

# Contested Memories: Revisiting the Battle of Mount Street Bridge, 1916

**BRIAN HUGHES<sup>1</sup>**

*Mary Immaculate College, University of Limerick*

*Email: [Brian.Hughes@mic.ul.ie](mailto:Brian.Hughes@mic.ul.ie)*

**BILLY CAMPBELL**

*Irish Defence Forces*

*Email: [campbellbilly3@eircom.net](mailto:campbellbilly3@eircom.net)*

**SUSAN SCHREIBMAN**

*Maynooth University*

*Email: [susan.schreibman@gmail.com](mailto:susan.schreibman@gmail.com)*

## ABSTRACT

*The Battle of Mount Street Bridge, 26 April 1916, was the most successful rebel military engagement of the 1916 Easter Rising in Dublin. Though it accounted for something in the region of half of the total British casualties of the Rising, exact casualty figures have remained elusive. Contested Memories: The Battle of Mount Street Bridge, a constituent project of the Humanities Virtual World Consortium, is using virtual world technologies and rigorous empirical research to interrogate the intricacies of the battle. This article presents the project's work to date establishing an accurate number for British killed and wounded during the battle. The most widely cited figure for British casualties is General Sir John Maxwell's 234, but research for the project has shown that this total is exaggerated. Combining a wide range of sources, the article presents its methodology and provides a figure of twenty-six for Sherwood Foresters who died as a result of the battle. It also offers evidence for the most authoritative figure for wounded troops to date based on available evidence (134). The 160 casualties found here are, then, far less than has most often been assumed.*

---

<sup>1</sup> Corresponding author.

## **Introduction**

The 1916 Easter Rising is the single most significant event in twentieth century Irish history. The Republic of Ireland not only traces its beginning to the Rising, but its influence is ever-present in contemporary Ireland: from the ideology of its main political parties to national debates about societal values. The leaders' proclamation, declaring an Irish Republic, is an iconic document and remains a standard against which the Irish state is judged in moments of crisis.<sup>2</sup> In 2012, Ireland began a 'Decade of Centenaries', marking important events (including the Great War) that culminated in independence for twenty-six Irish counties. At the centre point of this is the 1916 Rising. An almost overwhelming amount has been written about the Rising and published in traditional formats.<sup>3</sup> *Contested Memories: The Battle of Mount Street Bridge*, is a constituent project of the Humanities Virtual World Consortium supported by a generous grant from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, and took a different approach by combining traditional historical research with newer computational methods to better understand empirically how one particular military action, that at Mount Street Bridge, unfolded<sup>4</sup>. This project took a rigorous scholarly approach in spatially and temporally mapping the physical contours of the battlefield, including reconstructing the streets, buildings, and other physical features (such as tram lines, trees, shrubbery, and hoardings) in a virtual world to provide researchers with greater insight into how a small detachment of Irish Volunteers<sup>5</sup> (seventeen in total) kept at bay two battalions of British troops for the better part of a day, inflicting heavy casualties. This article is the result of the combined approach: traditional historical research—combining information gleaned from a wide range of sources, many of which have not previously been analysed in tandem—along with the insights generated from the model of the virtual world.

In terms of casualties inflicted, the 'Battle of Mount Street Bridge' was the most successful rebel operation of the Rising in Dublin. Yet, establishing an accurate British casualty figure has remained problematic, with sources for these figures often

---

<sup>2</sup> A search for '1916 AND proclamation' in the online debates and records of the Houses of the Oireachtas since 2006 returns 366 results <http://oireachtasdebates.oireachtas.ie/debates%20authoring/debateswebpack.nsf/fulltextsearch?readform>. Accessed 15 May 2016.

<sup>3</sup> Irish History Online lists 1,117 publications catalogued under 'Resistance, rebellion and sedition: Irish Rebellion 1916' (and some slight variants). Available at: <http://irishhistoryonline.ie> Accessed 20 September 2016.

<sup>4</sup> The bridge popularly known as Mount Street Bridge is officially McKenny Bridge; common usage is applied here.

<sup>5</sup> The Irish Volunteers, an armed militia originally founded in November 1913, provided the majority of the rebel combatants during the Rising.

## CONTESTED MEMORIES

circumspect. In addition, confusion in the lead up to the rebellion—where an order from the Irish Volunteers’ chief of staff, Eoin MacNeill, led to its postponement by twenty-four hours and impacted negatively on mobilisation when it did go ahead—was compounded by the death in action of the two key local leaders: Michael Malone and George Reynolds. This leaves a number of questions surrounding the make-up and command structure of the Irish force that require clarification.

The project began with a single traditional research question: how many casualties did the British forces suffer at Mount Street Bridge? Work on the project brought to the fore several metrics that need further exploration, but the exact figure for casualties has not yet been subject to detailed academic scrutiny. This article will present the project’s answer to this one question. While reconstructing the physical landscape of the battle was key, other critical aspects were the strength and disposition of the Irish Volunteers (including arms used, battle-readiness, and ammunition) and the numerical strength of the Sherwood Forester battalions that fought on Wednesday 26 April 1916.

While this research has served to establish the casualty figures of the Sherwood Foresters, it has also highlighted how at odds the sources are in establishing the trajectory of the battle, from the time the Volunteer outposts were taken to specific troop movements and behaviour. Despite an abundance of sources, lacuna remained in establishing the temporal and spatial contours of the engagement. The detailed data modelling of extant sources, which was necessary to build the virtual world, made abundantly visible, in a way not possible using traditional narrative devices, the contradictions in the sources. These, in turn, were tested against the virtual model for accuracy and feasibility.

### **Background**

Around midday on Monday 24 April 1916 Patrick Pearse read a proclamation on behalf of the ‘Provisional Government of the Irish Republic’ at the front of the General Post Office (GPO) on Dublin’s Sackville Street (now O’Connell Street) marking the symbolic opening of the Rising (the British referred to it as a ‘rebellion’ or ‘insurrection’). That day, members of the Irish Volunteers, Irish Citizen Army, Hibernian Rifles, and Cumann na mBan occupied a series of buildings around Dublin city, as well as a public park at St. Stephen’s Green. The GPO became the Volunteers’ headquarters and the base for five of the seven men who had signed the proclamation.

The Rising was planned and executed by - as historian F. X. Martin put it - 'a minority of a minority of the minority'.<sup>6</sup> The 'military council' which led the planning was made up of members of the oath-bound, revolutionary Irish Republican Brotherhood, hand-picked by veteran Fenian Thomas Clarke and his protégée Seán Mac Diarmada; socialist and leader of the much smaller Irish Citizen Army, James Connolly, was added to the conspiracy in January 1916. The conspirators kept their plans from any fellow members of the IRB likely to oppose them and, most notably, from Eoin MacNeill (who was not a member of the IRB). To the surprised citizens of Dublin and the Irish administration in Dublin Castle, those involved were 'Sinn Feiners', a blanket term applied to extreme nationalists, though Arthur Griffith's political party Sinn Féin was not involved in the planning or implementation of the Rising. The outbreak of violence on the streets of Dublin provoked a mixture of confusion, derision, anger, hostility, and excitement. It brought major upheaval to the city, with restricted access to food, money, and supplies, and disruption to businesses along with increasing civilian casualty figures (which eventually made up over half of the Rising's fatalities).<sup>7</sup> Within a week, the rebels had been defeated and rounded up. By 12 May, fourteen leaders had been executed in Kilmainham Gaol (including the seven signatories), and another was executed in Cork. Roger Casement, arrested in Banna Strand, County Kerry, was hanged in London in August. Around 3,500 men and women were arrested. Although many were quickly released, over 2,000 were interned and deported to prison camps in England, Scotland, and Wales.<sup>8</sup>

Though the Rising was a military failure, it was a symbolic and political victory. The drawn-out nature of the executions (fourteen men executed in Dublin over a period of nine days) and the mass arrests in particular saw a complex, but significant, shift in public opinion in favour of the Rising and the resurgent Sinn Féin party. The Rising is now seen as a pivotal moment in modern Irish history and a key starting point on the road that led to independence for twenty-six Irish counties in 1922. Events like those around Mount Street Bridge have added to the endurance of the myth that very quickly formed around the Rising.

