

**Title of Project:** Andrew Gallagher: Remembering a Forgotten Soldier in the Irish Fight for Freedom

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## Andrew Gallagher: Remembering a Forgotten Soldier in the Irish Fight for Freedom

### Foreword

Andrew Gallagher was my great granduncle and lived in the house which my grandparents live in today in Tullamore, Co. Offaly. I had always been aware that Andrew had been involved in some way in the Offaly IRA during the establishment of the state but to what extent and the details of his involvement were unknown to me.

My real interest in Andrew, or Andy as he was more commonly known, was ignited when I carried out a family genealogy project and discovered that his papers relating to this period, a Mauser c96 pistol and an RIC sword were all still in my grandparents house.



Andrew Gallagher in his National Army, or Irish Free State Army, uniform



The Mauser Pistol and RIC sword that are in my grandparent's house

As part of that project I gained a brief knowledge of Andy's life during the period 1920-1922 and also discovered that his brother, Joseph had been interned in Ballykinlar Prison camp during the same period and was released after the Anglo-Irish Treaty 1921. His arrest was noted in the King's County Chronicle on Thursday 30<sup>th</sup> December 1930.



Joseph Gallagher (first row, second from right) Ballykinlar 1920

Like so many others, Andy is an almost forgotten soldier in the Irish fight for independence and in this project I tried to carry out more extensive research to find out exactly when Andy became involved with the Irish Volunteers, the role he played and the details of his actions during this period. I tried to obtain as many witness statements from the Bureau of Military Archives relating to Andy and also received documentation from the Department of Defence relating to his military pension which contained invaluable information.

While carrying out research on Andy I discovered that the Offaly IRA had been divided in 1920. The differences between the two Brigades was very interesting as the actions of the Brigade in which Andy was a member were mundane in comparison to that of the Brigade in the south of the county and I attempted to investigate this further.

Andy became Officer Command of the Offaly Brigade during the Truce and subsequently enlisted in Michael Collins' National Army and was put in command of the Tullamore Sub-Command in 1923 but resigned in the same year. He soon became sick with encephalitis lethargica or 'sleeping sickness' which attacks the brain. He died in September 1930 and in documentation received with his Military Pension it seems that Andy blamed the 'stress and strain' of his life 'on the run' for his premature sickness. The side board and clock that he handmade during his years of illness are still located in my grandparent's house.



The side board and clock were handmade by Gallagher after his retirement from the Army in 1923 and before his death in 1930



The period of 1912-22 is arguably the most important phase in the modern history of county Offaly but taking into account the actions that were carried out by Volunteers elsewhere in the country during this period, the actions of the Offaly IRA and its members are disappointingly neglected by many historians.

Andrew Gallagher was born on the 4<sup>th</sup> March 1900 to parents Patrick Gallagher, a stone mason, and Mary Forrestal in Henry Street, Tullamore. While completing an apprenticeship as a coach builder with Goodbody's Tullamore, Andrew and his older brother, Joseph, joined the Offaly Irish Volunteers in 1916, presumably inspired after the Easter Rising of 1916, however, Joseph was later interned in Ballykinlar Prison Camp, Co. Down by the British forces after being suspected of involvement in nationalist militant activity following the events of Bloody Sunday 1920. He was imprisoned in Camp 2 of Ballykinlar and was released after the Anglo-Irish Treaty 1921.

The militant nationalist movement in Offaly of which Andrew Gallagher became a part of can be traced back to its roots in Sinn Féin which grew after the decline in support for John Redmond's Home Rule Party. It developed further with the outbreak of World War 1 as solidarity between nationalists was brought to an end when Redmond declared his support for the Allies and the call for enlistment. This stance meant that national forces divided and remained so until after the Easter Rising 1916 when public support changed in favour of the Irish Volunteers. By 1917 the Irish Volunteers had reorganised themselves and had established a General Headquarters in Dublin. The successes of Sinn Féin in the 1918 Election had brought with it the sitting of the first Dáil on the 21 January 1919 and the first shots of the War of Independence on the same day. Cathal Brugha, the Minister for Defence, was, in theory, in control of the Volunteers and in August 1919 renamed them the Army of the Irish Republic, better known as the IRA. The IRA decided to use guerrilla warfare against the British forces and for this to be a success the campaign held an air of secrecy. They also decided that this campaign would be best achieved at a local level rather than orders from the central power of the Dáil and so Gallagher became Adjutant to his local IRA unit, the Offaly No. 1 Brigade.

