



Retracing the footsteps of

The geography of the IRA's attacks on the British intelligence network in Dublin reveals so much of the back-story to the fateful day, writes **Martin Cregg**

Walking towards St Andrew's Church on Westland Row in Dublin city centre at dawn on a cold November day, you can feel a small sense of alignment with young men who traversed the same streets 100 years ago today.

This is where Vinny Byrne assembled his small group of volunteers on the morning of Bloody Sunday. The apprentice cabinet-maker and IRA member was two days from his 20th birthday when he was placed in charge of a brigade of men involved in an operation designed to bring down the heart of British intelligence networks in Ireland.

Collectively referred to as the Squad, brigades of young men had been undergoing intelligence operations of their own under the direction of Michael Collins. They had been secretly observing the activities of British officers and plain-clothes agents on the streets — evaluating patterns and movements, identifying key personnel and establishing where their enemies resided.

On this morning — November 21, 1920 — a series of synchronised assassinations were planned and carried out in south central Dublin.

The back-story to events on the fateful day have become a defining focus for my ongoing research and photography project entitled 'The Plot'. This documents buildings and locations that were flashpoints of activity on the morning of Bloody Sunday.

Taking interviews and witness statements conducted by the Bureau of Military History in the 1950s, it navigates the geography of events through the collected memories and experiences of volunteers and members of the IRA inner circle.

From carefully reading testimonies, it is possible to establish not only these famous and lesser-known locations connected to the story of Bloody Sunday, but also to identify surrounding narratives to the main events — surveillance operations, intelligence-gathering methods and battlegrounds.

All these players, on both sides, were navigating the same streets, desperately trying to gather information and eliminate one another.

To unravel the story, I have tried to follow footsteps of men



The point where Vinny Byrne and his men retreated down an alley and on to Mount Street Lower where they crossed paths with Thomas Keogh, another young volunteer

PHOTOS:
MARTIN CREGG

and reassemble the movements of brigades as they approached their targets.

UPPER MOUNT STREET

After meeting at 8am, Byrne and his men made the slow, short walk to Mount Street to carry out the execution of British agents living across from the corner of Merrion Square.

The young volunteers made their way along the dimly lit paths of Denzille Lane, past the National Maternity Hospital and took up their positions on the corners and doorways of Upper Mount Street. It was here at No 38 that two prime targets had been identified: intelligence agents George Bennett of the Royal Army Service Corps and Peter Ashmun Ames, an American working undercover for MI5.

A servant girl opened the door and pointed in the direction of two occupied rooms up the stairs and along the hallway. According to Byrne, each agent was found in his bed, and told at gunpoint to get up, march to the back room and face the wall: "I said to myself — May The Lord have mercy on your souls! I then opened fire... They both fell dead."

A servant girl opened the door and pointed in the direction of two occupied rooms up the stairs and along the hallway. Each man was told at gunpoint to get up, march to the back room and face the wall

LOWER MOUNT STREET

As the November half-light turned into a clear blue sky, the bells of the local church began to ring and the sound of gunshots echoed through Mount Street.

As the men burst out of the house, fire was opened on them from the other side. They retreated down an alley and on to Lower Mount Street. Here Byrne crossed paths with Thomas Keogh — another young volunteer — running and dropping a revolver on to the cobblestone path.

Keogh, along with accomplice Jim Slattery and six others from the 2nd Battalion E company, had been assigned to 22 Lower Mount Street at 9am to "eliminate a number of British intelligence agents and spies" who were residing there.