---

<sup>6</sup> F. X. Martin, 'The 1916 Rising: a "Coup d'État" or a "Bloody Protest"?', *Studia Hibernica*, No. 8 (1968), p. 132.

<sup>7</sup> The most recent published research gives a figure of 184 (or 54%) civilians killed during the Rising: Glasnevin Trust, *1916 necrology: 485* (Dublin: Glasnevin Trust, 2015).

<sup>8</sup> For the most authoritative surveys of the causes, course, and immediate consequences of the Rising see Charles Townshend, *Easter 1916: The Irish Rebellion* (London: Penguin, 2006); Brian Barton and Michael Foy, *The Easter Rising*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (Stroud: Sutton, 2011); Fearghal McGarry, *The Rising: Ireland, Easter 1916*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).

## CONTESTED MEMORIES

### **Mobilisation of British Forces**

Within minutes of Pearse reading the proclamation from the front of the GPO the British authorities became aware of the military action as telegraph operators, ejected from the GPO, ran to the nearby Crown Alley exchange and telegraphed the news to London. Shortly afterwards, the War Office began mobilising troops. As part of plans to send reinforcements to Dublin, the 178<sup>th</sup> Infantry Brigade of the British Army, then concentrated in the Watford area, was placed on notice for an immediate move to an unknown destination. With its 2/7<sup>th</sup> Battalion engaged in counter-Zeppelin duties in the local area and the other battalions on leave until midnight, the brigade had sufficient time to initiate its recall plan and assemble its battalions.<sup>9</sup> The brigade was made up of four battalions of the Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire Regiment, popularly known as the Sherwood Foresters.<sup>10</sup> These battalions, as indicated by their numerical titles, were second line territorial units. Their main task, from their formation at the beginning of the Great War, had been to supply drafts of replacements for their first line battalions then serving on the Western Front. By early 1916, a decision had been made to send the brigade to France and its training was focused in this direction.<sup>11</sup> The Rising in Dublin intervened and the men were hurriedly sent to Ireland to reinforce the British garrison. They landed in the early hours of the morning of Wednesday 26 April at Kingstown (now Dún Laoghaire) on board a number of packet steamers sailing from Liverpool. Having landed, the Sherwood Foresters moved by road, in two columns, towards Dublin city centre. The left column, made up of the 2/5<sup>th</sup> and 2/6<sup>th</sup> Battalions, marched by the Stillorgan-Donnybrook Road and the South Circular Road to the Royal Hospital, Kilmainham where it arrived without major incident (see Fig 1). The right column, consisting of the 2/7<sup>th</sup> and 2/8<sup>th</sup> Battalions (the 2/8<sup>th</sup> had embarked at Liverpool without one of its four Companies<sup>12</sup>) was ordered to march by the tram route through Ballsbridge and on to Trinity College via Merrion Square.<sup>13</sup> These two battalions met stiff and determined opposition at Mount Street Bridge, a crossing on the Grand Canal. On the following day both battalions were involved in an action at the South Dublin Union while on their way to the Royal Hospital, their new destination, following a change of orders.

---

<sup>9</sup> National Army Museum, London (NAM): 1979-08-62 Unpublished memoirs of Brigadier General Ernest Maconchy, p. 445 [hereafter Maconchy memoir].

<sup>10</sup> Written by Officers of the Battalions, *The Robin Hoods: 1/7<sup>th</sup>, 2/7<sup>th</sup> & 3/7<sup>th</sup> Battalions, Sherwood Foresters, 1914-1918* (Nottingham: J. & H. Bell, 1921), p. 281.

<sup>11</sup> W. C. Oates, *The Sherwood Foresters in the Great War 1914-1918 – The 2/8<sup>th</sup> Battalion*, (Nottingham: J. & H. Bell, 1920), pp. 32–3.

<sup>12</sup> Oates, *The Sherwood Foresters*, p. 35.

<sup>13</sup> *The Robin Hoods*, pp. 282-3.

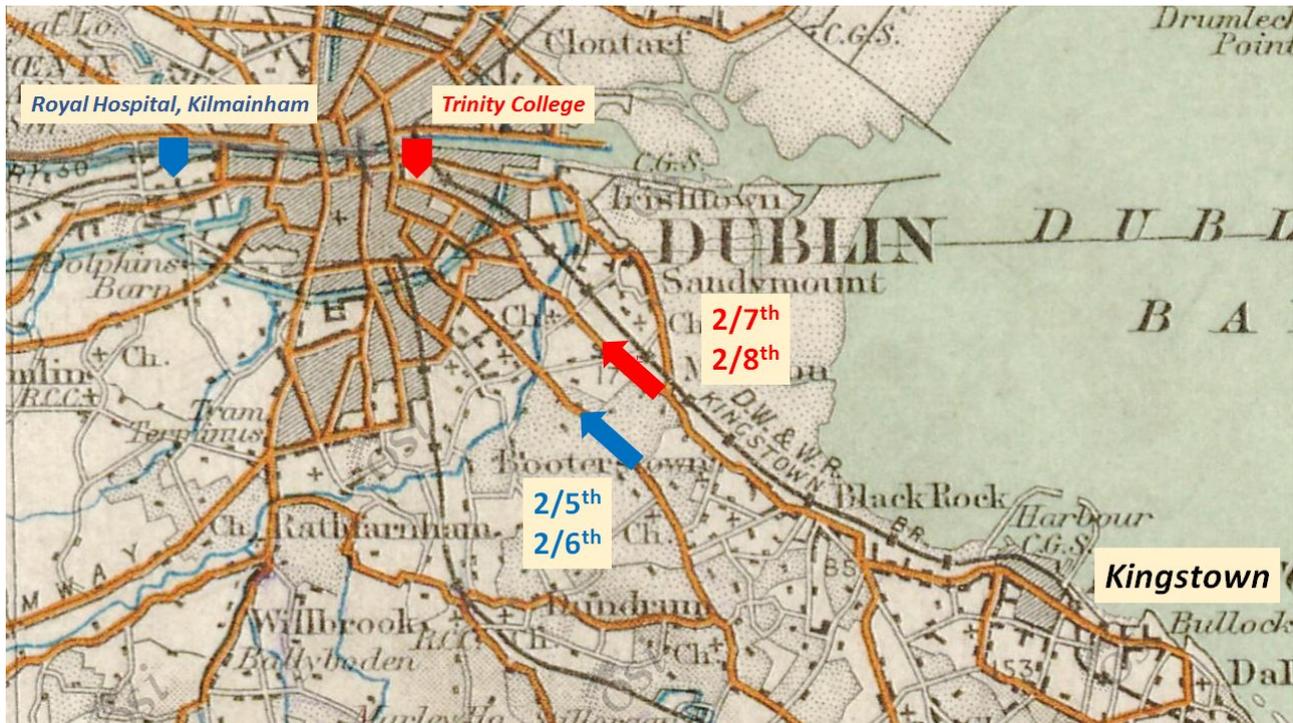


Figure 1: Routes taken by Sherwood Forester battalions on arrival in Dublin.