20/12/601  
Andrew Gallagher, O'Connell St. Tullamore  
Joined Sept 1916  
Apprentice to coach building  
but didn't finish as I had  
to go on run in Oct 1920.  
I was raided for  
I was in Clara Barracks attack  
in June 1920. I was in  
the mill. I was armed.  
I was in a couple of attempted  
ambushes  
Nov 1920. Raheen Barracks  
June 1921. attack on D.C. in train  
The other two went irregular  
Continuous service  
Not working

A document found as part of Gallagher's Military Pension paperwork in which he outlines his involvement in the IRA. He was involved in the attack on Clara Barracks 1920, an ambush in Raheen 1920 and an ambush on the RIC in June 1921.

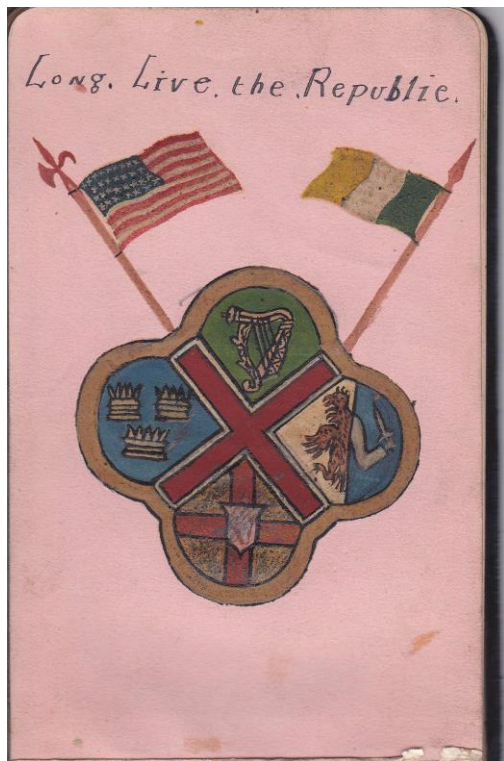
Very little is known about the role of the Offaly IRA due to the fact that shortfalls, setbacks and failures on their part were overshadowed by the heroics in other areas, namely in the south of the country. Arms and ammunition were reserved for these areas which also contributed to the lack of action in the midlands area and the flat country in which these Volunteers were situated, they claimed, did not help their guerrilla warfare tactics. Sabotage was often used instead with the occasional barracks raid and road blocks while ambushes were few and far between. The Offaly IRA was widely known not to be ruthless, a characteristic which was hampered by a hesitant and cautious approach by its leaders to the war's proceedings. The GHQ in Dublin often criticised the Offaly IRA and had a significant input into the proceedings for escalating the war in the midlands. The Royal Irish Constabulary was the main target for the IRA during this period.

As part of the Offaly Brigade, Gallagher was involved in a number of attacks in the county. The first of these took place in Clara, Co. Offaly on the 2nd June 1920. At this time Offaly was still organised as one whole brigade and men from all over the county were used in the attack. The main aim of this attack was to capture and destroy the local RIC barracks in Clara and according to reports communications were cut and trees were felled for a radius of 15 miles in order to slow British military reinforcements. At around 12 midnight the RIC Sergeant and his wife were removed by the Volunteers from their quarters which were attached to the gable end of the barracks while other members of the IRA took up their positions; in Williams' shop opposite the barracks, in McGlynn's Yard at the rear of the barracks and in Goodbody's Mill at the other gable end of the barracks. Gallagher was stationed here and was apparently armed. The IRA used sledges and crowbars in the Sergeant's house, in order to bore a hole for an explosive, while the RIC replied with bombs, grenades, rifle and revolver fire and sent a flare up into the night sky to signal for assistance. The men stationed in Goodbody's Mill, which included Gallagher, were led by Martin Fleming and demanded that the RIC surrender but instead were answered with a bomb which was thrown through a hole now made in the gable end wall. Pat Seery, Martin Fleming and Ned Brennan, all members of the Offaly IRA, were seriously wounded and the set-back of defective explosives meant that that the attack was called off at about 3 a.m.

About 200 men had been involved in this operation yet, once again, the track record of the Offaly IRA's failure in attacks had been kept and at a costly price as one of the fatally wounded Volunteers, Seery, lost his life. The Offaly IRA was later split into two brigades, the north and south of the county, and parts of Westmeath and Tipperary were included in these brigade areas. They both functioned as independent units after this.

