


BICYCLES, BARRACKS AND BANDOLIERS

Suggested Activities

Policing during the War of Independence

Notes to Teachers

These tasks encourage pupils to examine primary and secondary sources to identify key aspects of policing during the War of Independence. These activities will help pupils develop their history enquiry skills and knowledge of policing prior to partition. Tasks can be completed by pupils individually or in pairs. Where a class discussion and teacher input is required this is marked with a .

The activity set finishes with a concluding task, *task 5*, that supports pupils to evidence their learning across the theme.

Resources required:

Tasks 1 - 4: whiteboard or computers with internet access.

Curriculum Links

Learning Areas: KS3 History

KS3 History

- *Citizenship*
 - Investigate the long and short term causes and consequences of the partition of Ireland;
- *Knowledge, Understanding and Skills*
 - Understanding different perspectives and interpretations;
 - Understanding continuity and change;
 - Understanding cause and effect;
 - Developing enquiry skills to undertake historical investigations;
 - Developing critical thinking skills to evaluate a range of evidence and appreciate different interpretations.

Learning Outcomes

- Research and manage information effectively to investigate historical issues using ICT;

Key Skills and Personal Capabilities

- Managing information, Self management

BICYCLES, BARRACKS AND BANDOLIERS

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Policing during the War of Independence

The War of Independence began in 1919 with the shooting of two Royal Irish Constabulary (RIC) men in Co. Tipperary. Between 1919 and 1922, 493 members of the RIC and Dublin Metropolitan Police (DMP) died violently and 18 members were declared missing presumed dead. Seventy-seven died as a result of accidents or mistakes associated with fighting and 700 were wounded. The British army suffered fewer casualties during the same period; out of the 37,000 soldiers stationed in Ireland, 150 men were killed.



Source 1: Photograph of Ballytrain RIC barracks, which was captured and sacked by the IRA (NLI)

Source 2: Extracts from a witness statement by Company Lieutenant Anthony Dawson about the actions of the Irish Volunteers in Co. Donegal (<http://www.bureauofmilitaryhistory.ie/reels/bmh/BMH.WS1546.pdf#page=3>)

“... Early in 1919 orders were issued for the burning of all unoccupied R.I.C. barracks in the area, also the raiding of Excise Offices. Acting on these orders a party of us set out and burned Glenswilly R.I.C. Barracks....”

“... In August, 1920, it was decided to attack Drumquinn R.I.C. barracks in the County Tyrone. We had information that the R.I.C. stationed there were heavy drinkers and that a number of them could be rounded up in various licenced premises in the town. The entire R.I.C. force stationed there consisted of two Sergeants and eight or ten men.

It was finally decided to carry out the raid in daylight. The date fixed was the 29th August, 1920. That was Fair Day in Drumquinn and for that reason it was considered that a party of strangers entering the town would not attract attention. A number of officers and men from Letterkenny Company together with some men from Castlefin and Ballybofey Companies set out in four cars with fictitious number plates for Drumquinn. ... First thing, on arrival, was to cut the telephone wires. I was acting as scout and my job was to ascertain the location of the R.I.C. through the town. Having located some of them in licenced

BICYCLES, BARRACKS AND BANDOLIERS

Suggested Activities

Policing during the War of Independence

premises I immediately reported to our party detailed for rounding them up and disarming them. This was promptly carried out. The main body of Volunteers moved quietly in the direction of the R.I.C. barracks without resorting to shooting. Things, however, did not work out according to plan. One R.I.C. man was shot dead before an entry was effected and one Sergeant was seriously wounded inside the Barracks. The shooting had the effect of alerting some of the R.I.C. in the upper portion of the barracks and delayed the action somewhat. However, we succeeded in collecting all the available arms and ammunition. We did not delay to destroy the barracks: ... and there was a danger that Omagh, which was only six miles distant and was the headquarters of the Enniskillen Fusiliers, might be alerted. We also had to pass two occupied R.I.C. barracks on our return journey one at Castlederg and the other at Castlefin. On leaving Drumquinn we were ordered to keep our revolvers 'at the ready' but not to use them unless necessary to fight our way through, We got back home without further incident...."

"... On a night in June, 1921, we occupied positions in the town and eventually a patrol of one R.I.C. Sergeant and three Constables came along. We opened fire on them when they came into range. Constable Carter was shot dead and the Sergeant was wounded. This action had the desired effect by drawing off the British Forces from West Donegal. The British forces then concentrated in the Letterkenny district, in the belief that the Column had moved in there..."

Task 1: Guerilla attacks

1. Look at *source 1* - photograph and read *source 2* - extracts from Irish Volunteers witness statement.
2. Describe the different forms of attacks carried out by the IRA/ Irish Volunteers on the RIC.
2. The IRA is often described as adopting a **guerrilla** campaign against British forces in Ireland. Look up the definition of the word in bold.
3. Does the definition sum up the type of attacks described in your answer to *question 2*?

Source 3: BBC Easter Rising The Aftermath - the Anglo-Irish War
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/british/easterrising/aftermath/af04.shtml>

4. Read *source 3*.
5. Why do you think the Volunteers/ IRA choose these methods of attack?
6. Why did the IRA target the RIC?

BICYCLES, BARRACKS AND BANDOLIERS

Suggested Activities

Policing during the War of Independence



Source 5: Photograph Police cyclists at Sion Mills. c1922 PRONI D1422/B/11/22

Source 6: Royal Irish Constabulary Lee-Enfield Carbine Mk1
<http://policehistoryni.com/ric-lee-enfield-carbine.html>

Task 2: A vulnerable target?