In 1916 an infantry battalion of the British Army had an establishment of 1,007 all ranks, of whom thirty were officers.<sup>14</sup> Although unit strength rarely matched its establishment, the brigade that embarked for Dublin was in training for deployment to the Western Front. As a result, its battalion strengths would have been as close to their full establishment as they were ever likely to be. The unit histories of the 2/7<sup>th</sup> and 2/8<sup>th</sup> Battalions contain little information on strengths but the war diaries that exist for the period do provide a strong indication. The war diaries of the 2/7<sup>th</sup> and 2/8<sup>th</sup> Battalions show that the strength of their Other Ranks at the end of 1915 was 626 and 644 respectively.<sup>15</sup> In January and February 1916 their number increased dramatically with the arrival of what were known as the Derby recruits, men who had responded to the Derby Scheme introduced in autumn 1915 encouraging them to enlist voluntarily.<sup>16</sup> The 2/8<sup>th</sup> Battalion's diary gives it a strength of 28 Officers and 923 Other Ranks on 29 February 1916.<sup>17</sup> On the same day, the 2/7<sup>th</sup> Battalion has a

<sup>14</sup> <http://www.longlongtrail.co.uk/army/definitions-of-units/what-was-a-battalion-of-infantry/> Accessed, 15 September 2015.

<sup>15</sup> The UK National Archives, Kew, (TNA), WO 95/3025/6 War Diary, 2/7<sup>th</sup> Battalion, Sherwood Foresters; WO 95/3025/8 War Diary, 2/8<sup>th</sup> Battalion, Sherwood Foresters.

<sup>16</sup> Peter Simkins, *Kitchener's Army: The raising of the new armies 1914-1916* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988), pp. 150-7.

<sup>17</sup> TNA, WO 95/3025/8 War Diary, 2/8<sup>th</sup> Battalion, Sherwood Foresters.

## CONTESTED MEMORIES

recorded strength of 24 Officers and 959 Other Ranks with the entry for 25 April showing that it embarked on the S.S. Tynwald at Liverpool at 7 pm, bound for Ireland, with 27 Officers and 973 Other Ranks.<sup>18</sup> The history of the 2/5<sup>th</sup> Battalion describes how the unit was billeted, along with the 2/6<sup>th</sup>, in the grounds of a 'Roman Catholic Charity School' on the outskirts of Kingstown (now the grounds of the Dún Laoghaire Institute of Art, Design and Technology) in the early hours of Wednesday morning, giving 2,000 as the combined strength for the two units that bedded down there.<sup>19</sup>

Irish sources have given varying (and unverified) figures for the numerical strength of the Sherwood Foresters at Mount Street Bridge. An article by George A. Lyons, published in *An t-Óglach* in April 1926, states that 'the Sherwood Foresters, numbering 800 strong, were in the front column which formed the attack on Mount Street Bridge'.<sup>20</sup> The source for this figure is not provided and it seems likely that Lyons is only referring to the strength of the leading 2/7<sup>th</sup> Battalion, though this is unclear. An earlier article, published in the *Catholic Bulletin*, describes how 'a body of about 2,000 Sherwood Foresters were seen advancing on the city by Blackrock Road, the officers frequently consulting maps and apparently distrusting information given them by spectators. About 800 were in advance, the remainder only a short distance behind'.<sup>21</sup> Another Irish estimate for the strength of the Sherwood Foresters is contained in P. J. Hally's 1966 account of the military aspects of the Rising. Hally states that the arrival of the two brigades of the 59<sup>th</sup> Division (the 177<sup>th</sup> and 178<sup>th</sup>) in Dublin 'must have raised the total strength by about 10,000'.<sup>22</sup> This would give each battalion a strength of roughly 1,200. Colonel Hally seems to have based this figure on his own professional estimate.

The available British sources, suggesting a figure of 1,000 for the strength of each battalion, seem the most likely to be accurate. Because the 2/8<sup>th</sup> Battalion was

---

<sup>18</sup> TNA, WO 95/3025/6 War Diary, 2/7<sup>th</sup> Battalion, Sherwood Foresters; War Diary, 2/7<sup>th</sup> Battalion, Sherwood Foresters, 1 March 1916-25 April 1916 (Copy sourced by authors from a private collection). Whereas diaries for the four battalions of the 178<sup>th</sup> Brigade for the period March 1916 to January 1917 are not available in the UK National Archives, copies of at least some of these are held in a private collection.

<sup>19</sup> W. G. Hall, *The Green Triangle: The History of the 2/5<sup>th</sup> Sherwood Foresters in the Great European War, 1914 –1918* (Letchworth: Garden City Press, 1920), p. 20.

<sup>20</sup> *An t-Óglach*, Vol. 7, No. 13 (1926), pp. 3-12.

<sup>21</sup> 'Events of Easter Week: The Defence of Mount Street Bridge II, *Catholic Bulletin*, Vol. 7, No. 11 (1917), p. 696.

<sup>22</sup> P. J. Hally, 'The Easter 1916 Rising in Dublin: The Military Aspects, Part I', *Irish Sword*, Vol. 7, No. 29 (1966), pp. 313-26.

without one of its companies (a standard company numbered 227 men), it can be assumed it had a strength at Mount Street Bridge of 750, giving a total strength of approximately 1,750 troops.

An infantry battalion, including its horse drawn transport, and Maconchy, the brigade commander, indicated the presence of battalion transport, needed 800 yards of road space.<sup>23,24</sup> The 2/8<sup>th</sup> Battalion would therefore have been a significant distance to the rear when the engagement commenced. In addition, the unit history states they marched 400 yards to the rear of the 2/7<sup>th</sup>.<sup>25</sup> The length of the column, even allowing for the absence of one company, was therefore in the region of 2,000 yards. This means the 2/8<sup>th</sup> would have only been passing the Royal Dublin Society Grounds in Ballsbridge when the lead company of the 2/7<sup>th</sup> reached the junction of Northumberland Road and Haddington Road, where the firing began.

The Sherwood Foresters were armed with the Short Magazine Lee-Enfield (SMLE), Mark III rifle which fired a .303 inch calibre round; each man was issued with 120 rounds of ammunition.<sup>26</sup> This was more than adequate for the engagement at Mount Street Bridge. The shortage of ammunition referred to in his memoir by Maconchy, relates to the supply he estimated was needed to sustain longer-term brigade operations in Ireland. To this end, he requested 400 rounds for each man and some 10,000 grenades. These arrived at Kingstown after the battalions had departed for Dublin city centre.<sup>27</sup> Maconchy also succeeded in obtaining a supply of grenades and guncotton, along with the services of a number of the military staff,<sup>28</sup> from the bombing school at Elm Park<sup>29</sup>. By the end of Wednesday, the bombing school had supplied some 500 grenades.<sup>30</sup>

Each battalion had four Lewis Guns on issue. These were replacements for the heavier and less mobile Vickers Machine Guns which by then had been withdrawn

---

<sup>23</sup> Maconchy memoir, p. 452.

