarded £1,750 to Seamus Lawless's wife and 8 children.

The claims were to be paid by Local Authorities from rates levied. But as many Local Authorities were republican in their sympathies and felt that the British Government should foot the bill considering most of the destruction was carried out by their forces, they refused to collect rates. The British Government withheld many of the grants they paid to Local Authorities and used the money to meet claims made by their own soldiers. The awards made to the people of Balbriggan remained unpaid.

On 6th December 1921 Michael Collins signed The Treaty between Ireland and Britain. Ireland became a Free State and the Provisional Government was established. Britain and Ireland decided that each country would be responsible for paying of damages caused by their own forces. As most of the claims were as a result of “reprisals” by the Black and Tans Britain eventually paid most of the bill through transfers from their Treasury. The Provisional Government set up a three-man Compensation (Ireland) Commission which under the direction of Lord Shaw investigated each claim and the award granted. The Shaw Commission convened on 19th May 1922 in Green Street Courthouse. By the end of 1922 the Balbriggan claims had all been reassessed with two-fifths of them being reduced. The total compensation bill for Balbriggan was reduced by £25,000 mainly because of the adjustment in the Deedes, Templer & Co. award from £62,424 to £45,000. The awards were paid out to the claimants by early 1923.



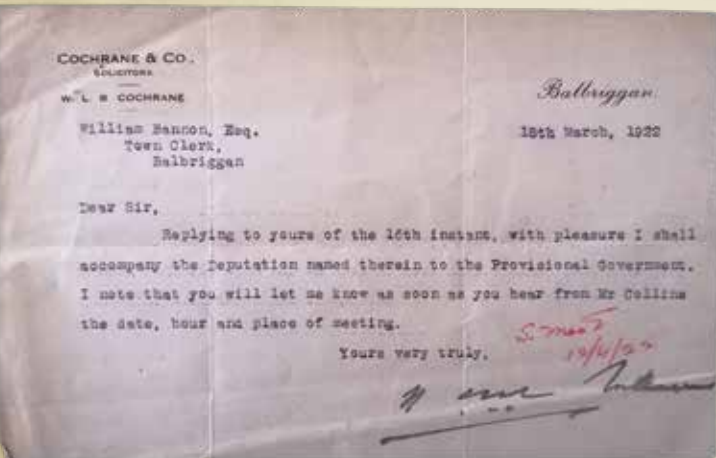


# Sack of Balbriggan

20TH SEPTEMBER 1920

“see that the people are suffering severely from unemployment... shortage in food and nervous strain”

Mrs. Despard, American Commission for Relief in Ireland



William Cochrane acknowledges that he will attend meeting with the Provisional Government and Michael Collins  
Courtesy of Fingal Local Studies and Archives



Telegram dated 12th April 1922 acknowledging that the Minister for Economic Affairs will meet with the Balbriggan Town Commissioners with regards to rebuilding Balbriggan  
Courtesy of Fingal Local Studies and Archives