Gallagher then went on the run in October 1920 but it wasn't long until he was involved in another ambush near Raheen, Geashill, Co. Offaly. They had been undergoing military technique training in the area prior to the 12<sup>th</sup> November 1920 when the Volunteers took up their positions on the main Tullamore/Portarlinton road. They didn't create a road block as they expected an RIC cycle patrol but instead they were met with a 20 strong police party, who travelled by lorry. They opened fire but failed to stop the lorry which continued on its way, however, two RIC officers were reported to be wounded. In the same month the first killing of an RIC member by the Offaly IRA took place when Sergeant Henry Cronin was killed on Henry Street in Tullamore, the same street where Gallagher had grown up, as he walked from the Forrester's back to the RIC barracks. It is believed that Michael Collins, IRA Director of Intelligence, ordered the killing, however, the killer was never caught and the Black and Tans carried out reprisals in the town.

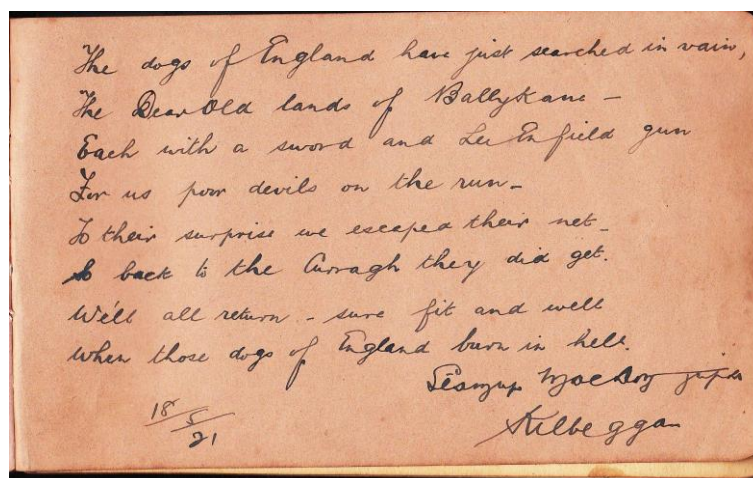
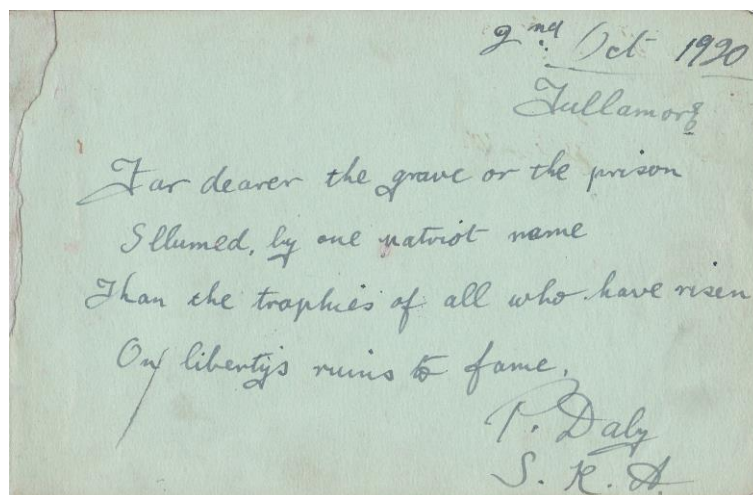




Some samples of art work and poetry from Gallagher's autograph book 1920-23 giving a firsthand account of the strong feelings Gallagher and his comrades had towards the cause they believed to be fighting for.

The painted crest demonstrates the hope of a united Ireland, as it includes the symbols of all four Provinces while the US flag along with the Tri-colour suggests American support for the Volunteers and their cause.

The poetry written down by various people in Gallagher's autograph book highlights the strong nationalist feeling of the Irish people during this period and the lengths that people would go to for Irish freedom. The second poem especially displays the strong feelings the poet had against the British forces in Ireland at the time.

