

THE KILLINGS AT COOLACREASE

A “Reel Story Production”

FOR RTE

Hidden History Series

As broadcast on Tuesday 23rd of October 2007

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Narrator: Orla Brady

Script consultant: Pat Sammon

Research: Paul Rouse

Philip Mc Conway

Introduction

[Interview/voice over]

JJ Dillon (son of Offaly I.R.A 1920-21):

The silence... that people didn't want to talk about it. I never wanted to talk about it and I never did!

Olive Boothman, grandniece of Susan Pearson

There were no words that fitted. The legacy would be one of great fear. It was never spoken of except only in whispers.

Voiceover/Senator Eoghan Harris:

Of all the stories I've heard the story of the Pearson's is easily the saddest one I have heard.

Voiceover/Paddy Heaney (local Historian):

When they got their orders it had to be carried out, they had no choice. No, indeed, no

Voiceover/Pr. Richard English (Historian):

One of the depressing things about conflict is the speed with which neighbours and friends can become killers and enemies.

Voiceover/Philip McConway (Local IRA Historian):

In the context of the times it was a necessary military reaction to protect and safeguard local Republicans.

***** COMMENT 1:

The tragedy is presented on one side only. But if the Pearsons were guilty as charged, then their own tragedy was something they brought on themselves. And we then have to factor in the tragedy of Mick Heaney and the other men they shot. And the tragedy and loss of lives wrecked and loved ones imprisoned because of the Pearsons – if they were guilty.

The other side is portrayed as harsh, unfeeling, militaristic. But on the side of the Pearsons, Alan Stanley's book, for instance, talks of putting down "the Rebels" with full military force. Innocent or guilty, it is impossible to deny that the Pearsons were reckless, gun-toting and trigger-happy.

It is not as if there is a moral equivalence between the two sides. The citizen volunteer forces of the democratically elected Irish government were conducting a gallant resistance to the aggression of a powerful, brutal, mercenary, terrorist, imperial force which sought to suppress the elected government. From that standpoint the IRA are the "good guys" waging a People's War, with sheer solidarity, courage and determination, against vastly superior forces.

[Picture/soundtrack]

Wide

Shot:Cornfields /trees/flowers

Close up:.....Dillon (Mood Music)

Wide shot:More trees, corn field/two young men pitching hay on sunny day

Close up:..... Pearson woman

Close up:IRA men at meeting/fields

Close up:..... IRA men at meeting

Close up:..... Heaney

Close up:..... Men in Hay field/men running

Close up:IRA men coming over ridge of hill

Close up:.....Frightened faces

Close up:..... Philip Mc Conway

Now suppose that the Pearsons were innocent. In that case we are dealing with, perhaps, a miscarriage of justice or mistake by the "good guys", or at worst a rogue element which perpetrated a crime under cover of an otherwise heroic and honourable struggle.

On the other hand, if the Pearsons were guilty, the military contest they joined of their own volition was not a morally neutral one. They attacked the "good guys" on behalf of the "bad guys".

<u>Main Title (White against black)</u>	<u>[Picture/soundtrack]</u>
<u>THE KILLINGS AT COOLACREASE</u>	
<u>[Interview/Voiceover]</u>	
<p>Voiceover/narrator: <i>Buried in the land around the Slieve Bloom Mts is a dark and violent story. Hidden there during the fight for independence is a story that was supposed to have died with time. It was a bloody episode that caused a family to leave the land of their birth for distant exile.</i></p>	<p>Wide shot:Slieve Bloom Mts/sky/landscapes/[gothic mood music]</p>
<p>Voiceover/Jenny Turnidge (Great-grand-daughter of Wm. & S. Pearson) : <i>You've lost your family, country, identity, and the part of Ireland that you are passionate about doesn't want to know you because you don't exist; this isn't the Ireland that we've wanted to create</i></p>	<p>Wideshot:..... Fields/skies</p> <p>Close up:..... Turnidge</p>
<p>Voiceover/narrator: <i>At four pm on the 30th of June 1921 the episode unfolded that Coolacree House Co. Offaly. Few dispute the central facts of this event, but nearly a century on this one story continues to divide itself in to two...two sides... two sympathies... two truths.</i></p>	<p>Close up:Archive photo of house.</p> <p>CU:Ruins</p>
<p>Interview/ Senator E. Harris: <i>I think the fact that that took place in broad day light... It was carried out by thirty men, em, it was so traumatic for the community... that it has to go into denial.</i></p>	<p>CU:Harris</p> <p>CU :Heaney</p>
<p>Interview/Paddy Heaney (local Historian): <i>I heard it first hand from all the fellows who were involved. At the time there was a war of independence going on. There was information there that the Pearsons were active. They had to be dealt with.</i></p>	<p>Archive:..... British Auxilary raid</p> <p>Wideshots:..... Cornfields</p>
<p>V/O Narrator: <i>The story of the Pearson's begins over a century ago in Ballygeehan, Co. Laois. The family had farmed the land for three generations. In 1894 William Pearson and his wife Susan inherited a holding of over 200 acres. They and their seven children shared a farm house with the family of a cousin.</i></p>	<p>: Farm House</p> <p>: Landscape</p> <p>: Sheep</p> <p>CU:..... Vernon</p>
<p>V/O Vernon Pearson (Grandson Wm. Pearson): <i>There was a number of kids from both families. At</i></p>	

dinner time they used to go to where the best smell was, and that's where they all went for dinner.

Interview/Ruth Kelly (Granddaughter Wm/Susan Pearson): *Grandma had been busy with the children in the family all the time when, y' know, they were little. There were seven of them... She was a very caring person too. She was all right. There was nothing wrong with Nanna.*

Voiceover/Edna Black (Gr/daughter/Wm./Susan Pearson): *She was a quiet softly spoken lady, genteel, kindly... very... well, shy, in exposing herself to the world.*

VO/Ruth Kelly: *Grandpa ... I loved him... I thought he was gorgeous... ha, ha, ha. Always had time to stop and play with ye, y'know, sort of thing, and when ye lived in the country ye didn't have many people to play with.*

VO/Vernon Pearson: *My Grandfather would be fairly strict on them, not to the extent that he treated them roughly but they would not know a lot of bad vices there.*

VO/Ruth Kelly: *Grandma decided that each girl should learn something different. My mother, she used to do sowing and she used to play the piano too. She made all her own clothes and everything. Uncle Abraham, well, I know he played the melodeon. He was her favourite brother. She talked a lot about him y'know, Abe did this, Abe did that, y'know. They were very close.*

VO/Narrator: *The Pearsons stood out from their neighbours in one significant respect. They were members of a small Protestant sect known sometimes as Cooneyites after a leading preacher, Edward Cooney*

Interview/Dr. Raymond Gillespie (Dept. History Maynooth): *The most characteristic feature of this group is they didn't believe in any sort of church organisation as we would understand it. They had no form of churches. They had meetings in houses for bible study. There are some similarities with the Amishes. There are some ideas that underly both groups. They conserve simplicity, they try to live out the word of the bible as they read it.*

Archive Pictures:

.....Susan Pearson

(Sound track/.....Big House Choral Church music)

Family shots

Close up:Flowers

Close up:.... William Pearson

Close up:House ruins
Fields
Close up Vernon

Close up:..... Pearson family photos.

Close up:..... men pitching hay in fields.

church choral music

Close up:Ed Cooney and Cooneyites.

Close up:..... Gillespie

(Music: Big House Choral music continues)

Close up:... hands turn bible page

Close up:.... two men come over hill with scythe on shoulders (choral music).

Close up:Cooneyite groups (black/white photos)

Vo:ruth kelly:

The women...they don't wear makeup. They don't cut their hair, and they don't have wirelasses. They only do good, helping people. They didn't expect payment for what they did. It was the life they led, y'know.

Vo:Sen. E.Harris:

My father ran a small grocery wholesale business in the 1950's. And the Cooneyites used to come into him.

I/V..Sen E. Harris:

They were terribly quiet. Very, very gentle, decent people. They were pretty much withdrawn from the world as a whole. I would say they found the whole world outside confusing. They were really a husbandry people, y'know,...the land...quiet evenings spent in meditation...reflection. These were the kind of people they were.

******* COMMENT 2:**

A highly debatable view of early twentieth century Cooneyism is presented. A favourable and attractive picture of the human qualities of the Pearsons is presented. A balanced account, in which the guilt of the Pearsons was not ruled out, would require similar presentation of the people and community against whom the Pearsons set themselves when the political Troubles broke out. This balance is omitted.

Narrator...[VO].

In the coming years the Pearsons' lives were to change dramatically. In 1909 Wm. Pearson decided to sell Ballygeehan and buy land elsewhere, at a time of huge rural unrest.

Dr. Terence Dooley [Author:"The land for the people"]:

Land hunger was endemic in Irish rural society at this time. There were often Protestant farmers who owned substantially larger farms than their surrounding Catholic nationalist neighbours. The Revolutionary period was used essentially as a pretext to run many of these Protestant farmers and landlords out of the local community, for locals to take up their land.