## Rebuilding Balbriggan

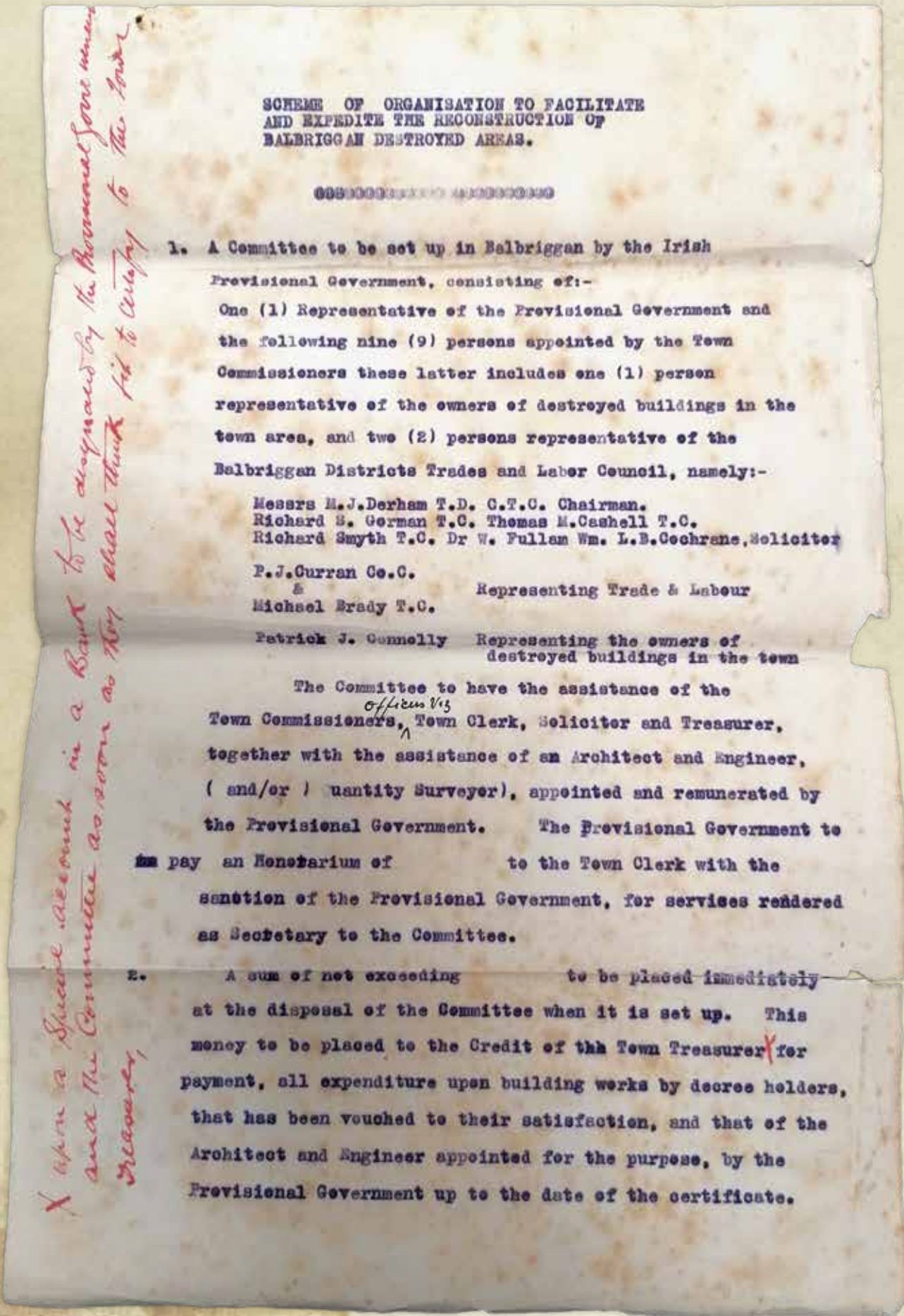
Rebuilding Balbriggan after the destruction of 20th September began almost immediately. Some damage was superficial and could be repaired easily. By 11th October Balrothery RDC had employed James Howard, a local builder, to repair the doors and windows of the damaged cottages belonging to them on Clonard Street. The tenants remained in situ whilst the repairs were being carried out.

The businesses and cottages that were destroyed took a lot longer to rebuild. Architect Michael Heeney estimated that rebuilding Balbriggan would cost £60, 000, over £17, 000 alone for Balbriggan Sea Mills. The owners had to wait for their compensation claims to be decided upon and paid with most payments not received until late 1922.

With the formation of the new Provisional Government an agreement was made with Britain as to who would pay out on the awards made for malicious damages. All lodged claims were to be reassessed but, as this would take time, the Provisional Government set up a scheme to finance the rebuilding of destroyed properties. After a deputation from the Balbriggan Town Commissioners met with the Minister for Economic Affairs, Mr. O'Higgins, and had also spoken with Michael Collins, Minister for Finance, who told them that he would do everything in his power to get them everything they wanted, they went back to Balbriggan to draw up a plan of action similar to Cork, who had suffered a similar fate. The Balbriggan Rebuilding Committee, which included a member of the Provisional Government, was set up to administer the scheme and would work under the control of the Ministry of Local Government. A building grant would be made available to each decree holder to the value of three-fifths of the amount awarded to them. An agreed sum of money was deposited in the account of the Balbriggan Rebuilding Committee at intervals to meet the amounts approved by the Committee.

A meeting was called on 18th April 1922 of all the decree holders and the scheme was outlined. The rebuilding scheme worked so well that by 1924 all damaged properties had been rebuilt apart from Balbriggan Sea Mills.

The owners of Balbriggan Sea Mills - Deedes, Templer & Co. - had been awarded £45,000 by the Shaw Commission in June 1922 with a stipulation that £5,000 would be deducted if the factory was not rebuilt. The owners took the award but left the factory in ruins. Over the years the Balbriggan Relief Committee, the Town Commissioners and subsequently the Balbriggan Rebuilding Committee tried to obtain finance to rebuild the factory but to no avail. It was only in 1933 that the factory finally reopened. Messrs. Stephenson and Co. from Newtownards, who were manufacturers of the Shamrock brand of hosiery and underwear, began work on the site in early 1932 opening its factory a year later. Many skilled workers who had not found continuous employment since September 1920 finally had a job again.



Outline of how the Scheme for Rebuilding Balbriggan will operate as agreed by the Town Commissioners  
Courtesy of Fingal Local Studies and Archives



Bridge Street with Connolly's Public House c1955. Connolly's was destroyed in September 1920  
Courtesy of Fingal Local Studies and Archives