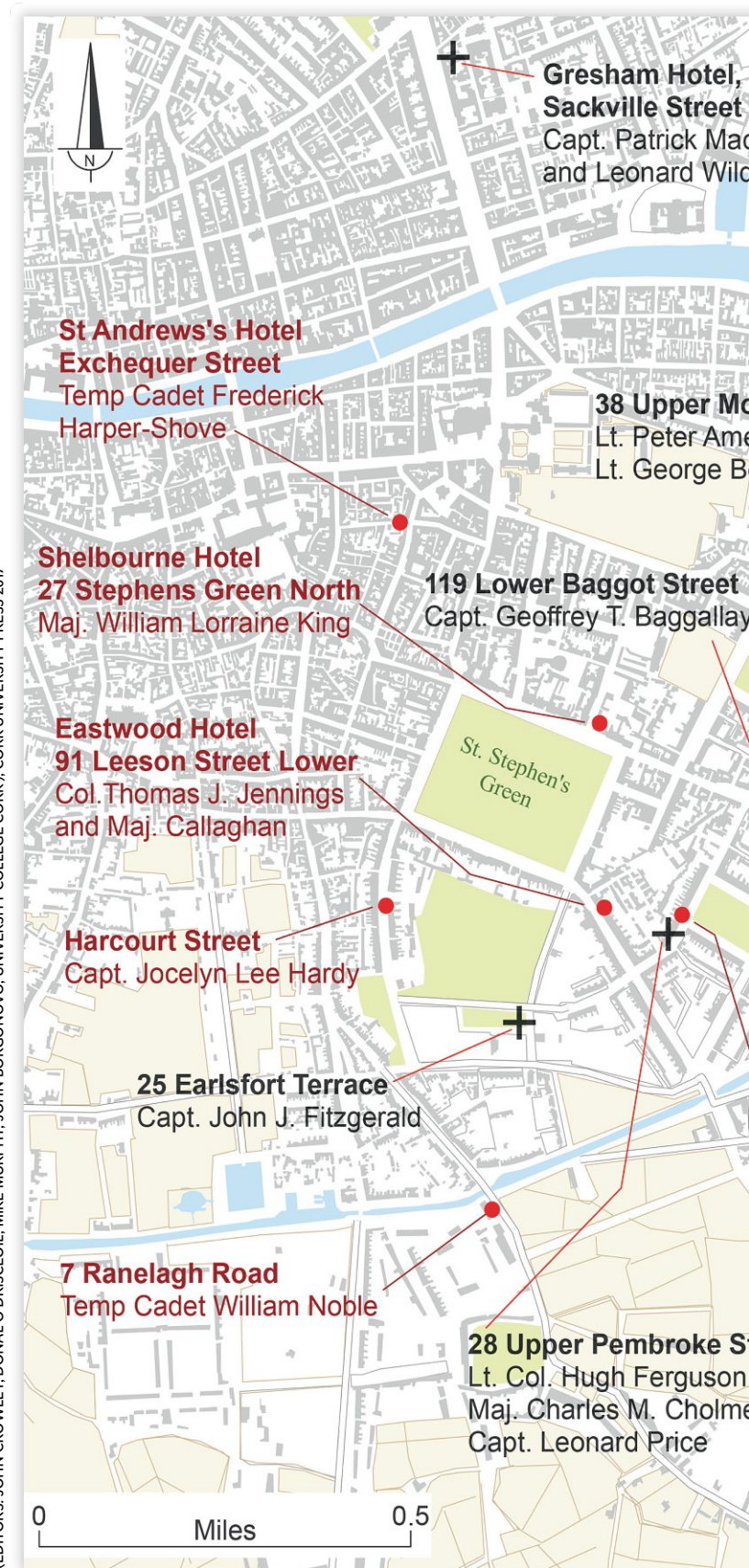
The company were admitted to the house by a maid and proceeded to separate rooms on separate floors, the numbers of which they already knew.

One of the targets was Henry James Angliss — known in Dublin by his alias Lieutenant Patrick McMahon — a plain-clothes undercover agent. He was a decorated veteran of World War I, serving in Russia before being dispatched to Ireland.

'McMahon' was high on Collins's list after, under the influence of drink, he told a female lodger, that he had killed an Irish legal clerk named John Lynch in the Exchange Hotel in September 1920. The girl had passed this information to on IRA intelligence agent.

While upstairs, Slattery heard gunfire at the front door. A house-

MAP: MIKE MURPHY, CARTOGRAPHER, DEPARTMENT OF GEOGRAPHY, UNIVERSITY COLLEGE CORK; ATLAS OF THE IRISH REVOLUTION (EDITORS: JOHN CROWLEY, DONAL O DRISCEOL, MIKE MURPHY, JOHN BORGONOVO; UNIVERSITY COLLEGE CORK), CORK UNIVERSITY PRESS 2017



keeper had spotted a patrol of Auxiliaries passing outside and had started to scream for attention. They surrounded the house and tried to gain admission.