Archive shots:.....

Groups of Cooneyites in old photos

Close Up:.....Sen. Harris...

CU's.... : Hands playing piano....women sitting,sowing,reading,
C.U,s....girl looks pensively out of window...piano plays reflectively ...

C.U.,s....men in field pitching hay on sunny day [mood music]

C.U,... woman at window watching men...

C.U...shots.. of big house Burnt out...

******* COMMENT:**

A highly debatable view of early twentieth century Cooneyism is presented visually. Likewise a favourable and attractive picture of the human qualities of the Pearsons is presented. A balanced account, in which the guilt of the Pearsons was not ruled out, would require similar presentation of the people and community against whom the Pearsons set their face, and against whom they committed crimes, when the political Troubles broke out. This balance is omitted.

[piano music]

Archive photos... of poor peasants.hats in hand...

shots... fields of hay

shots... of big house in ruins

[piano music]

archive:

footage...documents... names of estates and cost of same

******* COMMENT 3:**

No evidence is presented that any of this is true in regard to the area and community of Cadamstown. If there were any such evidence, e.g. in the form of newspaper or RIC reports, then it would have been presented in the programme. None was presented. So it is reasonable to conclude that there is no evidence.

Narrator...[Vo]:

To solve the growing crisis, Land Acts were introduced to break up large estates and divide them amongst local tenants.

******* COMMENT 4:**

The first Land Act was 1885, the last one was 1903. The subject of the programme belongs to a later period in which new issues, other than Land Tenure, came to the fore.

Dr. Terence Dooley...[VO]

It certainly was successful in terms of a revolutionary transfer of ownership of land from landlord to tenants. But the majority of these holdings could be termed uneconomic and unviable.

******* COMMENT 5:**

Before the Land Acts, most people scratched a living as insecure tenants. After the Land Acts they farmed the same holdings as secure owner-occupiers confident enough to make personal investments in a fledgling food-processing industry (creamery co-ops), and in the vast network of commerce and light industry which, in conjunction with the initiatives (semi-state etc) of the Irish government – first with Dominion/Free State status and later with Independence – laid down the basic economic warp and woof on which present-day Irish industry is founded. So the Land Acts enabled a vast economic and personal improvement which was perceived and experienced as such by those involved. Dooley is anachronistically projecting modern criteria onto the situation. Modern criteria projected back onto shopkeepers, labourers or history professors would produce similar anomalies. Would Dooley be prepared now to accept a salary which would not pay for a centrally heated house, a horseless carriage, foreign holidays and trips to history conferences?

[piano music].

Shots... of map of farm, #{339 acres}

[piano music]

C.U. ...name of Wm. Pearson on Irish Land commission document, purchase price of Coolacrease in 1911, £2000.

C.U...map of farms..

C.U. Dr. Dooley....

Narrator...[VO]:

In Co. Offaly, one estate of 4,000 acres was divided into almost 100 holdings. One farm at Coolcrease was substantially bigger, was bought by the sitting tenants, a Protestant family called the Benwells. Just two years after buying the land they sold up.

Dr. Dooley.[.Vo]:

Wm. Pearson purchased the farm at Coolcrease in 1911. So, he moves into an area, he takes up a 340 acre farm that is surrounded by a multitude of small uneconomic holdings, where the local people - and they tend to be Catholic and Nationalist farmers - are looking for access to this land themselves. There is the added tinge of sectarianism, ah, in the sense that Protestant land remains in Protestant hands.

******* COMMENT 6:**

No evidence is presented that Catholic, nationalist farmers sought access to this land, or whether they sought such access by illegal or improper means, or whether they viewed the matter in a sectarian way. Mere speculation.

Pr. Richard English..[author..”Irish Freedom”]

So in that sense it was seen as an alien incursion. It was small scale, it was only the family, but in the sense that they were seen as aliens, people that didn't genuinely belong, weren't genuinely integrated into the community, and indeed were taking land from the rightful possession of the community, as locals would have seen it.

******* COMMENT 7.**

More unsupported speculation. If there were evidence it would have been presented in the programme. The Pearsons came from the Aghaboe area, a mere twenty miles or so distant. A family called Drought lived in that area, and a well-respected, wealthy Protestant family called Drought lived near Cadamstown. The Pearsons were not alien, not strangers, and the programme went on to show that the Pearsons quickly integrated into the community. English does not present a shred of evidence that the locals saw the Pearsons as taking land from them. There is no such evidence.

[music interlude...3 secs...dramatic piano]

C.U..cornfields...red poppies

C.U...slow pan down from yellow confield to red poppies...

W.S...of same..

*****COMMENT:**

Here is the list of farms surrounding Pearsons: JJ Horan, 105 acres; Din Deegan; 80 acres; Brian Donnelly 330 acres; Tom Donnelly 80 acres; John and Mick McRedmond 140 acres; Joe Carroll 80 acres; Albert Jackson 900 acres. So the Pearsons' farm was surrounded by large farms, not "small, uneconomic holdings".

(This sweeping and unfounded speculation of Dooley is typical of the programme. In the Tubridy Show Oct 23, Niamh Sammon made the same false statement.) Tom Horan farmed 27 acres in Deerpark and in addition had 4 acres which adjoined Pearsons – the ONLY adjoining small farm.*

C. U...Pr. English..

[dramatic trill of piano music...]

Paddy Heaney...[I/V]

They were very good neighbours in the beginning, and old Mr. Pearson was himself very helpful when local farmers were in trouble, or that, and actually the family went to the local school here in Cadamstown.

Vernon philips....grandson....[Vo..]

My father, - he would have gone to a Catholic school and the whole family would have mixed in a Catholic school.

J.J. Dillon..[son of Offaly IRA man,1919/21]...[I/V]

One time one of them actually played hurling with the local club. They were part of the community.

Jenny**Turnidge...[granddaughter...Pearsons]...[I/V]**

.Knowing them having a lot of brothers and sisters..quite a lot of young people and boys there....I can imagine them having a lot of friends into the house and it being a social house really.

Paddy Byrne..{Cadamstown resident}...

They were good neighbours. My grandfather said they were great neighbours. According to what I heard they would do anything for ye.

Vernon Pearson...[VO]..

I think they had life very easy, those kids, I really do. And if you don't want to do anything then I don't think you can think anything is going to happen to you. It's just natural, isn't it?

******* COMMENT 8:**

The above sequence is intended to demonstrate what decent, neighbourly people the Pearsons were (and would appear to be perfectly valid until, for political reasons, the Pearsons set their face against the democracy), thus setting the stage for the awfulness of the alleged crime against them. But these acknowledged facts of good neighbourliness are not intended to counter and contradict the earlier, unfounded speculation of Dooley and English about sectarian land envy and hostility against an alien intrusion. The exchange above is about the merits of the Pearsons. In fact it cuts both ways, though the programme is blind to the fact. The exchange refutes Dooley and English, demonstrating that the community was open and welcoming towards the Pearsons.

C.U..Paddy Heaney**archive footage:..photos..**

...children with horse and hay bogey...hay being drawn in..

CU...photo...Pearson family...sons..

[mood music]

CU...Dillon..**staged footage....lads**

playing hurling as per "Wind that shakes the Barley", in 1920's costume...

[mood music]

CU..... Turnidge

Shots ...lads playing hurley...

[mood music]

CU... Paddy Byrne

Shots.....lads play hurling...

CU: Vernon

[piano music]

Narrator...{VO}...

But the atmosphere was changing. By 1919 Ireland was heading for a bloody break from Britain. Like most Protestant families, the Pearsons were strongly loyal to the Crown. As Cooneyites, they stayed out of politics.

******* COMMENT 9:**

The second sentence in this does not acknowledge that Ireland elected an independent government, to which Britain responded by imposing military government and war. The third sentence contradicts the argument made by Dr. Murphy (page 37) that William Pearson was lying when he said he was a staunch loyalist. The fourth sentence prejudices the very issue on which the whole programme hinges – whether the Pearsons involved themselves as combatants in the war.

Pr. Richard English...[Vo]..

There was a shift as Ireland moved into the Revolutionary period, where neighbours who had gotten on, or integrated across religious or political boundaries before the troubles found it more difficult to do so against the background of the violence from 1919, 1920 onwards.

Paddy Heaney...{VO}...

There was a local battallion formed in Cadamstown, part of the Offaly Brigade, and I think about 22 or 23 local fellows joined the local company. I think at that particular time then, the Pearsons began to withdraw from the local people. They began to resent I think the fellows and girls they went to school with. When they'd meet them on the road they wouldn't speak to them.

Paddy Dermody..[I/V]..[son of Commandant of Cumann Na mBan]...

Me mother told me they treated locals with contempt. On a summers evening they'd walk down to the

CU...more hurling shots...

...**CU**....hurling shots..with piano music ...

Archive shots....War of Independence.....Irish Volunteers march....Union Jack...auxies...

CU.....Pr. English

...**[piano music]** shotsof war of independence...