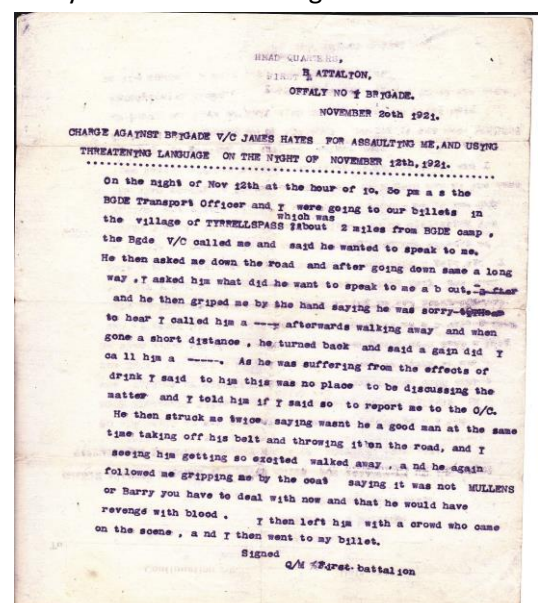


By 1921 the support for the Offaly IRA was increasing and many sympathised with their cause. Although very little activity had taken place in the north of the county, in the No.1 Brigade's area of which Gallagher was a part of, the No. 2 Brigade's involvement in war activity was heightened when GHQ sent men to escalate the situation and they looked to dealings in the south of the country for inspiration. The Cork IRA had begun to burn loyalist collaborators' houses and this seemed to have become standard IRA policy. The killing of the Pearson Brothers in Coolacree, near Kinnity, Co. Offaly, remains a controversial issue today as some argue that the Offaly IRA performed the executions based on sectarian motives but other local historians believe that the Pearson brothers were killed as part of the IRA crackdown on spies and informers.

The Pearsons were a Cooneyite family who lived at Coolacree, Kinnity, Co. Offaly and were widely known as collaborators with the British military forces in the area. Their religious intolerance had led them to blocking a local Mass path on their land to Catholics in 1920 and a fierce argument between Richard Pearson and John Dillon, a local Republican, had led to Dillon's and fellow Republican J.J. Horan's arrest. In June 1921 the three Pearson brothers, Richard, Sidney and Abraham had shot at the local Offaly IRA as they created a road block near Coolacree and their actions were followed with Thomas Burke, the Offaly No.2 Brigade O/C, calling for their execution on the 26<sup>th</sup> June 1921. Originally from Galway and attached to the Dublin IRA, Burke had been appointed to south Offaly by GHQ to increase the war effort. Suspicion alone was not enough to order an execution and reports had to be sent to GHQ. The argument Burke made for the executions was that open hostility had been shown by the Pearson's who had been active in promoting the Ulster Volunteer cause and who had harboured a militant loyalist fugitive, William Stanley. Burke also noted that the burning of the Pearson's buildings was imperative to ensure that the other family members would leave the area.

On the 30<sup>th</sup> June 1921 up to 30 Offaly IRA members surrounded the Pearson house while others went to find Richard and Abraham who were working in a field. Stanley had left to attend a wedding with his father in Tipperary. They were taken to a yard at the back of the house where they were shot by a firing squad who failed to instantly kill the men or deliver a *coup de grace*, once again displaying the limited military experience of the Offaly IRA. The Volunteers then went about setting fire to the house using hay covered with petrol. Although Gallagher was not involved in this attack it is interesting to note the drastic contrasts between the two Brigades within the one county. This execution would have been noted as a rare success for the Offaly IRA where as Gallagher had been more involved in the more muted actions of sabotage in the north such as the attack on the Clara RIC barracks which hadn't aimed at the execution of any RIC officers.

Andrew Gallagher was appointed as Offaly No.1 Brigade Officer in Command in 1921, during the Truce, and in the same period the 3<sup>rd</sup> Southern Division was established, headed by Michael McCormack, which included both counties of Laois and Offaly and the northern proportion of Tipperary. As well as becoming Officer in Command Gallagher also had to deal with financial and disciplinary duties of his title which included a charge against Brigade V/C James Hayes on the 20<sup>th</sup> November 1921. This incident occurred near Tyrrellspass, Co. Westmeath and