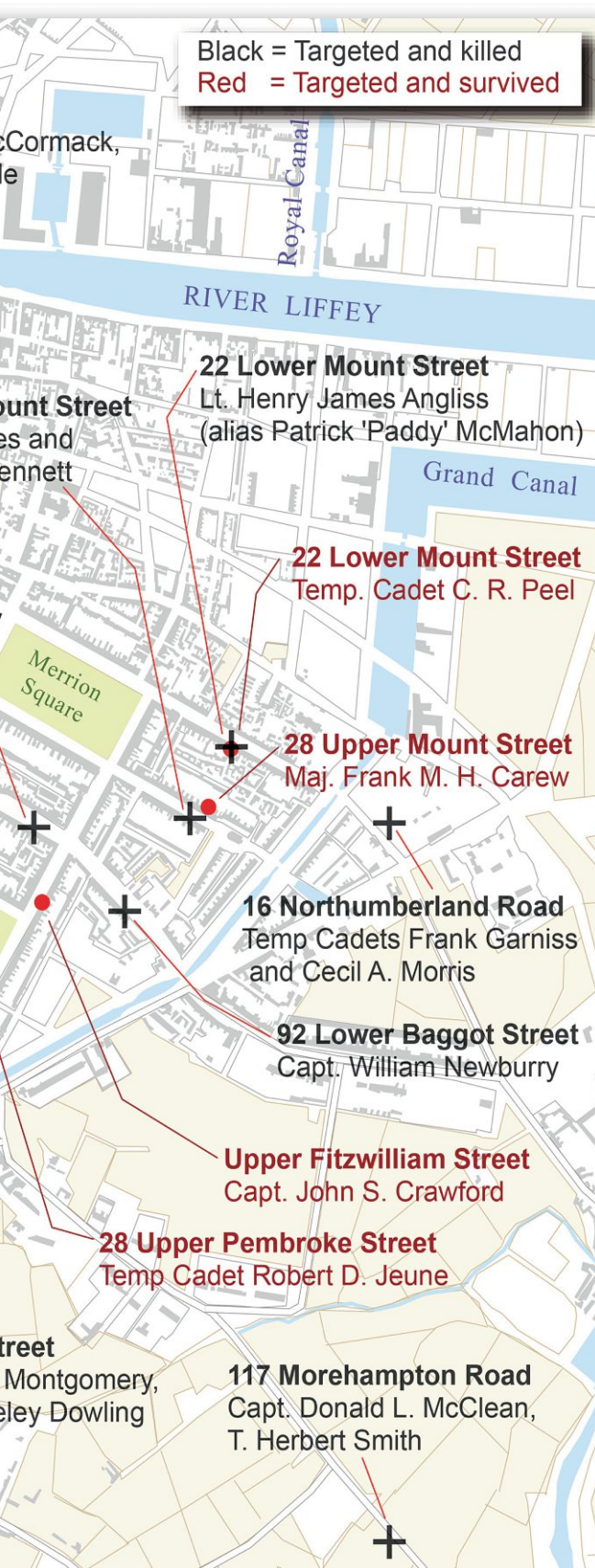
One of the volunteers, Billy McClean, fired at them through the door but got wounded in the hand. However, he had bought a

little time for the men upstairs to find and assassinate their prime targets and to escape.

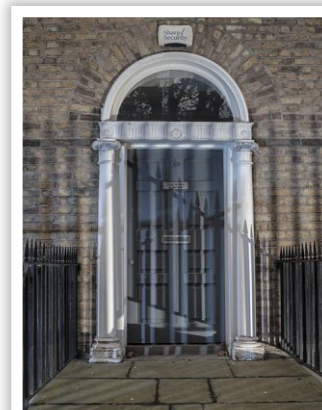
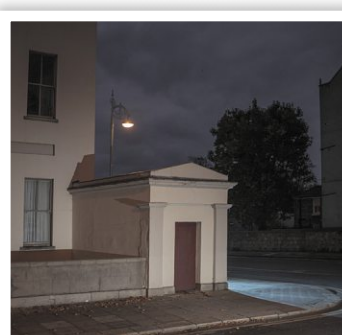
The company would make their way to the quays, where a boat was arranged to take them across to North Wall.

Later that day, Keogh would stand on what would become

the Collins Squad assassins

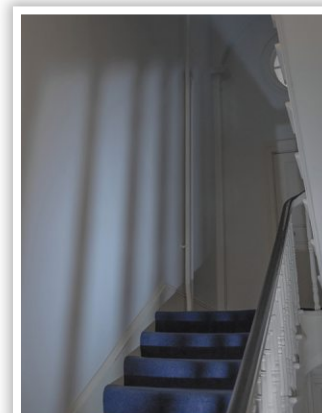


Herbert Road, where Mount Street meets Leeson Street



Captain Geoffrey Baggallay — a member of military courts that sentenced IRA volunteers to death and believed to be one of Kevin Barry's torturers — was assassinated at 119 Lower Baggot Street

No 92 Lower Baggot Street, where Captain William F Newberry was killed. He was shot seven times and his body left hanging from the window



28 Pembroke Street, where Captain Leonard Price and Major Charles Dowling were killed, is now converted into several office spaces

was attempting to escape by the window and was shot a number of times. One of our party on guard outside fired at him from outside."