Archive photos....IRA men in Cadamstown

WS....two men, one with scythe on shoulder, walking peacefully along country road...

******* COMMENT 10:**

The peaceful Pearsons are contrasted visually, and prejudicially, with the militaristic locals.

CU...Dermody

Shots... of two men on

<p><i>village. The whole family, they'd link arms, and any locals that were on the road, if they wanted to pass, they'd have to get up onto the ditch.</i></p> <p>Philip McConway..[local IRA historian..1919/1922].. <i>Richard Pearson, in particular, was particularly aggressive towards local volunteers who he viewed with contempt.</i></p> <p>J .J. Dillon..[VO].... <i>A cousin who was in school, used to tell me about it, Pearson stamping on his feet and saying, y'know, the IRA are a lot of ruffians, good for nothing.</i></p> <p>Jenny Turnidge...[VO]... <i>I believe that there's a lot of stories going around to make people feel better about their part in the actions. They really want to have another reason to make themselves feel better .They don't want to face the truth of the past.</i></p> <p>***** COMMENT 11: Opportunity for rebuttal given to a Pearson protagonist. No reciprocal opportunity given.</p> <p>Narrator...{VO}.. <i>But there may have been another reason for the rift between the P earsons and their neighbours. During the 1st WW , Wm. Pearson had supported a Gov. tillage order to grow more crops. He also decided to rent more land to help the War effort.</i></p> <p>Dr Dooley...[author]...[VO].. <i>Some years later Pearson claimed that his troubles began with the rise of Sinn Fein, and the compulsory tillage order. And when he took that field he said "the local Sinn Fein people were enraged at this and said I had done it to help the British Government. They accordingly, when the corn was ripe, trampled the entire down." They were resentful of the fact that he was taking land that they felt they should have access to themselves.</i></p> <p>***** COMMENT 12: The quote is from William Pearson's 1927 application for compensation from the British Government's Irish Grants Committee. This application is riddled with lies (500 raiders attacked his house, his daughter was shot, he was prevented from selling his land on the open</p>	<p>road with scythe... CU.....feet on road...</p> <p>Mood music..</p> <p>CU...P. McConway...</p> <p>WS...two men on road with scythe...</p> <p>...[mood music...]</p> <p>WSmen on road...</p> <p>CU.....Turnidge</p> <p>WS....cornfield... CU.....yellow corn</p> <p>[No music]....</p> <p>WS...fields of corn....no music...</p> <p>CU...Dooley</p> <p>WS...Pearson House...</p>
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market (in fact he held an auction and according to the local papers (August 1922) he refused all bids), his land (bought for £2000 in 1911) was worth £10000), and many more such lies. No uncritical credence can be given to anything in this application.

***** COMMENT 13:

There is no comment, criticism, questioning or rebuttal to this highly dubious statement by Dooley about the corn field. He provides no evidence for the final sentence of his statement.

[Pause for mood music interlude]

Narrator...[VO]...*But in 1919 the Pearsons thought they had little to fear from their rebel neighbours. Offaly at the time was heavily garrisoned with troops stationed in Birr and Tullamore. Meanwhile, the local IRA was regarded by Chief of Staff, Richard Mulcahy, as one of the least competent brigade in the country*

***** COMMENT 14:

The word “rebel” is prejudicial. The opposing view of the Pearsons is that they were rebels against the democratically elected government.

Dr. Will Murphy, Dept. of Irish Studies, Mater Dei Institute of Education,...[VO]..

The War Of Independence In Co. offaly was a pretty quiet affair..

Pr. R. English...[i/v].

It tended to be a low level activity. It was road blocking, marching, drilling.

Dr W. Murphy...[I/V]...*One of the IRA's boasts to headquarters was that in Offaly they had spread glass on the road to puncture the bicycles of R.I.C patrols.*

J.J. Dillon [VO]..

They'd hoist the flag In Cadamstown. The British would be out and they'd have to take it down.

Dr. W. Murphy ...{I/V}..

There had been attempts to derail a train which had failed miserably and G.H.Q would be very angry about

The cornfield:

This field was rented by the Pearsons from the Droughts. The Droughts and other local Protestant landowners appear to have been on excellent terms with the local community as a whole, and if they had land to let, would undoubtedly have made it available to anyone who was interested. And the idea that there were people around who objected on principle to cashing in on the money to be made from the Great War is laughable.

In the heavy, wet soil of this part of Offaly, ripe corn crops tend to "lodge" - that is, flatten to the ground because of wind or rain.

[vocal choral music..]

... Various shots

of ...Birr/Tullamore...

...zoom in on archive letter from Richard Mulcahy re. Local IRA...

B & W archive ...IRA men on horse and cart....men cutting down tree...

CU....English...

Cu.... Murphy...

CU Dillon

Cu..flag being raised...letter...

Cu...Murphy

*****COMMENT:

The remarks in this sequence are about the volunteer defence forces of the democracy,

<p><i>the incident.</i></p> <p>J.J. Dillon...[VO]... <i>A raggle taggle group of peasants, thinking they're soldiers, that they're going to take on an Empire, an Empire that was just after winning a war.</i></p> <p>*****COMMENT: JJ Dillon expressed pacifism throughout the programme, but this stance was directed editorially, in a derogatory, one-sided way, against the forces which defended the democracy against the imperial aggression.</p> <p>Narrator..[vo]... <i>By 1920 however, this picture was about to change dramatically. The War of Independence stepped into a higher gear, and IRA suspects and their families began to come under more pressure from the authorities.</i></p> <p>Paddy Heaney...[vo].. <i>They got it so hard during that period. A lot of them suffered. Their houses were raided. People were on the run. They were in jail. They were harassed.</i></p> <p>Murphy...[vo] <i>Once escalation happened, the IRA look around their area, who's selling them out, who's shopping them. And they eventually reach out for local targets, often typically, Protestants. There were a number of incidents that suggested to the IRA that that the Pearsons may not only be quietly Loyalists , but may be active in their support for the British.</i></p> <p>***** COMMENT 15: This implies that informers were typically Protestant and/or that Protestants were typically the targets of IRA punishment for informing. No proof or evidence is provided for this, and it is not actually true. Here Murphy accepts that the Pearsons were loyalist. Later in the programme he presented an argument that William Pearson was lying when he declared himself a loyalist in his Grants Committee application</p> <p>Sen.Eoghan Harris...[i/v].. <i>To understand it, you have to cast your mind back. It's the summer of 1921. It was a halcyon summer. It was a golden summer.</i></p> <p>Ruth Kelly...[granddaughter ...Pearsons..].. <i>She was beautiful. She was a very strong woman,</i></p>	<p>expressing criticism of their military effectiveness, but from a standpoint of opposition to their political objectives (or, at best, critical neutrality).</p> <p>Cu..Cadamstown IRA...looking shifty.. CU...Dillon...</p> <p>CU...British Auxies in Ireland....</p> <p>WS...IRA prisoners being rounded up</p> <p>Ws...more prisoners ..</p> <p>Ws..civilians being searched</p> <p>CU...Murphy</p> <p>CU..Harris</p> <p>Ws ..Cornfields... [piano mood music]...</p> <p>CU Ruth</p>
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y'know. If she wanted to do something, she did it.

******* COMMENT 16:**

The stage is being set here for proposing various hard-to-prove reasons – some of them complete red herrings – for the execution of the Pearsons, reasons deliberately set up for facile debunking in the programme. While the actual and real reason for the executions (the attack on the roadblock) is downgraded to one of numerous bogus allegations.

Narrator....[vo]..

By the early summer of 1921 the actions of the Pearson family were beginning to be interpreted in two very different ways. For some, allegations of a relationship between the Pearsons eldest daughter, Tilly, and an officer of the Crown were evidence of treason.

******* COMMENT 17:**

None of the contributors on the other side of the argument made any such allegations. The allegation has the appearance of being inserted editorially, perhaps to give Eoghan Harris the opportunity to indulge in righteous indignation (below) about an issue that neither the Pearson relatives nor the locals appear to have actually raised. The wording of Ruth Kelly's comment (below) indicates, not that she raised this issue herself, but that she was responding to some suggestion, put to her by an interviewer, which she had never heard of before. The editorial "For some" is misdirection. None of the contributors on the other side of the argument made any such allegations. For the allegation to have any meaning or force, it would have to come from the Pearsons' accusers, not their defenders. This is a red herring.

P.Heaney,,[local historian]....[vo]..

Local people were aware at all times that the military were visiting the house, and the local police from Birr used to come out there. The IRA had their own intelligence there. And they had people watching the house.

******* COMMENT 18:**

This is a completely different issue, a very valid one in a war context, and nothing to do with Matilda Pearson's courtship.

Sen. Harris....[i/v]...

The Pearson girls were supposed to be going out with British soldiers, or went out with British soldiers. What

CU..actress...as Tilly Pearson...[lots of mood music]...walks out with British soldier...

CU....."Tilly" and soldier walk along road....

CU....Heaney...

"Tilly" and Soldier

CU.....Harris...