<sup>24</sup> <http://www.longlongtrail.co.uk/army/other-aspects-of-order-of-battle/road-space-and-speed-of-british-army-units/> Accessed 10 October 2015.

<sup>25</sup> Oates, *The Sherwood Foresters*, p. 38.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid*, p. 35.

<sup>27</sup> Maconchy memoir, p. 446.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid*, p. 448.

<sup>29</sup> The Irish Command Grenade School, located in the grounds of Elm Park House, Nutley Lane, Dublin, now Elm Park Golf Club. <http://www.elmpark.ie/about/club-history.717.html> Accessed 12 Sep 2016.

<sup>30</sup> E. W. S. K. Maconchy, 'The 178<sup>th</sup> Brigade' in *59th Division 1915-1918*, (Chesterfield: The Naval and Military Press, 1928), p. 36.

## CONTESTED MEMORIES

for use by specialist machine gun companies.<sup>31</sup> The 2/7<sup>th</sup> Battalion, however, was ordered to leave the two Lewis Guns it had brought to Liverpool behind on the docks.<sup>32</sup> The 2/8<sup>th</sup> Battalion was similarly ordered to leave its Lewis Guns behind and its commanding officer was informed by the embarkation officer at Liverpool that 'men were wanted and not guns'.<sup>33</sup> Even when the 2/8<sup>th</sup> Battalion's Lewis Guns did arrive in Kingstown with D Company late on Wednesday, they were ordered to leave them at the harbour.<sup>34</sup>

The battalions consisted of men with varying levels of training; most had been with their units from at least August 1915 and by April 1916 would have had a minimum of eight months' service and training in marching, night-operations, entrenching, field engineering, bombing, bayonet fighting, and other specialist areas.<sup>35</sup> The Derby recruits, representing in excess of 30% of the strength of the two battalions, had only completed two to three months of what was called 'basic training' by Easter 1916. This aimed to teach them the fundamental military skills needed to function in the army but was only the first phase of preparing them for the rigors of combat.<sup>36</sup> Maconchy later admitted that only a very small proportion of the battalions had ever fired a round from their service rifles.<sup>37</sup> They had been due to fire their rifles for the first time on an open range on 1 May 1916, but would instead undergo their first range practices under active service conditions in Dublin.<sup>38</sup> The commanding officer of the 2/8<sup>th</sup> Battalion, in trying to deal with this, marched his unit down to the seafront in Kingstown and conducted impromptu range practices by ordering his men to fire out to sea.<sup>39</sup> Although some officers and NCOs had served on the Western Front, the vast majority of the members of both units, including probably all of the privates, had never seen action. The battalions had never been in an operational environment and urban warfare was not included in the training for units earmarked for service on the Western Front.<sup>40</sup>

---

<sup>31</sup> <http://www.longlongtrail.co.uk/army/regiments-and-corps/machine-gun-corps-in-the-first-world-war/> Accessed 15 August 2015.

<sup>32</sup> *The Robin Hoods*, p. 282.

<sup>33</sup> Oates, *The Sherwood Foresters*, p. 35.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid*, p. 43.

<sup>35</sup> *The Robin Hoods*, p. 279.

<sup>36</sup> Jonathan Boff, 'Training to be a soldier' (London: British Library) available online at <http://www.bl.uk/world-war-one/articles/training-to-be-a-soldier> Accessed 25 September 2015.

<sup>37</sup> Maconchy, *59th Division*, pp. 32-3.

<sup>38</sup> Oates, *The Sherwood Foresters*, p. 34.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid*, p. 38.

<sup>40</sup> *The Robin Hoods*, p. 279.

## **The Volunteers**

Among the source material for the Rising, it is the Irish Volunteers that are best represented. In the months and years that followed the Rising, accounts were published based on interviews and information given by Volunteers.<sup>41</sup> In 1947, the Irish government established a Bureau of Military History (BMH), with the aim of gathering together testimony from those involved in the struggle for independence. Over the next decade, the BMH collected 1,773 'witness statements', 66 annexes to witness statements, and 54 collections of documents relating to people who did not contribute statements. They also gathered 322 collections of original documents, as well as 178 sets of press cuttings, 12 voice recordings, and 246 photographs.<sup>42</sup> Seven veterans of Mount Street Bridge left statements with the BMH and these were made available to the public in 2003.<sup>43</sup> More recently, records relating to Army and Military Service Pensions, offered from 1924 by the Irish Free State to recognise the contribution of veterans of the independence struggle, were also made available.<sup>44</sup> All but two of the surviving participants at Mount Street Bridge applied for pensions; Patrick Doyle and Joseph Clarke the exceptions.<sup>45</sup> Relatives of the four Volunteers

---

<sup>41</sup> For accounts of the Battle of Mount Street Bridge and the surrounding area based on interviews with veterans see, for example, 'Events of Easter Week: The Defence of Mount Street Bridge', *Catholic Bulletin*, Vol. 7, No. 10 (1917), pp. 639-46; 'The Defence of Mount Street Bridge II', pp. 695-702; John McCann, *War by the Irish* (Kerry: The Kerryman, 1946).

<sup>42</sup> Diarmaid Ferriter, "In such deadly earnest", *The Dublin Review*, No. 12 (2003), pp 36-64, available online at <http://thedublinreview.com/article/in-such-deadly-earnest/> Accessed 16 May 2016.

<sup>43</sup> Bureau of Military History Witness Statement, (BMH WS), 127 & 309 James Doyle; BMH WS 166 Seamus Doyle; BMH WS 198 Thomas and James Walsh; BMH WS 208 Seamus Kavanagh; BMH WS 310 James Grace; BMH WS 646 William Christian, available online at <http://bureauofmilitaryhistory.ie/> Accessed 16 May 2016.

<sup>44</sup> For the origins and working of the Army and Military Service Pensions, see Marie Coleman, 'Military Service Pensions for veterans of the Irish Revolution, 1916-1923', *War in History*, Vol. 20, No. 2 (2013), pp. 201-21.

<sup>45</sup> Military Archives of Ireland (MAI), Military Service Pensions Records (MSPR) 34/REF/368 Application by James Joseph Grace; MAI: MSPR 34/REF/22708 Application by William Ronan; MAI, MSPR 34/REF/20659; Application by James Joseph Doyle; MAI, MSPR 34/REF/10243; Application by James Walsh; MAI: MSPR 34/REF/8879 Application by Thomas Walsh; MAI, MSPR 34/REF/20099 Application by William Christian; MAI, MSPR 34/REF/20580 Application by Denis O'Donoghue; MAI, MSPR 34/REF/814 Application by Seamus Doyle.

## CONTESTED MEMORIES

killed during the battle also submitted applications.<sup>46</sup> As the application process required details of their activity during the Rising, all of which had to be verified by referees and, in some cases, an advisory board, the pension applications offer additional detail on the activity and disposition of the Volunteers around Mount Street Bridge on the day of the battle (though the files are more valuable for what they tell of personal circumstances in the 1920s and after). Given the abundance of available material from these sources alone, their activity has been well covered in the historiography and a brief sketch of their arms and disposition at Mount Street Bridge will suffice here.