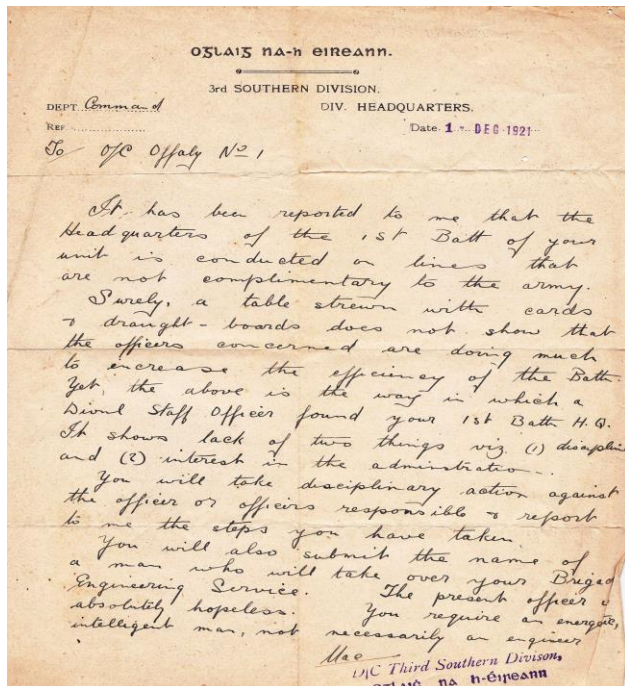


Letter of Complaint against James Hayes

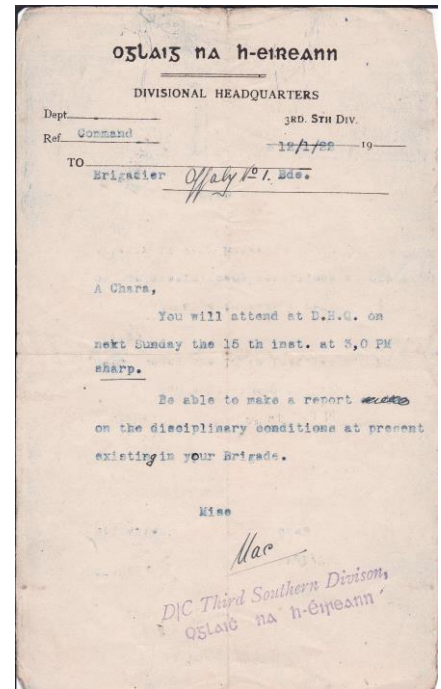


the Quartermaster who made the charge claimed that Hayes had assaulted and used threatening language against him.

Another incident was reported on the 1 December 1921 when Gallagher's unit was caught by a Divisional Staff Officer playing cards and drinking draught in the Brigade's headquarters. He was summoned to make a report on the disciplinary conditions in his Brigade by Divisional Headquarters on the 12<sup>th</sup> January 1922. This series of events highlights the lack of military training and conduct of the Offaly IRA in this period which no doubt would have had an impact on their overall success rate during their military campaign.



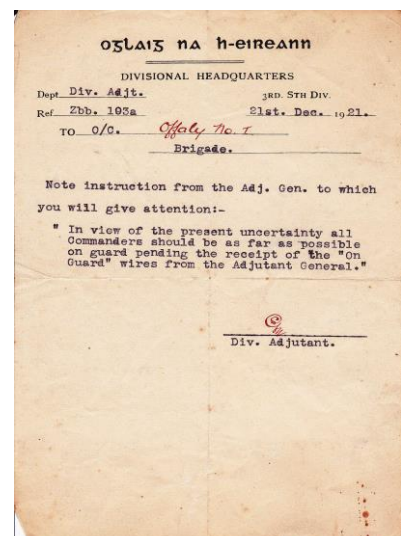
Letters to the No.1 Offaly Brigade highlighting disciplinary issues and calling for a report



During this same period the Irish plenipotentiaries had returned from London with the Anglo-Irish Treaty 1921 and debates had begun in the Dáil. Gallagher received a note from the Divisional Adjutant on the 21<sup>st</sup> December 1921 urging all Commanders to be 'as far as possible on guard' giving the 'present uncertainty'.

This brings into context the fragile nature of the state over the divisive Treaty as war could soon rage, however, it is noted by local historian Philip McConway (2007) that 'the majority of people, the press, and the Catholic Church, supported the Treaty in Offaly'.

The Treaty was passed on the 7<sup>th</sup> January 1922 by 64 votes to 57 and the Irish Volunteers became the National Army, more commonly referred to as the Free State Army, however, a split remained between the pro and anti Treaty sides and mainly only those who supported the Treaty and Michael Collins became members of the Free State army.



A Letter Gallagher received warning him to be 'on guard'



Gallagher was also part of the Tullamore Battalion that took over Kilbeggan Barracks on behalf of the IRA after it was evacuated by the RIC on Thursday 20th February 1922 as part of the Anglo-Irish Treaty.