<p><i>else would they do...!...?...Would they make dancing partners for local IRA officers d'ye think..!!...D'ye think the local IRA wanted to dance with the Cooneyites out there..!!...I doubt very much that the Cooneyite girls went out with British soldiers. But if they did, so what!</i></p> <p>***** COMMENT 19: Harris seems to be challenging and debunking Paddy Heaney's reasonable statement – note that no reciprocal challenge to Harris is permitted! Harris's self-indulgent rant is on a completely different topic to the one raised by Heaney.</p> <p>Narrator...{vo}... <i>At this time Tilly Pearson may in fact have been seeing her future husband.</i></p> <p>Ruth Kelly...[vo] <i>My father was born in Offaly and he joined the R.I.C, and he served in Belfast. They knew each other quite a while. It's possible that Mum would have been in contact with Dad at that time. They were courting, so it wouldn't have been anything untoward. It would have been just dad chasing mum.</i></p> <p>***** COMMENT 20: Further irrelevant misdirection against Paddy Heaney's argument – except that Paddy Heaney argued something quite different which is NOT refuted.</p> <p>Narrator...[vo].. <i>There were other incidents, however, cited as evidence that the Pearsons were enemy collaborators at a time of war.</i></p> <p>Alan Stanley...[son of William stanley..]...[vo] <i>My father said a British army officer came pushing a motorcycle in the avenue, one day, and asked if they had petrol. He'd run out of petrol and the Pearsons said, certainly, yes, we have some. And they filled up his tank and off he went.</i></p> <p>***** COMMENT 21: More irrelevancies. This incident was never “cited” (see preceding comment by Narrator) by anybody except Alan Stanley. He gives it in his book, and I've never seen or heard it anywhere else. It was certainly not put forward by anybody else in the programme.</p>	<p>Archive...B&W photo of Tilly Pearson</p> <p>[piano music]...</p> <p>CUR.I.C. man..</p> <p>Shots of Ruth Kelly's parents...archive...</p> <p>Cu...Ruth Kelly..</p> <p>Cu... house...</p> <p>WS....cows cross avenue..</p> <p>CUStanley...fields/avenue</p>
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Pr. Richard English...[vo]..

Looked at from the IRA's point of view, a family that was outside their own community, that had taken land that the IRA's community would have seen as rightfully their's, that was fraternising with what they would have seen as the enemy. All of that would have been added together and seen as the Pearsons not only being outside the community, but as potentially targets that were legitimate.

******* COMMENT 22:**

English is just repeating the same bogus, unfounded points he made earlier (see COMMENT 7, page 7).

Narrator...[vo]...

But it was the presence of William Stanley at Coolcrease House that would raise the temperature even further. Stanley, a relative of the Pearsons, was living there under the alias Jimmy Bradley, after running into trouble with The IRA in his homeplace in Co.Laois.

Alan Stanley..[vo]...

The problem arose when one of the Protestant ladies of the parish invited people from the Church back for Sunday lunch. Now these were Police people. Not quite the Black and Tans. They were officer material. The problem was my father, and the other young lads, were seen to be fraternising with the enemy. When the local IRA people became aware they sent him a note and they were ordered out and that's how he came to go to the Pearsons.

******* COMMENT 23:**

In other words, some rather posh British officers encountered in church were making polite conversation with Alan's father, and the Co. Laois IRA didn't like it and expelled him. But the "officer material/police people" whose full and proper title he is struggling with were Auxies. And in his book, Alan Stanley says:

"Frank Stanley [Alan's father's cousin] said that my father used to keep company with a number of young men of the area [Luggacurran, Co. Laois, scene of mass evictions, attempted ethnic cleansing and plantation by Lord Lansdowne in 1887]. Like him, they were all sons of "planters" [Protestants from the local area and it seems also from Ulster (where William Pearson spent six months

WS....fields of corn...poppies....

CU....English...

CU.... of three lads [actors]...pitching hay on a summers day...as...Wm. Stanley.....Richard and Abraham Pearson.....

[piano music]

CU... archive .Wm. Stanley

WS.....haymaking..

CU.....Wm. Stanley...making hay

after the executions, according to his son) and Scotland] brought in to replace evicted Catholic tenants]. ... All were in possession of a pistol of one kind or other. ... At Sunday Matins [the mother of the leader of this armed group] espied two handsome young Englishmen, auxiliary Police Cadets, and invited them home for lunch. ... it seems there was more than a social element to their visits ... Frank's sister, who later married [the leader of this armed group] told me she overheard plans to "lift" a young man of the area who was an active IRA member [... and] went to warn [him]. ... If the local brigade (IRA) had tolerated "playing at soldiers", "fraternizing with the enemy" was a different matter altogether, one that in many cases exacted the extreme penalty. It was not long until this "pack of whelps", as Frank described them, got notice to leave. ... Frank believed it was the decency of the Luggacurran people that enabled them to get off so lightly."

In other words, the death penalty could have been expected for the loyalist paramilitary plot that never actually got off the ground in Luggacurran. But in Coolacree, a loyalist armed attack against the democracy was successfully accomplished, a much more serious matter than the Luggacurran affair which resulted in the Stanley family selling up and leaving the country in 1921.

Paddy Heaney..[vo]..

I wouldn't class him as a spy, but he was there to glean information, I suppose, at the houses and the house dances that he went to, the people that he me and} knew in his rambles in the area.

CU...Heaney...

Narrator...[vo]..

New information has recently come to light. It suggests that another incident convinced some in the community that the Pearsons were spies.

CU ...photo of ..Cecil Pearson...

Cyril Pearson...[relative of Pearsons]..

Cecil Pearson, who was around at the time, was related to the Pearsons of Coolacree. He told me that at that time it was common for farmers, if cattle had strayed onto their land, to report it to the police, who acted as a clearing house. On the day in question the Pearson family had found that some cattle had strayed

Ws...cattle straying across avenue

Ws..... of bridge in town..

onto the land and Dick Pearson went into the local town to report this fact. Unknown to them the local IRA had intended to blow up a bridge as an ambush for Black and Tans. But they didn't arrive, and Dick Pearson in particular was blamed, and his family was blamed by association, for passing information that he may have got.

******* COMMENT 24:**

This is complete baloney. Think of it. A neighbour's cattle break through a fence into pasture, meadow or crop. A routine occurrence in the countryside, especially before wire fencing became common. The practical, obvious and realistic response is to call across the way to your neighbour, to sort out a commonplace emergency in rapid and friendly and co-operative fashion; to save the crop, repair the fence and prevent injury to the animals. But suppose instead that you are prepared to waste precious hours cycling the ten miles back and forth to Kinnitty to report it to the RIC! There was no telephone network at the time. Are we supposed to believe that the RIC, a military police force at war with the democracy, are going to cycle round the countryside in 1921 chasing cows? If it happened, this was an act of open antagonism to the whole neighbourhood. It was the action of a troublemaker seeking to provoke hostility – or worse, somebody who was in close cahoots with the RIC for some more serious purpose than straying cattle. Fences routinely weakened and break, and animals stray. But running to the RIC was not innocent routine. This story is damaging to the Pearsons, not helpful to them.

Narrator....[vo]...

In the aftermath of the incident it seemed any rumour about the Pearsons was readily believed. There was even speculation that they were running an underground militia from their home.

******* COMMENT 25:**

Comment 23 shows that the Narrator has no grounds for the first sentence. It is empty rhetoric. The second sentence mentions “underground militia”, implying this is paranoid fantasy. But Alan Stanley's own account of his father's loyalist activities in Luggacurran (across the adjoining county boundary in Laois) cannot be dismissed as fantasy.

Archiveshots of auxies

Ws...of men striding purposefully through woods with guns...

[spacey mood music]

<p>Paddy Heaney...[vo].. <i>I do believe that the Pearsons were spies. Everything added up, that the Pearsons were involved in an underground movement. And people knew that.</i></p> <p>***** COMMENT 26: The previous statement by the Narrator has already planted the idea that what Paddy Heaney is saying here is paranoid fantasy. So it is rebutted editorially before it is even spoken (- “pre-buttal”).</p> <p>Philip McConway...[vo].. <i>According to local speculation British Army soldiers worked undercover as farm labourers and during night the Pearsons would help pinpoint where the IRA volunteers lived.</i></p> <p>***** COMMENT 27: The Narrator has already planted the idea editorially that none of this could conceivably be true – “pre-buttal”.</p> <p>Narrator....[vo]... <i>At a time of war local speculations could have serious consequences. In other parts of the country, notably Cork, alleged informers were shot without much hard evidence. But did the local IRA have more on the Pearsons?</i></p> <p>***** COMMENT 28: The narrator chips in with a reference to Cork, a murky situation where lists of Protestant informers were found in an RIC station when the RIC were stood down. Similar lists were found in other vacated RIC stations, indicating there may have been a “dirty tricks” operation. In Co. Cork there is debate about who actually carried out these shootings, and it is possible that the “dirty tricks” operation actually extended to carrying out the shootings themselves. The only thing that is certain about the County Cork case is that nothing is as it seems, certainly not the trite and bogus theory of sectarian murder proposed by historian Peter Hart whose ideas are supported by Alan Stanley and Eoghan Harris, and parroted here by the Narrator. Hart was disgraced when a “witness” he said he’d interviewed was found to be dead at the time!</p>	<p>CU...lad walks in wood in a hurry...</p> <p>CU McConway [mood music]</p> <p>various CU’s conspiratorial lads around a table looking tense....dragging on fags...meaningfully..</p> <p>CU’s..... ...more of same....</p> <p>***** COMMENT: The visual prompts show the Pearsons going about their farming work peacefully and innocently, while ominous, militaristic stuff is afoot all around them.</p>
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Pr. Rich. English....[vo]..