On Easter Monday 1916, the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion of the Dublin Brigade of the Irish Volunteers occupied Boland's Bakery, Westland Row Railway Station, and outposts in Grand Canal Street and on the railway line at South Lotts Road. Converging on this area from the south was one of the main avenues of approach for British reinforcements moving by road from Kingstown towards Dublin city, along the tram route through Ballsbridge and on to the centre of the city via Merrion Square.<sup>47</sup> The commandant of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion decided to block this approach in the vicinity of Mount Street Bridge, which traverses the Grand Canal. A force of 15, made up of an officer from C Company and Volunteers from at least four of the battalion's companies, effectively a section in strength, was assigned this task. Because of their age, two youths were sent away from the position by the officer in charge, Lieutenant Michael Malone, before the engagement commenced, reducing the strength of the section to 13.<sup>48</sup> Another four Volunteers occupied St Stephen's Parochial School, on the south side of the Grand Canal, close to the embankment and on the opposite side of the road to the other positions on Northumberland Road. On Tuesday evening a decision was taken to evacuate the building, as it was of no military value, and its occupiers moved to Boland's Bakery, headquarters of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion. The building was unoccupied for the remainder of the Rising but the British were unaware of this.<sup>49</sup>

---

<sup>46</sup> MAI, MSPR 1/D/315 Application by the mother of Michael Malone; MAI, MSPR D/P/6326 Application by the sisters of George Reynolds; MAI, MSPR 2/D/50 Application by the wife of Patrick Doyle; MAI, MSPR 1/D/224 Application by the mother of Richard Murphy, available online at <http://www.militaryarchives.ie/en/collections/online-collections/military-service-pensions-collection> Accessed 16 May 2016.

<sup>47</sup> Hally, 'The Easter 1916 Rising', p. 320.

<sup>48</sup> BMH WS 310 James Grace.

<sup>49</sup> BMH WS 208 Seamus Kavanagh; BMH WS 309 James Doyle.



Figure 2. Locations of Volunteer outposts in the Mount Street Bridge area

By Wednesday, two men, including Malone, had occupied 25 Northumberland Road, which is at the junction of Haddington Road and 200 metres southwards from the bridge; four occupied the Parochial Hall, which is on the west side of Northumberland Road and 100 metres southwards from the bridge; seven occupied Clanwilliam House, on the northern side of the bridge<sup>50</sup>. This force was supported on its left flank by four riflemen positioned in a builder's yard 100 metres east of the bridge on the north bank of the Grand Canal.<sup>51</sup> Throughout the operation the builder's yard position remained under the control of the commander of C Company, who was located with battalion headquarters fifty metres to its north. This resulted in a somewhat unusual command structure in that the officer in charge of the operation did not exercise control over all the troops intimately involved in defending the bridge. The Volunteers manning the builder's yard position were

<sup>50</sup> This article is following common usage in referring to the property as Clanwilliam House. The official address of what is known as Clanwilliam House is 1 and 2 Clanwilliam Place; only 1 Clanwilliam Place was occupied.

<sup>51</sup> BMH WS 127 James Doyle.

## CONTESTED MEMORIES

relieved each morning by fresh troops from the main battalion position in Boland's, further confirming the command divide.<sup>52</sup>

Those manning the four positions were armed with a variety of weapons. Each man had a rifle (in one case a shotgun<sup>53</sup>) and many carried side-arms. Although it is not possible to identify the personal weapon of each individual, the following is clear. At 25 Northumberland Road there were two pistols, one of which was a 7.63mm Mauser C96. There was also a Long Lee Enfield .303 rifle of Canadian origin and two Mauser Model 1871 rifles.<sup>54</sup> The Mauser fired an 11mm black powder, lead bullet that fouled the weapon very quickly and required each round to be loaded individually into the chamber.<sup>55</sup> It was commonly known in Ireland as the Howth rifle, after the harbour where 900 were landed by the Irish Volunteers in July 1914. The weapons held by those manning the Parochial Hall consisted of a .32 revolver, a shotgun, a Howth rifle, a .303 Martini-Henry rifle, and a third rifle.<sup>56</sup> In Clanwilliam House there were four SMLE Mark III rifles, two Martini-Henrys, two Howth rifles, two .38 revolvers, two .45 revolvers, and one .38 pistol.<sup>57</sup> At the builder's yard there was a .38 pistol along with four rifles, two of which were Martini-Henrys and one a Howth rifle.<sup>58</sup> The BMH statements, referenced here, indicate that individual holdings of ammunition ranged from between 150 to 250 rounds per rifle and in the region of fifty rounds for each side arm. It is stated that the officer in charge had 400 rounds of 7.63mm ammunition for the Mauser C96 pistol.<sup>59</sup> The wide variety of weapon calibres employed meant that ammunition resupply posed significant problems. Even where weapons fired the same calibre round, as in the case of the .303 SMLE and the .303 Martini-Henry, the ammunition was of a different specification and not interchangeable.<sup>60</sup> Although the supply of ammunition in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion area was described as limited, the Volunteers manning the bridge had a reasonable quantity for the action they would become involved in on Wednesday.

---

<sup>52</sup> BMH WS 208 Seamus Kavanagh.

<sup>53</sup> BMH WS 646 William Christian.

<sup>54</sup> BMH WS 310 James Grace.

<sup>55</sup> <http://www.militaryrifles.com/Germany/71Mauser.htm> Accessed 7 November 2015.

<sup>56</sup> BMH WS 646 William Christian.

<sup>57</sup> BMH WS 127 James Doyle.

<sup>58</sup> BMH WS 208 Seamus Kavanagh; BMH WS 166 Seamus Doyle.

<sup>59</sup> Tim Pat Coogan, *De Valera: Long Fellow, Long Shadow* (London: Random House, 1993), p. 67.

<sup>60</sup> BMH WS 157 Joseph O'Connor.

The standard of training in volunteer and militia units tended to be uneven (and remains so today). Training parades, exercises, and range practices were usually conducted outside of working hours and at weekends. This meant that family, social, work and other commitments would quite frequently have impacted on individual attendance. As a result, training could have taken a long time to complete, might have had a significant drop-out level, and produced varying levels of skills in those who completed it. These training pressures were exacerbated for the Irish Volunteers who were operating on an extrajudicial basis in circumstances where the British authorities were actively seeking to curb their activities.

In the case of Mount Street Bridge the witness statements of those detailed to man the positions show them to have been committed members of the Volunteers from its inception or shortly afterwards.<sup>61</sup> This means they had between two and three years' service which had provided them with a reasonable level of military training.<sup>62</sup> They were also well known to each other and would have been familiar with the streets and lanes that made up their area of operations. These Volunteers did, however, freely admit in their statements that most had never fired their personal weapons prior to the Rising. A minority had fired just two or three rounds, such was the shortage of ammunition.<sup>63</sup> Firing practice was confined to miniature rifle ranges where small bore, low recoil target rifles, such as the .22, were fired over distances of 25-30 yards.<sup>64</sup> Although this provided Volunteers with some live firing experience, it was no substitute for firing their own rifles at extended ranges.<sup>65</sup>

Some sources seem to suggest that a number of the Volunteers who fought at Mount Street Bridge had extensive weapon firing practice. For example, Michael Malone was credited with being 'the crack shot of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion with the Mauser automatic'.<sup>66</sup> This suggests the weapon was on general issue to the unit and that regular firing practices were conducted with it. The 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion had only one Mauser automatic pistol and this was the personal weapon of the battalion commander who handed it over to Malone on the first day of the Rising.<sup>67</sup> Volunteer units did, however, hold .22 rifle competitions and perhaps it is here that Malone's reputation for marksmanship was earned.<sup>68</sup> Another example is James (or Seamus) Grace, also manning 25 Northumberland Road, who had served with the Canadian

---

<sup>61</sup> Ibid; BMH WS 646 William Christian; BMH WS 208 Seamus Kavanagh.