The letter of resignation by Gallagher written on the 1<sup>st</sup> March 1922 intended for his Divisional Commandant is quite interesting as it reaffirms previous criticism of the Offaly IRA and gives us insight into the actual workings of the Brigade. Gallagher makes it quite clear in his opening that he wasn't taking sides when it came to the political unrest and impending Civil War during this period and continues to state that his 'chief reason for resigning' was that he believed that he was incapable of managing the Offaly No.1 Brigade which had been 'difficult' to run since its formation and 'bad administration in the past' was now causing trouble within the Brigade itself. This opening reason highlights the weak leadership within the Offaly IRA which has already been discussed as part of their botched attempts in ambushing and attacks. Gallagher later expresses his own concern over this problem as a lot of 'trouble' had arisen in the two months prior to when this letter was written which can only indicate unrest over the passing of the Treaty and again points towards the looming Civil War.

OGLAIG NA H-EIREANN  
\*\*\*\*\*

Brigade Headquarters  
Offaly No 1

Date 1st March.1922

To The Divisional Commandant  
3rd Stn Div.

"Sir"

I wish to tender my resignation as O/C Offaly No 1 Brigade. In doing so I would like to make it quite clear that it is not taking sides with either party in the present political unrest, that has led to my resignation. Because at all times I did and will continue to observe the disciplinary standing of our Army.

My chief reason for resigning is; Firstly, I think that I am not capable of running the Brigade, as you may understand it is a very difficult one to manage as since its formation in 1916, it has been run on nothing but intrigue and cliques, and now that the tightening grip of war has passed the fruits of bad administration in the past is coming to the surface consequently causing trouble and dissension.

Of course when I say trouble and dissension I don't mean that it interferes to a great extent with the working of the Brigade but for the past two months a lot of trouble has risen which caused me worry and regret.

Secondly; My reason for accepting the position as O/C was. At the time the financial and disciplinary standing of the Brigade was in a hopeless state, and was getting worse every day, So in hopes of straitening matters up or at least to check the total destruction of the Brigade I accepted the position, but imagined that it was only till such times as you could find a better man.

It was not a hasty thought that prompted me to resign. I would have done so last January but for the fact that the Army being in such an unsettled state and the Officers of the Divisional staff being so busy. I did not like to put more trouble on their shoulders by resigning at a critical time.

Further the financial state of the Brigade being so bad I waited to try and clear off some of the debt which is now almost done as the balance sheet which will be ready in the course of a few days will show.

If you appoint a man as O/C from another area (as I would suggest) I am prepared to remain with him for a month if necessary to give him a clear knowledge of the working of the Brigade, or if you cannot find a suitable man at present I will remain on till such times as you can

Signed Andrew Gallagher  
O/C Offaly No 1.

The second reason which Gallagher provides for his resignation is the financial and disciplinary matters of the Brigade which he claims were 'in a hopeless state' which when put into context confirms the previous shortfalls of the Offaly IRA in this period. The concluding paragraph of Gallagher's letter is just as intriguing as its opening as he suggests to his Divisional Commandant to appoint another man as O/C but who is from outside the area.

This had been the case with Burke in the Offaly No. 2 Brigade who had been appointed by the GHQ from Dublin to increase militant activity. The reasons for Gallagher suggesting this are unclear but it seems that it was intended to overcome the local relations and loyalties to which a man appointed from the area may be bound.

There are two copies of this letter in Gallagher's files which points towards the idea that the letter did not reach its intended destination. In an undated letter sent by Padhraig Mulcahy, Divisional Adjutant, to Gallagher it seems that Gallagher also had offered his verbal resignation. Mulcahy seemed unimpressed and didn't accept it asking Gallagher instead to reconsider his decision which suggests that this letter was written in the same period.

I have been speaking  
Conall Costello and he told me  
you asked him to inform me  
of your intention to resign. Needless  
to say, I was unpleasantly surprised.  
I need hardly remind you that  
such verbal and short notice  
could not, in any circumstance,  
be accepted. In your case,  
your resignation cannot be accepted  
by me. I would ask you  
to reconsider the situation and,  
near time, carry on until I see you.  
I cannot leave HQ at the moment  
as I am up to my neck in many  
troubles and papers.