I've seen no evidence that would persuade me that the Pearsons were running an underground militia from the farm, or passing on information about the local IRA. I think it's a convenient claim, because if you can present them as being effectively a militia force, then taking violent action against the Pearson brothers would seem to be more an act of legitimate war between combatant groups.

******* COMMENT 29:**

The final part of this sequence has Peter English rebutting Heaney and McConway, using the by-now-discredited words “underground militia”, so he may either have been shown their statements or had the statements relayed to him for more focused contradiction. This is followed (below) by further statements of Heaney and McConway, which show no evidence of them knowing how English responded. Superficially they seem to have the last word. But in such a way that their argument is weakened even further by the editorial methods of the documentary.

Paddy Heaney [vo]

The Pearsons weren't innocent and the research I carried out, talking to a lot of those fellows, who were involved in that period - they were spies and informers. That's my opinion. I documented it in my local history . I stand over it.

Philip McConway...[vo]...

A British army deserter, who used to drive staff officers to Coolacree - he deserted to join the IRA - he said the Pearsons had very close contacts with British army soldiers at the time and they were passing on information. There is no documentary information to support that but it is a reasonable conclusion to make.

Alan Stanley...[vo]...

It's very easy to create an enemy. You just find a way of antagonising him and then you have an enemy.

******* COMMENT 30:**

Last word given to the Pearson side again.

CU's....

...even more
conspiring...heavy
smoking....

Cu....English

**CU.....archive....Pearson
Bros**

CU.....Heaney

**CU.....archive
British soldiers**

CU McConway

[blast of music]

CU.....fields

J.J. Dillon...[vo]...

Well, it probably started over a pathway to Cadamstown. People used to call it the mass path.

Narrator...[vo]..

The path was strategically important to the IRA. Crossing the Pearsons' land, it was being used by IRA men moving between hideouts in the mountains and their targets in the villages below. In the Spring of 1921 it would become the flashpoint for all the bitter divisions over land and religion.

******* COMMENT 32:**

The first sentence of the Narrator is complete invention. As is the second sentence. The "bitter divisions" of the third sentence were about politics, not land and religion, and the programme did not produce the slightest shred of evidence to the contrary. It simply depended on persuading the audience of this nonsense by repeated assertion and nothing else.

J.J. Dillon...[vo]...

The Pearsons didn't want people who they thought were IRA people using this pathway. Me father onetime was coming down the pathway and he met Dick Pearson. He told him they had no right to cross their land. They had a heated discussion. It was always said he was carrying a gun that day 'cos he expected confrontation, I think, and he simply wasn't prepared to back off.

Narrator..[vo]..

But the story that spread in the community cast the Pearsons in a strongly sectarian light.

WS.....mass path

[piano music]

WS.....man walks over mountain.....watched by Dick Pearson

******* COMMENT 31:**

The scene is open, desolate country bearing absolutely no resemblance to the actual mass-path which is sheltered and runs through a narrow tree-growing strip of ground.

CU,S.....actors...enact the incident on mountain

***** COMMENT 33:

The evidence, reinforced by the early history of Cooneyism, shows that the Pearsons actually were strongly sectarian at this time.

Philip McConway.....[vo]..

They prevented local Catholics from accessing a traditional mass path in the area when people were coming home from mass. The Pearson brothers would ride horses to disperse Catholics from the road, in what was tantamount to religious bigotry on the Pearsons' part.

CU.....McConway

Alan Stanley

I find that unbelievable. That wasn't their way. Their Christian way was not to stop anyone going to church. There was something else going on}

CU Stanley

***** COMMENT 34:

Rebuttal again awarded editorially to the Pearson side.

The wording shows that Stanley has either heard/seen the McConway statement, and is allowed to deny it. There is no indication that any such advantage was given to the other side at any point in the programme. Re the substantive point, early twentieth century Cooneyites were notorious for unseemly sectarian squabbling.

Narrator...[vo]..

Another time the conflict over the mass path might have died away. But in April 1921 the subject of Offaly was on the agenda of the IRA GHQ.

WS.....yellow
cornfields...black crow flies
past...gurgling stream
CU.....IRA document....

Murphy, Mater Dei..[vo]..

The IRA are under extraordinary pressure in Offaly. They are regularly being arrested. Their own community is under pressure and GHQ has finally decided the Offaly IRA didn't know how to run their own affairs and they needed to be shaken up.

CU Murphy

CU.....IRA document

***** COMMENT:

"Their own community"? Does he mean religious community? Or political community? Are we supposed to assume the two are the same? Does he think the audience is a bunch of simple-minded fools?

<p>Pr. Rich English...[vo]... <i>What often happened when an area was seen to be inactive was that an organizer would be sent to chivy them along, to organise them and get them into higher gear if you like, and an organizer was sent in Spring of 1921 to Offaly</i></p> <p>Murphy ...[vo] <i>Tom Burke was a trusted organizer, well known in GHQ. Upon his arrival you can see a significant change in Offaly.</i></p> <p>***** COMMENT: Yes, the Dublin organizer arrives and we get the Kinnitty ambush and the execution of the Pearsons. So where does this leave the local land hunger and sectarian hostility theory?</p> <p>Pr. Rich. English...[vo]... <i>It's been claimed that the rise of IRA activity in Offaly before the Treaty reflects the desire to settle some scores, and to do some ... housecleaning, if you like.</i></p> <p>***** COMMENT 35: Or could it simply be exactly as it says on the tin – that there was a war on, and every effort had to be made to resist the occupying terror forces and their collaborators? English uses highly prejudicial language, without challenge, without balance.</p> <p>Murphy ...[vo]... <i>There was a considerable number of shootings of spies in Offaly between May/July 1921. On 17th May, the Offaly IRA pulled off one of its biggest coups. It was the Kinnitty ambush. They succeeded in killing two RIC men in Kinnitty. The Kinnitty action was extremely significant. It provoked a reaction from the British Army. There were reprisals, widespread arrests, escalation of violence.</i></p> <p>Pr. Rich. English...[vo].. <i>....So those who were seen as closer to the British forces would have been at greater risk at this point in summer 1921.</i></p>	<p>CU.....Richard Mulcahy inspecting IRA troops in field</p> <p>CU.....IRA organizer..... <u>TOM BURKE</u></p> <p>CU.....IRA documents</p> <p>[burst of choral music]</p> <p>WS....various.....SLIEVE BLOOM</p> <p>CU.....typing...</p> <p>CU.....RIC man outside barracks CU...photo of Pearsons.... Police, document being typed</p> <p>CU English</p>
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<p>***** COMMENT 36: As were those who were actually in collaboration with the imperial terror.</p> <p>Narrator...[vo]... <i>There were deadly whispers in the wind. At this point an event occurred which sealed the fate of the Pearsons.</i></p> <p>***** COMMENT 37: The wording is prejudicial. To balance this, there would need to be some statement that what happened to the Pearsons was the result of actions they carried out entirely on their own initiative.</p> <p>Murphy ...[i/v].. <i>One night in June 1921, the local IRA embarked on an activity that was typical of that period, blocking roads.</i></p> <p>Paddy Heaney...[vo]... <i>They chose a tree on Pearsons land. Seven or eight of them went out there at 11.30 pm and they began to cut down the tree.</i></p> <p>Michael Donnelly...[vo].. <i>My uncle Tom Donnelly and another man were providing armed cover. Both of them were armed.</i></p> <p>Alan Stanley...[vo].. <i>Old Wm. Pearson was away at the time, so Richard was left in charge. And when he sees these men cutting the trees without a by-your-leave, my father told me he confronted the tree-fellers. He said: "Aren't ye the brave lads with all your guns", and fired over their heads.</i></p> <p>*****COMMENT: This is the crux of the whole Coolcrease story. To understand it, the location and topography must be grasped. The Pearsons' house stands about a hundred metres off the Birr-Tullamore road. In 1921 it was surrounded by trees. The location of the roadblock was several hundred metres back along the road in the direction of Birr, about half-way between the Pearsons house and the village of Cadamstown. A single tree on the roadside was being cut down to make a roadblock, as part of county-wide manoeuvres in support of a proposed ambush of Crown forces near Birr. The purpose of the Cadamstown roadblock was to hinder the movement of Crown forces from Tullamore to Birr.</p>	<p>CUbig ominous night sky.....</p> <p>[blast of gothic choral music]</p> <p>CU.....Murphy</p> <p>CU,S.....lads in woods with guns</p> <p>[dramatic music]</p> <p>CU,S.....men in woods</p> <p>CUStanley</p> <p>CU,S....men shouting at each other</p> <p>Dick Pearson: "Who goes there?" IRA man: "Mind your own business, Pearson." D.P.: "You have no right to be on this land." D.P. points gun upwards. Gun fired upwards into the air.</p>
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The tree was at the point on the roadside where the Pearsons' land adjoined the farm of JJ Horan, an IRA member who had been arrested and jailed the day following the confrontation with the Pearsons over the mass path. It was not "the Pearsons' tree". It was a considerable distance from their house. Retired RIC man Bert Hogg visited the Pearsons regularly, and on that particular evening was arrested by the roadblock party as he made his way home towards Lackamore on the far side of Cadamstown. (As a loyalist, he could not be relied on.) The noise of sawing and chopping would have been audible at the Pearson house across the fields. There was no prior confrontation or conversation with Richard Pearson. About ten minutes after the arrest of Hogg, the Pearsons arrived at the roadblock, walking along the public road. Mick Heaney was on sentry duty on that side of the roadblock. When he challenged them they shot him in the stomach and neck. Tom Donnelly was on sentry duty on the Cadamstown side of the roadblock, and he ran towards Mick Heaney and fired at the Pearsons. They fired again and wounded Donnelly in the head, and Hogg in the leg and back as he tried to run away towards Cadamstown. According to the RIC report, the Pearsons thought they had killed one of the IRA men.