<sup>62</sup> BMH WS 157 Joseph O'Connor.

<sup>63</sup> BMH WS 433 Simon Donnelly.

<sup>64</sup> BMH WS 208 Seamus Kavanagh.

<sup>65</sup> BMH WS 157 Joseph O'Connor.

<sup>66</sup> BMH WS 310 James Grace; *Catholic Bulletin*, Vol. 6, No. 12 (1916), p. 712.

<sup>67</sup> Terry de Valera, *A Memoir* (Dublin: Curragh Press, 2004), p. 120.

<sup>68</sup> BMH WS 157 Joseph O'Connor.

## CONTESTED MEMORIES

armed forces and smuggled his rifle back to Ireland. This might give the impression he was an experienced soldier. Depending, however, on which of his accounts is consulted, he had just one<sup>69</sup> or three months'<sup>70</sup> service with a territorial unit, allowing time for very limited training. Despite their lack of live firing practice, the Volunteers quickly overcame this shortfall in their training and engaged the attacking force effectively. This was due in part to the density of numbers used in the British attacks, where very little cover was available or even utilised, and to the relatively short ranges they were engaged at.

### **British Casualties**

The battle commenced when the leading company of the 2/7<sup>th</sup> battalion of the Sherwood Foresters ('C' Company) reached the junction of Haddington Road and Northumberland Road. From their position in 25 Northumberland Road, Malone and Grace opened fire inflicting immediate casualties; Captain Frederick Christian Dietrichsen and 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant William Victor Hawken were among the first to fall.<sup>71</sup> Over several hours of fighting, punctuated by a series of 'truces' to allow treatment of the wounded by civilian volunteers and medical professionals, the two battalions of the Sherwood Foresters suffered heavy losses in securing their objective.

Most historical accounts have taken a figure for British casualties from a despatch by the General Officer, Commanding-in-Chief, The Forces in Ireland General Sir John Maxwell, dated 25 May 1916, in which Maxwell states '4 officers were killed, 14 wounded, and of Other Ranks 216 were killed and wounded' at Mount Street Bridge, a total of 234 British casualties.<sup>72</sup> Because of the apparent authoritative source for the figure, historians have often accepted it uncritically.<sup>73</sup> But Maxwell's figure is at odds with other British sources. The 178<sup>th</sup> Brigade's war diary states on 8 May that the two battalions of the Sherwood Foresters had 5 officers killed and 14 wounded, and 21 Other Ranks killed, 118 wounded, and 7 missing, or 165 total casualties.<sup>74</sup> On 11 May the House of Commons was informed of 196 casualties, made up of 6 officers killed and 15 wounded, 24 Other Ranks killed and 142 wounded, and 9 missing.<sup>75</sup> Maconchy, the brigade commander, wrote in 1928 that 5 Officers and 25

---

<sup>69</sup> MAI, MSPR 34/REF/368 Application by James Joseph Grace.

<sup>70</sup> BMH WS 310 James Grace.

<sup>71</sup> *Robin Hoods*, p. 283-4. See also BMH WS 310 James Grace.

<sup>72</sup> TNA, WO 32/9523 Maxwell to French, 25 April 1916.

<sup>73</sup> For recent examples see Paul O'Brien, *Blood on the streets* (Cork: Mercier, 2008), p. 80; Derek Molyneux and Darren Kelly, *When the clock struck in 1916: close quarter combat in the Easter Rising* (Cork: Collins Press, 2015), p. 81.

<sup>74</sup> TNA, WO 95/3024/1 War Diary, 178<sup>th</sup> Brigade.

<sup>75</sup> House of Commons Debate (Hansard), 11 May 1916, vol. 82, 885-6.

Other Ranks were killed and 14 Officers and 118 Other Ranks wounded.<sup>76</sup> An identical figure is provided in his unpublished memoir.<sup>77</sup> The commander of the 59<sup>th</sup> Division, of which the 178<sup>th</sup> Brigade was part, noted 155 casualties (5 officers and 150 Other Ranks).<sup>78</sup> The marked differences in the army sources alone highlight the need to conduct a full review of the casualty figures, based on available evidence.

It is important to clarify the terminology used. A casualty is a soldier who becomes unavailable for duty due to death, injury, illness, capture, or who cannot otherwise be accounted for.<sup>79</sup> Battle Casualties are incurred as the direct result of hostile action sustained in combat.<sup>80</sup> At the time of the Great War the term casualty included Killed in Action (KIA), sometimes shortened to Killed, Died of Wounds (DOW), and Wounded, rather than the current term Wounded in Action. Battle Casualties do not include casualties sustained as a result of accidental or self-inflicted wounds or injuries as a result of falls etc., even when these are sustained in combat, or due to combat stress reaction. The term 'Died' was also used at the time and usually referred to soldiers who succumbed to illness, such as those who died during the 1918 flu pandemic. In 1921, the War Office published *Soldiers Died in the Great War*, a companion to *Officers Died in the Great War* (1919), comprising eight volumes.<sup>81</sup> Those Other Ranks killed in Dublin during the Rising are included in *Soldiers Died*. The term 'Died', however, was applied here on a blanket basis to all Other Ranks of the Sherwood Foresters who became fatalities during Easter Week, including CSM Henry Dixie of the 2/8th Battalion, who was Mentioned in Dispatches at Mount Street Bridge. This may have been due to a reluctance to admit to casualty types such as KIA where the Place of Death and Theatre of War are both recorded as 'Home' (though officers are referred to as 'Killed' or 'Killed in Action' in *Officers Died*).

Extant sources make it possible to track and list casualties among officers. The *Sinn Féin Rebellion Handbook*, published shortly after the Rising, lists British officers who

---

<sup>76</sup> Maconchy, 'The 178<sup>th</sup> Brigade', p. 39.

<sup>77</sup> Maconchy memoir, p. 451 where the figure for wounded officers is given as 12. This is a typographical error and should read 14. Maconchy offers a total figure of 19 officer casualties, which includes 5 killed, all of whom it is possible to name.

<sup>78</sup> A. E. Sandbach, untitled contribution in *59th Division*, p. 10.

<sup>79</sup> *NATO Glossary of Terms and Definitions AAP-6(2008)*, p. 2-C-2.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid*, p. 2-B-2.

<sup>81</sup> *Soldiers Died in the Great War, 1914–1919*, 8 vols. (London, 1921) incorporating *Officers Died in the Great War, 1914-1919: Part I Old and New Armies. Part II Territorial Forces* (London, 1919), via <http://ancestry.co.uk> Accessed 7 September 2016.