*An undated letter from Mulcahy, presumably for Gallagher, outlining the reasons why he cannot accept Gallagher's resignation.*

Although there is no evidence to show whether Gallagher resigned from his post or not, he and his Staff Officers were arrested by the 'Executive' IRA in April 1922 but were released after a short period from Crinkle Barracks, Birr. The circumstances and reasoning behind the arrests are unknown.

Gallagher enlisted in the National Army, becoming a Brigadier, on the 28<sup>th</sup> June 1922, coincidentally on the same day as the Provisional Government decided to bomb the Four Courts which had been taken over by anti-Treaty IRA soldiers and thus marking the official beginning of the Irish Civil War.

As part of the Free State Army Gallagher acted as part of a policing body on behalf of the Provisional Government and random criminal acts that he investigated while trying to establish law and order in this new Free State were written down in his notebook.

Joseph Gray, Arkansas  
William George, Mississippi  
Christopher Taffey, Mississippi

Thursday night, 9 Feb.  
Faintly visible & still upon  
the road with night  
freezing on ground.  
B. Late. 9 Feb.

Misses George Lynde  
Sunday night

Patrol, shells,  
of Wilson  
of Butler  
of Vegetation  
Leaf in Immense Rubber  
house, Kellogg's  
for 1888 and opening  
to have also returned to  
do as by G.P.P.  
and afterwards left  
even among relatives  
and Kachin, soon.

P. S. Gifford.  
 of Pangam.  
 of St. Germine.  
 Refused to leave California  
 Pacific Coast Highway on  
 Jan 20, 1932, when  
 ordered to leave by F.R.P.  
 and afterwards went out of  
 their respective territories  
 and Michigan soon.

*Notes from Gallagher's notebook relating to an incident in Mahon's Public House in Kilbeggan and poaching on the Durrow Estate*



Andrew Gallagher resigned from the National Army in August 1923, eight months after being put in command of the Tullamore Sub-Command due to his ever increasing ill-health. According to the Midland Tribune on Saturday 26<sup>th</sup> January 1924 it was 'because of the part he played in the Nationalist Movement' that Gallagher was appointed manager of the new cinema hall in Tullamore but his time here was short lived as the hardship and strain of military life deeply affected his health.

General regret was felt in the Tullamore district at the death, at an early age, of Mr Andrew Gallagher, son of Mr Pat Gallagher, Henry St., Tullamore. He had not yet reached his 30th year. Deceased took an active part in the I.R.A. movement, to which he devoted himself with great enthusiasm. His activities came under the notice of the British authorities, and he was "on the run" for a long period during which he and his comrades suffered much hardship. Returning to Tullamore after the truce, he had charge as Commandant of the Tullamore Division. When the civil trouble started he joined the National Army, and rose to the rank of Brigadier. Coming back to civil life, his health gave way, and for a long time before his death he was rather seriously ill. He was a young man, of estimable qualities, of great talent and ability, and these were recognised by his comrades in the times of trouble. There was great sorrow in the town and district when the news of his death was received, and the family have received many messages of sympathy in their bereavement. The remains were removed to the Church of the Assumption, Tullamore, on Monday evening. At the Office and Mass on Tuesday, Rev G. Cooney, C.C., was celebrant, and there were present — Very Rev P. E. Duffy, P.P., V.F.; Rev T. O'Keeffe, C.C.; Rev J. MoManus, C.C.; Rev Fr. Clarke, Kilbeggan. The funeral for Clonminch took place later in the day, and was of a very large and representative character, people travelling a long distance to pay a last tribute to the memory of the dead.

*Andrew Gallagher's death notice from the  
Midland Tribune 13<sup>th</sup> September 1930*

Andrew Gallagher was like any other young Irish man of his time, he believed in joining the Nationalist movement in an effort to free Ireland from centuries of British Rule. Although the actions he undertook as part of the Offaly IRA are not as reflected upon as frequently as those in other parts of the country, they are no less insignificant as Gallagher and his comrades believed that their fight was just as important as those of other prominent Volunteers. Gallagher was a small part of probably the most important period of Irish modern history and it is stories like his that give us an in depth knowledge of not only the military history but also the social history of the time providing invaluable context in which we can adapt our previous studies of this phase. He led the Offaly No.1 Brigade through a very troubling time during the establishment of the Irish Free State and the subsequent Civil War and although it may have not been immediately evident, the freedom of the Irish State was paid for with Gallagher's life, along with so many other Volunteers like him, as his years enduring the harsh military life 'on the run' inevitably caught up with him at an early stage in his life.

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