Pr. Rich. English....[vo]

The Pearsons are merely doing what any law abiding citizen should do and legally they are within their rights to defend their land and as they would see it, to protect it against terrorist activity.

******* COMMENT 38:**

The British and loyalist interpretation of the context is provided here. Nowhere in this sequence is the Irish view given of a citizen volunteer defence force bravely risking their lives against terrible odds on behalf of the legitimate, democratically elected government.

MICHAEL Donnelly...[vo]

*My uncle **Tom Donnelly** returned fire. He wounded one of the Pearsons, but he was also wounded himself.*

Paddy Heaney...[vo]

Mick Heaney, on the first blast of the shotgun, - the lead embedded in the scarf around his neck and he was shot also in the stomach.

******* COMMENT 39:**

The reconstruction affirms Alan Stanley's father's version of the (Amish-like!) Pearsons firing into the air. So maybe Mick Heaney just had a bad fall off his bicycle!

CU,S.....scene in woods acted out.
Shotgun fired horizontally.
CU.....Donnelly

CU Man firing gun horizontally

CU.....Heaney

CU.....Harris

Sen. Eoghan Harris....[l/v]

I dunno if they hit anybody or not. Paddy Heaney says they did. I dunno. When Paddy Heaney tells me things like that I want documentary corroboration in evidence.

******* COMMENT 40:**

Is it possible that a whole community without exception could conform to a lie, that Mick Heaney could simulate his crippled condition for five years, and that he could conveniently die young just to give the appearance of truth to this invention? And that this lie could be upheld for generations?

Paddy Heaney...[vo]

Those men who were there that night, and I spoke to most of them, they all maintain that the Pearsons deliberately shot at Mick Heaney and Tom Donnelly that night.

Narrator...[vo]

Sometime later the local police inspector did report the allegation that the Pearson had shot and wounded two local IRA men. However, there was no official investigation into what actually happened that night. Both sides do agree that there were no fatalities. But the incident would be used to justify what was to come.

******* COMMENT 41:**

The “local police inspector” was the County Inspector of Queen’s County RIC. The British Court of Inquiry papers include: “It is said by the C.I. Queens County that the two Pearson boys a few days previously had seen two men felling a tree on their land adjoining the road. Had told the men concerned to go away, and when they refused had fetched two guns and fired and wounded two Sinn Feiners, one of whom it is believed died.” The wording is of a fact, not an allegation. The Irish military conducted an official investigation. The RIC had the Pearsons in their custody and could interrogate them at their convenience. A retired RIC officer was shot (by the Pearsons) at the roadblock. In the circumstances of war the incident was ample justification for what was to come.

CU.....woods scene
Pearson aiming shotgun horizontally. Gun fired horizontally (shooter not shown).

CU.....woods scene

CU...Portion of page of contemporary document shown, the words “Revenge by I.R.A.” visible. The document is not identified, but it is the from the papers related to the British Military Courts of Enquiry in Lieu of Inquests.

Murphy..[vo]

It allowed the local IRA to express the fears they had about the Pearsons. It justified their paranoia. It justified their social resentment at their landholding. And now they had a reason.

******* COMMENT 42:**

This rhetoric re-states the earlier, unfounded speculation about land envy. It is entirely on one side of the argument, and is not balanced by any rebuttal or relevant balancing contribution. It trivializes the military challenge that the Pearsons presented to the legitimate, elected government.

Paddy Heaney...[i/v]

T'was coming to them. The writing was on the wall for the Pearsons. if they would keep their heads down and kept with the local people they'd still be there today.

******* COMMENT 43:**

Paddy Heaney is given the appearance of having the last word, but the words are in no way a rebuttal or debunking of the previous rhetoric – a rebuttal which would have been very easy for him to do if the programme had been inclined to give him any such opportunity.

End of part one

CU.....Group of young peasant men sit around table in cottage.....conspiring...

CU....Heaney

[blast of music]

<u>THE KILLINGS AT COOLACREASE</u>	[Picture / soundtrack]
<u>PART TWO</u>	
[<u>Interview/voice over</u>]	
<p>Alan Stanley... (VO) <i>Its very hard not to wonder if somebody who knew that truce was imminent did not decide, "Well look lads, there's some nice pickings here, lets go for it." I know its very dangerous to say that... but the land... of course... the land... of Ireland for the people of Ireland.</i></p>	<p>CU.....men sitting around Tableconspiring</p> <p>CU....faces looking tense CU....Stanley</p>
<p>JJ Dillon... (VO) <i>In conflict those things occur. Like hatred comes into it, revenge comes into it.</i></p>	<p>CUmen around table</p>
<p>***** COMMENT 44: JJ Dillon's pacifist, anti-war words could relate to any side in any war. In no way are they balance or rebuttal to the very specific speculative allegations just made by Stanley.</p>	
<p>Narrator... (VO) <i>Days after the shoot out on the Pearsons land the local IRA met to decide the fate of the Pearson family. For IRA commander Tom Burke, there was now no going back, no second chances.</i></p>	<p>[eerie music]</p> <p><u>CU</u>mountains</p>
<p>Actors Voice...(statement of Tom Burke): <i>" C Company the Third Battalion reported to me on the twenty sixth of June 1921. That some of their men had been fired on a few nights previously, whilst engaged in a road blockade operation, by three men armed with shot guns. As a result, one of their men was somewhat seriously injured".</i></p>	<p><u>CU</u>.....hand stubs out cigarette</p> <p><u>CU</u>....men around table</p>
<p>Ph. Mc Conway (VO)... <i>If the local IRA were to be criticised, it was that they were too lenient and that</i></p>	<p><u>CU</u>....McConway</p>

they showed consistent restraint, given the provocation by the Pearsons. And that restraint almost cost the lives of two volunteers.

Actors Voice (statement of Tom Burke)(VO)...

“These Pearsons had always displayed open hostility towards the IRA and have been active in promoting the Ulster Volunteer movement in their district in which there are a number of Planters. There are good grounds for suspecting the family of transmitting information”.

******* COMMENT 45:**

Comment 22, page 15 above, about William Stanley, the Luggacurran Planters, and their Ulster connections, shows how these words have some substance.

Pr. Rich. English.. (I/V)...

Its quite comforting if you do target people, afterwards to build up as much as much justifications as possible. I think the real justification lay in the fact that the IRA and their authority in the area had been challenged in an unacceptable way and in order to show who is boss in the area they had to teach the Pearsons a lesson. You can exert your authority and in the long run you can also maximise access to land.

******* COMMENT 46:**

The Irish Military Court of Enquiry was held before the executions. English has no grounds for supposing that Thomas Burke invented these reasons retrospectively in order to justify the executions. English has presented no grounds for doubting the validity of this official Enquiry, and for substituting the list of speculative and unfounded reasons he has presented here.

Actors Voice (statement of Tom Burke)(VO)...

“ Having satisfied myself by enquiries that there was no doubt about the identity of the men who fired. I ordered that these men be executed and their houses destroyed.”

Ph. Mc Conway (VO)...

Ultimately it was the senior IRA leadership who took the decision to execute. In the

[doomy music]

CU....men around table...

CUhard faced men [actors]...around table...

CU....English

CU....men around table...

[mood music]

CU...fields...

[music]

CU... blue cigarette smokesnakes up slowly

CU McConway

context of the times it was a necessary military action to protect and safeguard local republicans.