## CONTESTED MEMORIES

were killed or died of wounds during Easter Week.<sup>82</sup> This includes five named officers from the Sherwood Foresters, but does not provide their battalion designations. By cross checking these five officers with information provided in other available sources, it is possible to confirm the names of five officer casualties (three KIA from the 2/7<sup>th</sup> Battalion; one KIA and one DOW from the 2/8<sup>th</sup>) as a result of the action at Mount Street Bridge on Wednesday 26 April 1916.<sup>83</sup> The *Handbook* also provides a list of officers wounded during the week, naming fourteen officers from the Sherwood Foresters. The unit histories give eight officers wounded for the 2/7<sup>th</sup> Battalion<sup>84</sup> and six for the 2/8<sup>th</sup> Battalion<sup>85</sup> during the Rising (not all referred to by name), a total of fourteen. Maxwell's despatch also stated that fourteen officers had been wounded.<sup>86</sup>

Other Ranks are more difficult to trace. The 2/7<sup>th</sup> Battalion's history states that fifteen Other Ranks were killed, but names only fourteen in its roll of honour, while the 2/8<sup>th</sup> Battalion records that sixteen Other Ranks were killed, but names only twelve in its roll of honour (including a Private Brindley who, although wounded, did not die).<sup>87</sup> Cross-referencing the range of available sources generates a list of twenty-five named Other Ranks of these two battalions KIA, or subsequently DOW sustained on either 26 or 27 April. The nearest published contemporary source naming individuals, the *Handbook* published in 1917, lists, by name, twenty-four Other Ranks from the Sherwood Foresters who died during Easter Week 1916.<sup>88</sup> The names of twenty-six Other Ranks are published in *Soldiers Died*, including two not found in the *Handbook*, (Privates William Lang and George Wyld of the 2/7<sup>th</sup> Battalion), and identifies one in the *Handbook* list as being from the 2/6<sup>th</sup> Battalion (Private Alfred Tyler), a unit not involved in the action.<sup>89</sup> The resulting twenty-five

---

<sup>82</sup> *Sinn Féin Rebellion Handbook: Easter 1916*, published by the *Weekly Irish Times* (Dublin: Irish Times, 1917), p. 52.

<sup>83</sup> *Officers Died; The Robin Hoods*, pp. 296 & 459-68 (Roll of Honour); Oates, *The Sherwood Foresters*, pp. 56 & 225-30 (Roll of Honour); Commonwealth War Graves Commission Records (CWGC) <http://www.cwgc.org/find-war-dead.aspx> Accessed 26 Aug. 2015; Glasnevin Trust, *1916 Necrology*; 1916 Bodleian Library, Oxford: Papers of Sir Matthew Nathan, *Rebellion in Ireland*, Vol. I, MS 476 & Vol. II, MS 477 Casualty lists by day, 26 April-5 May [hereafter *Casualty Lists*].

<sup>84</sup> *The Robin Hoods*, p. 296.

<sup>85</sup> Oates, *The Sherwood Foresters*, p. 56.

<sup>86</sup> TNA, WO 32/9523 Maxwell to French, 25 April 1916.

<sup>87</sup> *The Robin Hoods*, pp. 296 & 459-68 (Roll of Honour); Oates, *The Sherwood Foresters*, pp. 56 & 225-30 (Roll of Honour).

<sup>88</sup> *Handbook*, p. 53.

<sup>89</sup> *Soldiers Died*.

names of Other Ranks of the 2/7<sup>th</sup> and 2/8<sup>th</sup> Battalions can be traced in the Commonwealth War Graves Commission records and in Glasnevin Trust's *Necrology*.<sup>90</sup> In all cases bar three, dates of death on gravestones and in *Soldiers Died* are either 26 April or 27 April; Private Ernest Davenport's date of death is 28 April, Private James Horace Bradford's is 5 May, and Private Albert Edward Wood's is 17 May.<sup>91</sup> This information, along with the data provided by the regimental histories, confirms that seventeen Other Ranks died on 26 April as a result of the action at Mount Street Bridge, five died on 27 April either in action that day at the South Dublin Union, or of wounds sustained the previous day at Mount Street Bridge, and three died at later dates from wounds sustained on either 26 or 27 April. Information contained in Nottinghamshire County Council's Great War Roll of Honour<sup>92</sup> and The Sherwood Foresters Roll of Honour<sup>93</sup> make it possible to refine this information and name nineteen Other Ranks who were KIA or DOW as a result of Wednesday's fighting and four, all from 2/8<sup>th</sup> Battalion, as a result of Thursday's. This leaves Private Harold Rodgers<sup>94</sup> of 2/8<sup>th</sup> Battalion who DOW on 27 April as a result of injuries sustained on either Wednesday or Thursday and Private James Bradford<sup>95</sup> of the 2/7<sup>th</sup> Battalion, who DOW on 5 May. It was determined that Private Rodgers was Wounded on 26 April at Mount Street Bridge as he was temporarily buried in St. Bartholomew's Churchyard, Clyde Road, with two other members of his unit who were KIA at the bridge (Lt Daffen and CSM Dixey).<sup>96</sup> The church is located about a mile south of Mount Street Bridge. It was also determined that Private Bradford was wounded at the bridge on Wednesday as he subsequently died in the nearby Royal City of Dublin Hospital, Baggot Street, where many of Wednesday's casualties were brought.<sup>97</sup>

The most difficult statistic to establish is the number of Other Ranks who were Wounded. A significant source for wounds suffered is a collection of previously

---

<sup>90</sup> Glasnevin Trust, *1916 Necrology*; CWGC.

<sup>91</sup> *Soldiers Died*.

<sup>92</sup> Nottinghamshire County Council Great War Roll of Honour <http://www.nottinghamshire.gov.uk/rollofhonour> Accessed 7 September 2016.

<sup>93</sup> The Sherwood Foresters: A Roll of Honour to the men of the Regiment who fell in the Great War <http://www.the-sherwood-foresters.co.uk/index.html> Accessed 12 September 2016.

<sup>94</sup> CWGC <http://www.cwgc.org/find-war-dead/casualty/900475/RODGERS,%20HAROLD> Accessed 12 September 2016.

<sup>95</sup> CWGC <http://www.cwgc.org/find-war-dead/casualty/900677/BRADFORD,%20JAMES%20HORACE> Accessed 7 September 2016.

<sup>96</sup> Casualty Lists.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid*.

## CONTESTED MEMORIES

unexplored reports submitted to the under-secretary for Ireland, Sir Matthew Nathan, and held among his papers at the Bodleian Library, Oxford. The lists were submitted directly to Nathan by the officer commanding the troops in Dublin and later bound with related papers. Casualties are listed by the hospital to which they were admitted and the name, rank, unit, and nature of the casualty are provided ('Dead' in the case of those killed). From these lists, it is possible to extract 100 named Other Ranks, from both units, who were Wounded.<sup>98</sup> The reports' lists should not be considered comprehensive as not every hospital reported every day, but as twenty-six of the known dead are also found here (87% of the total, including Private Wood who was wounded but alive at the time he was reported) it can be assumed that the lists cover the majority of those wounded. In addition, twenty-eight named Other Ranks from the Sherwood Foresters, not contained in the hospital returns, are listed as 'wounded' in the *Handbook*, accounting for most of any projected discrepancy.<sup>99</sup> Based on the ratio of those found Wounded compared to those who became casualties for other reasons (sprains, strains, fractures, shock, collapse, etc.) as described in the casualty lists, up to four of these twenty-eight may not have been Wounded. This was not considered statistically significant enough to impact on the overall figures so the total Other Ranks Wounded for both units from these two sources has been taken as 128. This agrees with the figures provided in the unit histories, which give a figure of sixty-five wounded for the 2/7<sup>th</sup> and sixty-three wounded for the 2/8<sup>th</sup>.<sup>100</sup> The best available figure for the total casualties suffered by both units during Easter Week is, therefore, 5 Officers and 25 Other Ranks killed with 14 Officers and 128 Other Ranks wounded; a total of 172.