The RIC suffered more losses than the British army stationed in Ireland during the War of Independence.

1. Read *source 6*.
2. Look closely at the photograph above (*source 5*),
3. Describe the aspects of the force that made RIC men and barracks more vulnerable to IRA attack.

BICYCLES, BARRACKS AND BANDOLIERS

Suggested Activities

Policing during the War of Independence



Source 6: WWI Body Armour worn by the RIC barrack orderlies during War of Independence

Source 7: Copy of circular regarding body armour sent to RIC barracks [courtesy of RIC Forum]

Confidential-Crime Special Circ 246.

Larne. 7-12-19.

Body Armour For B.O.

A set of body armour for use of the B.O. [Barrack Orderly] is now about to be issued.

- (1) The armour is to be worn by the B.O. when opening the barrack door at night, or on occasions of any local excitement or probable danger.
- (2) The armour should be hung up in such a position as to be ready accessible by the barrack orderly.
- (3) The B.O. should invariably have a loaded revolver with him, when opening the door on the above occasions.

The I.G. [Inspector General] has conducted most searching tests with the armour, with very satisfactory results, and in no case did penetration take place, either with service revolver or automatic pistol, this fact should induce men to be very ready to avail them selves of this means of protection.

BICYCLES, BARRACKS AND BANDOLIERS

Suggested Activities

Policing during the War of Independence

Source 8: Royal Irish Constabulary body armour
<http://policehistoryni.com/ric-body-armour.html>

Task 3: Protective measures

British army weapons and armour became available at the end of World War I and were used by the RIC during the War of Independence.

1. Review *sources 6, 7 and 8*
2. List the protective measures adopted by the RIC.
3. Compare this list to you information gathered about the tactics used by the IRA from *Task 1*.
4. Do you think the RIC methods of protection were adequate? Give reasons for your answer.



Source 9: Three members of the new reinforced RIC on patrol in Dublin [NLI]

Source 10: Royal Irish Constabulary Christmas card 'The New RIC'
<http://policehistoryni.com/new-ric-christmas-card.html>

Source 11: Ulster Special Constabulary 'B' Specials firearms permit
<http://policehistoryni.com/usc-b-specials-firearms-permit.html>

BICYCLES, BARRACKS AND BANDOLIERS

Suggested Activities

Policing during the War of Independence

Source 12: **British officer 1st Bn Devonshire Regt in Ireland** recounting his experiences of being stationed in Ireland in 1921-1922

“... the black and tans were a darn nuisance; a lot of ex-officers out of a job after the first war. Where we tried to make friends with the local Irish, they just antagonised them completely ... with their behaviour ... in every way you can think of ... in their dealings with the locals they treated them rough ... I believe they used to have a lot of drunks ...”

Source 13: **The Chief Secretary For Ireland (Colonel Sir Hamar Greenwood)** speaking about the **Auxiliary Police** in the House of Commons 23rd February 1921

“Five platoon commanders and section leaders of N Company of the Auxiliary Division of the Royal Irish Constabulary were put under arrest for looting on the 13th inst. They are still under arrest. Twenty-six cadets of the same company were also alleged to be involved in looting. The Commandant of the Auxiliary Division made a preliminary investigation and reported to the Chief of Police that all of these cadets should be discharged.”

Source 14: *Extracts from US and Canadian Newspapers*

The Lewiston Daily - Sunday December 21 1920

“Black and Tans without Discipline say ex-soldier

Washington Dec 22 - A characterization of the Black and Tans in Ireland as ‘wholly without discipline and not responsible to anybody’ was given today by a former corporal in the United States Army...”

Montreal Gazette - October 18 1920

“In State of Terror ‘Black and Tans’ Fired on Galway Civilians

Galway Ireland October 17 - A section of Galway was in a state of terror for hours Friday evening in consequences of the Black and Tans firing among civilians. ...”

Task 4: The RIC is reinforced

1. Read *sources 10 and 11*.
- 2 How was the RIC reinforced?
3. Why did the RIC need reinforcements during the War of Independence?
4. Compare the additional RIC forces in the north and south of Ireland, note similarities and differences.
5. Read *sources 12 -15*.
6. Why were the Auxiliaries and the Black and Tans disliked by the army and the majority of the public? Discuss your answers with the class.

Task 5: Policing during the War of Independence

1. Using the previous sources, create a spider diagram that describes different aspects of policing during the War of Independence.

BICYCLES, BARRACKS AND BANDOLIERS

Suggested Activities

Policing during the War of Independence

Links

- BBC History Easter Rising - Aftermath: Anglo-Irish War
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/british/easterrising/aftermath/af04.shtml>
- Witness statement by Brigade Adjutant in Co. Armagh about military operations of IRA in the North
pp 46 - 54 <http://www.bureauofmilitaryhistory.ie/reels/bmh/BMH.WS0492.pdf#page=52>
pp 85 – 88 <http://www.bureauofmilitaryhistory.ie/reels/bmh/BMH.WS0492.pdf#page=85>
- IWM: British officer recalls IRA attacks in Ireland, 1921-1922 [Reel 1: 12: 30 - 17.00]
<http://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/80005887>
- Debate of the Ballymena Raid in the House of Commons 23rd June 1921
http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1921/jun/23/raid-ballymena#S5CV0143P0_19210623_HOC_133
- Debate of Auxiliary Police in the House of Commons 23 February 1921
<http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1921/feb/23/auxiliary-police-looting-charges>