Newberry was shot seven times and his body left hanging from the window. The operation lasted about 15 minutes.

Upon their retreat, Stapleton and Leonard intercepted a British dispatch rider, took his motorcycle and made their way to the quays. Stapleton would later head to Croke Park and was present when it was raided by British forces: "I was beside a man who was shot and I was splashed with his blood."

LOWER BAGGOT STREET

At 119 Lower Baggot Street, Captain Geoffrey Baggallay — a member of military courts that sentenced IRA volunteers to death and believed to be one of Kevin Barry's torturers — was high on the list for assassination.

The IRA unit that carried out the operation included future taoiseach Seán Lemass, and Patrick McCrea, a veteran of IRA activities since 1913. At 9am the men entered the house, leaving one man on guard on each side of the building.

They had details of the agent's bedroom. Baggallay opened the door to an armed unit and tried to escape through the window. Before he could reach it, he was shot in the top of the head, through the left eye and twice in the chest.

According to McCrea: "The job was completed in the space of a few minutes. We got away without incident". They went back to their assigned headquarters: North Richmond Street, in the shadow of the canal end at Croke Park.

McCrea arrived home to Dollymount at 11am. His absence was noticed by his family. He had missed breakfast and not been to Mass.

"Up to this point my wife did not think I was deeply involved. When I said I had been out fishing she asked me where was the fish. This remark caused me to stumble and I could not think of a satisfactory answer.

"In order not to give myself away, after breakfast I took the tram into town and went to the short 12 o'clock Mass in Marlboro' Street. When I left the church I met several of the fellows who had been out that morning with us and, at this time, there was terrific activity on the part of the military and Tans all over the city."

PEMBROKE STREET

Seven British regimental officers lived at No 28 Pembroke Street.

Inside the house, now an interconnected row of offices, a deep blue carpet leads to the first floor where Caroline Woodcock awoke to the sound of church bells ringing around Dublin, summoning people to Mass.

Her husband Col Wilfred James Woodcock — a commander of four battalions in the Great War — hurried to dress as he was to take a church parade at the commander-in-chief's lodgings. As Caroline stood at the window, she spotted a man climbing over the garden wall. It was shortly after 9am.

A group of about 10 republican volunteers from the 3rd battalion had entered the house and ascended the staircase in search of their targets. Two members on 'the list' were killed on the spot: Captain Leonard Price and Major Charles Dowling. Col Hugh F Montgomery, a staff officer, died of his wounds the following month. Col Woodcock was injured.

One member of the unit that entered the house at Pembroke Street was Charles Dalton, who was 17 and had become a key intelligence officer for the IRA under Collins. He had done most of the groundwork to find information on the condemned men at this location. He had courted the maid, got an IRA man employed as a porter and established which rooms the targets were sleeping in.

THE LOCATIONS TODAY

Many of the locations retain much of the character represented in turn-of-the-20th-century photographs: the grand Georgian structures and broad, open streetscapes of Fitzwilliam Square, Upper Mount Street, Herbert Street, Morehampton Road and Northumberland Road. It is easy to imagine the backdrop to the drama that unfolded 100 years ago today.

Several locations have been transformed inside: 22 Mount Street now comprises multiple apartments and empty offices.

The ghosts of Bloody Sunday have been well concealed behind generations of updated décor and the cut and thrust of modern life.

The house on Pembroke Street has been similarly updated into several office spaces, yet the exterior retains its beautiful Georgian character. Around the corner, 38 Upper Mount Street is now a building site.

● *Martin Cregg is a photographer and educator living in Dublin. For more work from his project 'The Plot', visit martincreggphotography.com*

known as Hill 16 as British forces opened fire into the crowd in Croke Park. McClean would make his way to a safe house in Denzille Place to be treated for his injuries.

BAGGOT STREET

While Slattery and company were making their approaches to the

target location on Lower Mount Street, Bill Stapleton was waiting under Baggot Street Bridge, after being instructed to report fully armed for an operation that Sunday morning.

There he would meet Joe Leonard and other members of his company to "liquidate members

of the British intelligence service" living at No 92.

Nine o'clock was zero hour. After mobilising the men into positions around Baggot Street and Herbert Street, Stapleton entered the house and asked to see Captain William F Newberry: "He was in his pyjamas, and he