As the Battle of Mount Street Bridge only occupied one day of the 2/7<sup>th</sup> and 2/8<sup>th</sup> battalions' time in Dublin it is important to recognise the timing of the casualties listed in the sources above. After they finally arrived at the Royal Hospital on Thursday evening, the 2/8<sup>th</sup> Battalion received orders to move to Athlone and left by train the following morning. It saw no further action in Dublin.<sup>101</sup> The 2/7<sup>th</sup> Battalion remained in the city for the duration of the Rising and suffered no casualties after

---

<sup>98</sup> Ibid.

<sup>99</sup> *Sinn Féin rebellion handbook*, p. 53. Details of 102 Sherwood Forester Other Ranks, wounded during Easter Week, was issued by the War Office and published in newspapers on 8 May. Although this contains an additional eight names, it was issued when the Sherwood Foresters still had seven men posted as Missing. The 1917 issue of the *Handbook*, which names 128 wounded, has been taken here as the most comprehensive amalgam of published reports on the wounded. See *Freeman's Journal*, 8 May 1916 and *Nottingham Evening Post*, 8 May 1916.

<sup>100</sup> *The Robin Hoods*, p. 296; Oates, *The Sherwood Foresters*, p. 56.

<sup>101</sup> Oates, *The Sherwood Foresters*, pp. 49-50.

Thursday.<sup>102</sup> But can we separate casualties between Wednesday 26 April (the day of the battle) and Thursday 27 April? The unit history of the 2/8<sup>th</sup> Battalion gives its casualties as three killed and seven wounded at the South Dublin Union on Thursday (one of the wounded, Private Albert Edward Wood, died subsequently) and states there were 'only two casualties in the Brigade, outside of the 2/8<sup>th</sup> Sherwood Foresters'.<sup>103</sup> As the only other 178<sup>th</sup> Brigade unit involved was the 2/7<sup>th</sup> Battalion, we can conclude these two casualties were members of that unit and that both were Wounded as all those who died have been accounted for.

No officers were killed on Thursday and if any had been among the wounded of the two battalions it is likely they would have been named in their unit histories (the practice in these publications was to name officer casualties and, generally, to provide the number sustained by Other Ranks). The sources suggest, therefore, that the 2/7<sup>th</sup> Battalion had two Other Ranks wounded and the 2/8<sup>th</sup> Battalion had four killed and six wounded as a result of Thursday's action. By subtracting Thursday's casualties from the overall total we can conclude that five Officers and twenty-one Other Ranks were killed on Wednesday (three Officers and fourteen Other Ranks from the 2/7<sup>th</sup> Battalion and two Officers and seven Other Ranks from the 2/8<sup>th</sup>). We can also conclude that fourteen Officers and 120 Other Ranks were Wounded (eight Officers and sixty-three Other Ranks from the 2/7<sup>th</sup> Battalion, and six Officers and fifty-seven Other Ranks from the 2/8<sup>th</sup> Battalion). This gives a total of 160 casualties for Wednesday. Among the contemporary army estimates reported, Maconchy's figure of 162 for the total casualties sustained 'on this one street', as he put it, is closest to the 160 we have calculated, followed by the figure of 165 given in the 178<sup>th</sup> Brigade's War Diary.<sup>104</sup> Another contemporary, a volunteer with the St John Ambulance who was active in the area during the Rising, also recorded a figure of 160 killed and wounded in a handwritten account produced after the Rising.<sup>105</sup>

What is clear is that a small band of part-time Volunteers - outnumbered one hundred to one - inflicted a significant number of casualties from well-entrenched positions in a built-up area over some ten hours. The progress of the British troops along Northumberland Road, taking each outpost in order (with the exception of Robert's Builders' Yard whose occupants were able to return to the garrison at Boland's), and the flanking movements attempted, are well described in regimental histories and eyewitness accounts. Four Volunteers were killed in the engagement: Michael Malone, killed in 25 Northumberland Road, and three of the defenders of

---

<sup>102</sup> *The Robin Hoods*, pp. 290-1.

<sup>103</sup> Oates, *The Sherwood Foresters*, p. 48.

<sup>104</sup> Maconchy, 'The 178<sup>th</sup> Brigade', p. 39; Maconchy memoir, p. 451; TNA, WO 95/3024/1 War Diary, 178<sup>th</sup> Brigade.

<sup>105</sup> National Library of Ireland, Ms. 24, 952 'Autograph narrative of W. G. Smith', n. d.

## CONTESTED MEMORIES

Clanwilliam House, including the post commander, George Reynolds.<sup>106</sup> The four occupants of the Parochial Hall were arrested that evening, William Ronan of the Clanwilliam House garrison the following day, and Grace on Saturday. The remaining three survivors of Clanwilliam House avoided capture.<sup>107</sup> Other elements of the battle remain the subject of contested and contradictory evidence. Most obvious is the timing and duration of individual acts and their consequences. Most accounts, for instance, agree that the battle began around midday, but there are conflicting reports on the timing of the first Volunteer outpost to fall, 25 Northumberland Road. The 2/7<sup>th</sup> battalion's history claims the unit had taken the building soon after 2.45pm, while the sole survivor, Grace, placed it after 8pm (certainly unrealistically late). Precisely timing casualties, beyond vague descriptions provided in unit histories regarding officers, is also difficult. There is also scope for much additional research on the course and consequences of the battle. It might be argued that the medical response, including the actions of local volunteers and medical practitioners and the range of facilities available in the immediate vicinity of the battlefield, directly influenced the number of fatalities, as did the faulty or out-dated weaponry and limited training of the Irish Volunteers. Moreover, the physical and psychological impact of the battle on survivors remains unexplored.

The figure of 160 for the total number of Sherwood Foresters who became casualties as a result of the action at Mount Street Bridge is significantly lower than the 234 reported by Maxwell at the end of May 1916. While still shocking by any standard, this figure represents just a tiny fraction of the 11,409 men, mostly from Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire, who died while serving with that regiment during the Great War.<sup>108</sup> But even with these revised figures, the military achievement of the tiny force of Volunteers at Mount Street Bridge was remarkable. To interrogate the findings described in this article, the *Contested Memories* project team is now utilising Artificial Intelligence to further model the engagement through such variables as gun accuracy, reload rates, and troop movements. This data, combined with the already extensive research undertaken, is providing a new environment in which evidence-based arguments can be made and modelled.

---

<sup>106</sup> BMH WS 127 James Doyle.

<sup>107</sup> BMH WS 310 James Grace; BMH WS 646 William Christian; BMH WS 198 Thomas and James Walsh; MAI: MSPR 34/REF/22708 Application by William Ronan.

<sup>108</sup> <http://www.stand-firm-strike-hard.org.uk/index.php/the-sherwood-foresters>

Accessed 17 April 2016.