P.Heaney (I/V)...

And when they got their orders, it had to be carried out. They had no choice. No, indeed.

Stanley (VO)...

The warning came from a person in the community. By giving the warning he put himself at great risk. The postman came and said to Mrs. Pearson "Get your sons out of here. I am in the IRA myself" he said. "I was at a meeting . It was decided they would be shot" he said. "I don't have a stomach for it." That's all I remember my father saying.

P. Heaney (VO)...

No, the family never were tipped off. It wasn't possible for the Pearsons to be tipped off by anybody local. It couldn't be possible. It didn't happen.

*****COMMENT:

{Pages 36, 37 and 68 of Alan Stanley's book *I met Murder on the way*, 2nd edition, 2005: "The postman [Delahunty, page 68] came to deliver the mail. ... he said he had attended an [IRA] meeting at which the decision had been made to kill Richard, Abe and [William Stanley/Jimmy Bradley]."

Jim Delahunty was Quartermaster of the Cadamstown IRA and was one of the IRA party attacked by the Pearsons-Stanley/Bradley at the road-block two weeks earlier. He was arrested and jailed in the round-up following the attack on the road-block, before the Pearsons were executed. His father Tim Delahunty had been postman; he died in 1919. Tim's sister Bess Grennan was the acting postman during 1919-24. No letters were delivered to the Pearsons' house; they collected their post themselves from McAllister's Post Office.

(If they were engaged in communication with the British military, this would be a more secure way of dealing with correspondence. The statement in question is by William Stanley; a similar statement was made by David Pearson in 1983 (pages 46, 48). He said that his father William Pearson and brother Sydney left Coolcrease House after this information was received as "they felt they had done nothing to provoke the IRA," and he argues that if they really were spies and informers they would have gone to the police. But spying/informing are quite different from seeking protection against a death threat. If they were innocent they can hardly be criticised now for seeking out whatever protection that could be provided, from any source, against an unwarranted threat.)

Jim Delahunty became postman in 1924. From 1982 Alan Stanley consulted Tom Mitchell of Kinnitty, who lived next door to Jim Delahunty, still alive at that time. Yet Stanley neglected to interview this crucial witness. Just as he did not publish his version until all the volunteer soldiers who defended the democratically elected government against military dictatorship were dead and safely out of the way, unable to contradict him or to defend their reputations against slander. (For details see Stanley, page 68.)}

CU ...face looks out cottage window
[mood music]

CU...Heaney

[dramatic burst of music]

CU...conspirators...shotgun being loaded

CU....bicycle on road...

CU..Postman on bike..

CU...agitated postman..

[mood music]

CU....scared postman knocks on door...door opens...

WS... postman on bike cycling ...then he "vanishes"

Pr. R. English (VO)...

It's claimed that the Pearsons got a warning on the day of the 30th of June 1921. The family, it appears, thought that this was just a warning that was intended to frighten them out. Ah, William Pearson and one of his sons, Sydney, were away from the estate leaving the two boys, Richard, who was 24 and Abraham, who was 19, ah, on their own in terms of protection, and leaving the rest of the family, the women, effectively defenceless.

Heaney (VO)...

I suppose the Pearsons were marked men. They were very arrogant, we are told, and they brought that on themselves because, speaking to Protestant people who knew the Pearsons well, they were told to keep their heads down. But they didn't listen to those people.

P. Mc Conway (VO)...

They were extremely arrogant toward their neighbours, they had a profound disdain for local Republicans, including the Irish Volunteers, whom they openly antagonised and provoked.

Alan Stanley (VO)...

My father was aware of the warning and he thought the warning was genuine. He had his eyes peeled. He was the first to see them. He told the two boys to run for their lives. He himself ran. He was a very good runner.

P. Heaney (VO)...

He ran zig zag down across the field. The local OC with the column, ordered a couple of men down to fire on him.

Stanley (VO)...

He actually called out a second time for the boys to run but they were rooted to the spot.

Heaney (VO)...

Then the Pearsons were brought up to the house, the Pearson family was there. The girls were very aggressive, more aggressive than the brothers, or their parents.

Olive Boothman, Grandniece/Susan Pearson (I/V)...

My mother was there. They were told the house was going to be burnt and they were all

WS/CU,S...various...fields .

CU,S..Pearson boys pitching hay in sunny field

CU...English

Haymaking

WS...men running through woods with guns

CU ...Pearson boy and Wm Stanley...[actors]

[mood music build up with slashing fx]

CU...Pearsons pitching hay

[build up ...mood music...]

CU...Wm Stanley pitching hay..[actor]....

..WS....Posse of IRA men appear over brow of hill..

CU....Stanley runs off..

CU..Pearsons.."rooted to the spot"

CU...IRA give chase...Capture the Pearsons...

CU...Heaney

CU...IRA men attack Pearsons house...

CU... wedding photo..Pearsons

CU.... Boothman

brought out in to the yard including Aunt Susan.

P.McConway (VO)..

According to IRA regulations at the time any Loyalist who attempted to resist the IRA forfeited their property to the Irish state. That included burning the house down.

P.Heaney (VO)...

Well, reading Michael Cordial's report... Michael was involved with the local IRA. He gave the report that when the house was fired the roof lifted off from explosions. Well, it was known locally that the Pearsons had ammunition stored in their house.

Narrator (VO)...

What Michael Cordial's statement actually said is that heavy explosions were heard when the house was burning. One possible explanation for the explosion was later accounted by IRA commanding officer on the day, Joe Connolly.

******* COMMENT 47:**

Nobody denies that the Pearsons had guns and ammunition in the house. They attacked the roadblock with them (or, if we are to believe the version of the Luggacurran paramilitary William Stanley, they "fired in the air", leaving unexplained the gunshot wounds suffered by Mick Heaney, Tom Donnelly, and retired RIC man Bert Hogg). The only question is about the quantity of armaments they held. Michael Cordial's Witness Statement says: "Heavy explosions were heard while the house was burning which indicated that a large amount of ammunition was stored in it." To start a fire in a house you need inflammable material such as hay, which, even in summer, can usually be found in a farmyard. Did the IRA party, travelling on foot from distant parts (the local IRA had all been arrested the week before), bring enough petrol – a barrel, say – to cause "several heavy explosions"? It is likely they brought a can or two, which if poured or splashed carelessly on burning hay would ignite and possibly engulf the person holding the can. That is what the following statement by Michael Connolly indicates. It does not explain several large explosions.

CU,S....IRA taking Family out of house.....setting house alight....

CU....McConway

CU,S...military archive statement...1712....Michael Cordial...Kinnity..Co Offaly

CU....Heaney

CU,S...various...Pearson s house burning....

CU,S...archive... Pearson's house burnt out

Michael Connolly (Son of Joe Connolly) (I/V)...

Daddy got petrol and, ah, threw it in on the floor and there was an explosion once it lit up and he was thrown back into the yard.

Ruth Kelly (VO)....

It exploded when it was set alight. But of course it exploded!! They filled it with petrol!!

******* COMMENT:**

As usual, the Pearson side is given the opportunity to debunk the case against them. But this advantage is not reciprocated. Even though it is quite easy to debunk the latter remark. There is a great difference between a small amount of petrol bursting into flame - which might cause somebody close by to be thrown backwards - and a quantity of ammunition blowing the roof off a house. The latter would kill anyone nearby, not throw them off their feet.

Alan Stanley (VO)...

The women were all brought out in to the court yard. The two boys were stood against the wall.

******* COMMENT 48:**

According to the evidence given by Ethel Pearson to the British Military Court of Enquiry in Lieu of Inquest held in Birr on July 2 1921: "My mother who was in a fainting condition was carried by my two brothers into a little wood we call the Grove and we all went with her by the order of the raiders." So according to this the women were not taken to the yard, but to a place from where the interior of the enclosed yard was not visible. She does NOT say they were taken to the yard. She does say the following: "I saw the raiders search my brothers and place them against the wall of the barn and shoot them", even though this was physically impossible from the Grove. The bogus atrocity stories of the Pearsons began very quickly and grew into William Pearson's 1927 version which has 500 IRA raiders descending on the house and shooting his daughter. These statements of the Pearsons (and of William Stanley) have to be taken with great caution. There is no indication that the Hidden History programme used any critical judgement in assessing them. They were presented uncritically, the fact there was a British Court of Enquiry was not disclosed, and no balancing views were expressed.

Heaney (VO)...

The Court Martial was read out.

CU....archive...,Joe Connolly...in free state uniform..

CU,s...house burning...

CU,s.... house burning

CU,S...various....women and men being roughly manhandled in yard and men being put up against wall...with 5 (!) adult women watching. (There were 4 adult women present on the actual occasion.)

CU.....Heaney...

<p>Stanley (VO)... <i>They were told, apparently, that they had been sentenced to death, making it all nice and legal and proper, of course.</i></p> <p>P. Heaney (VO).... <i>The executions were duly carried out.</i></p> <p>Stanley (VO)... <i>They were shot first of all with numerous rounds aimed to the groin area. They had turned their backs as we all might do. Then there was more fire.</i></p> <p>***** COMMENT 49: The Court of Enquiry shows that the men received mostly superficial gunshot wounds all over their bodies, only one of the to the (right) groin of one of the men. The programme scrupulously excluded all reference to this evidence, and provided no counter-balancing contribution to Stanley's and Harris's statements on this point.</p> <p>Stanley (VO)... <i>Richard died seven and three quarter hours later. Abraham fourteen hours later. In fact Abraham died the following day, so I imagine that they would have been in unbelievable pain.</i></p> <p>Pr. Richard English (VO)... <i>The details of the killing, dying slowly while bleeding to death made this a particularly ghastly episode, even if one were broadly sympathetic with IRA Republicanism.</i></p> <p>***** COMMENT 50: Assuming the Pearsons were innocent of the roadblock attack, this statement would be fair. The programme was not entitled to make that assumption on behalf of the viewers, and therefore not entitled to leave this statement without an accompanying statement based on the opposite assumption.</p> <p>JJ Dillon (VO)...</p>	<p>CU...IRA firing squad...</p> <p>CU...faces ...Pearson boys</p> <p>CU...firing squad shoots..</p> <p>CU...Pearsons fall screaming ..clutching groins..</p> <p>WS...firing squad fires again with five (!) adult women in background looking on</p> <p>CU.....womans face in horror...</p> <p>CU...more firing... Then.... ...[angelic choral music]...</p> <p>CU.....Pearsons in slow motion... falling to ground...much blood... Hate-filled face of executioner</p> <p>CU,,,,,,Richard on ground writhing in pain being attended by girls...</p> <p>CU.....Abraham bleeding on ground...</p> <p>[angelic mood music]</p> <p>CU'S....women attending Pearson boys on ground in yard</p> <p>CU'S.....women attending boys on ground...plus</p> <p>[mood music]..</p> <p>CU.....Dillon...</p>
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It was crazy. It was brutal. It was wrong. Even in death a person is entitled to dignity.

******* COMMENT 51:**

This is not a balancing statement. It is in the broadly anti-war spirit of JJ Dillon's earlier statement (page 25) "In conflict those things occur. Like hatred comes into it, revenge comes into it." From this point of view, the blame lies with the party which started the war. And the programme made no effort to give a balanced explanation of the political context out of which the war came.

P. Heaney (VO)...

People resented, I suppose, the way they were shot, but they were executed and that was it.

******* COMMENT 52:**

This is not a balancing contribution giving the just and legitimate war-time reasons for the executions. Any number of Paddy Heaney's statements explaining these could have been inserted here. Editorially, the programme chose a statement which does not include such a reason. The viewers thus get an impression of a hard, unfeeling person who needs no reason for such a measure.

Sen. Eoghan Harris (VO)...

That's not an execution. That s an atrocity. Shooting them very deliberately, in the genitals, in their sexual parts, in their sexual organs, what it really says is you are the other, you are an outsider, we hate you, go away and die.

******* COMMENT 51:**

This statement is contrary to the evidence that the Pearsons were guilty of what they were charged with, and is contrary to the medical evidence. It unjustly charges those involved in the executions with attitudes, and with a crime, for which there is no evidence. This statement is the most highly charged part of the programme, and was the basis of the resulting bogus propaganda in the media. If the programme was fair, impartial and objective, it would have provided an equally strong statement of the opposite case.

CU,S.....bodies on ground..

CU,Sbleeding boys being attended to by women on ground.....

CU.....Harris...

CU.....bloodied boys again..

**[mood music]
[fade to black]**

Philip Mc Conway (VO)...

The IRA botched the execution in that they didn't finish them off with head shots. In hindsight it was wrong for the IRA to allow the mother and sisters to witness the executions. But the female members of the Pearsons were deemed to be as hostile as their brothers to the local volunteers.

******* COMMENT 52:**

This does not provide balance or rebuttal (for which there is plenty of evidence well known to the programme makers) to the preceding statement of Harris. Harris has been enabled by the programme to make a powerful, but unjustified, case. Philip McConway has explained that the programme makers knew before broadcast that new evidence had caused him to change his opinion on whether the Pearson women had seen the executions. The programme knowingly and consciously misrepresented him.

JJ Dillon (VO)...

A lot of their people, they weren't trained to kill. They were overawed, frightened, they were victims as well in a different kind of way, probably haunted by it, maybe for the rest of their lives.

******* COMMENT 53:**

This is a broad anti-war statement similar to those expressed earlier by JJ Dillon. Having allowed Harris to make an unchallenged allegation of atrocity, this statement of JJ Dillon's is not a counter-statement, it actually reinforces Harris's position. JJ Dillon's humanitarian, anti-war sentiment is used to buttress the political position of Harris. This would not have been possible if the case had been made for the guilt of the Pearsons, and their complicity in the imperial onslaught against Irish democracy. Responsibility for the war, and the consequent horrors, lie with the side which resorted to force to overturn the democratically expressed choice of the voters by making the country ungovernable by the legitimate, elected government

Edna Black...[I/V]..{grand daughter/Wm./Susan Pearson}

I myself lost a son.It was after his death that I sort of thought of my grandmother losing two

CU...McConway...

CU...archive...Pearson women....plus angelic music and re-enactment of firing squad ...

CU'S....individual members of firing squad...[actors]

*******COMMENT:**

The gory execution scene is played over and over again. This is the focus and fulcrum of the programme and its political propaganda. It is a powerfully contrived emotional blast. There is not even a gesture towards balance. Feelings of sympathy are artfully evoked in order to overwhelm any remaining faculty of judicious rationality in the viewers. But war consists of combatants on each side attacking and killing combatants on the other side. The moral guilt resides with the authority which caused the war. The human and personal consequences are experienced by everyone involved. The Pearsons chose to get involved in violent conflict with the democracy, when they could very easily have kept out of it. They were not innocent victims. Any violent incident in any war could be presented in a way which focusses on the personal suffering involved, without offering any explanation of the why's and wherefore's. But this documentary was advertised as providing an explanation of what happened in Coolacrease. It did exactly the opposite. These scenes are the high point of the programme's propaganda.

CU....Black...

sons in a tragedy. Its hard just to enter into the depth of} sorrow that she was asked to face into that day by her own fellow countrymen, which is even sadder.

******* COMMENT 54:**

Those attacked by the Pearsons were also afflicted. That aspect should have been included in the summing up. The points made by JJ Dillon could easily have been developed in this direction, instead of being misused to buttress the Harris position.

Sen. Eoghan Harris...[i/v]..

Even if there were shots fired, even if there were rows over mass rocks and rights of way...nothing...nothing...can disturb the starkness of 30 or 40 men going to a farmhouse, pulling two young men, Abe and Richard, out of a field, standing them against a wall, shooting them in the groin, then shooting them in the ass when they turned round in pain and horror and then leaving them to bleed to death. Nothing can disturb that image in the public mind. And I believe that the plain people of Ireland have a good idea that something evil was done that day.

[silence...pause]

******* COMMENT 55:**

This dramatic, rhetorical conclusion, reiterating earlier unfounded statements, is given powerful, unchallenged and unbalanced display.

Narrator...[vo]..

A few days later Richard and Abraham Pearson were buried without ceremony in an unmarked grave in Co. Laois, almost 30 miles from their home.

Jenny Turnidge..[i/v]..

They couldn't be buried in their local area. They had to be taken out of the area and they had to be buried without a name.

CU.....Susan Pearson..

CU...Sen. Harris

CU...IRA going into house...firing squad fires again....

CU...Harris

**CU.....Pearson family...outside burnt out house
....[fade to black...]**

CU ...Turnidge

CU.....laneway...flowers in foreground.

***** COMMENT 56:

All graves are unmarked at time of burial. It was up to the Pearsons themselves to mark the graves subsequently. William Pearson was diligent in attending to many other things, and he could hardly plead poverty! The brothers were buried in Killermogh, in the Aghaboe area where had lived for the earlier part of their lives, where they came from only ten years earlier, the area where their ancestors had lived and died. Newspapers of the time report that issues and disputes tended to arise in burials of Cooneyites. For one thing, they did not have formal church buildings or formal burial grounds of their own. And since Cooneyism only began around 1900, the only mainstream congregation the Pearsons would have been connected with would have been in the place they resided before Cooneyism came into the picture. So it is quite understandable that they were taken to that area, that church, and that graveyard for burial.

Alan Stanley..[vo]...

I spoke to a man who witnessed the burials. He said that as they came out of the church two Crossley type tenders pulled up to the gate .He then saw two soldiers remove two coffins. Two young women followed weeping bitterly. They saw coffins being lowered and instantly the graves being filled and they were gone almost as soon as they arrived.

Paddy Byrne...[Cadamstown resident]...

I asked an old woman, she was an old woman, where were they buried and she said, if they were buried in the bog it would be too good for them. There was bitterness everywhere.

***** COMMENT 57:

By juxtaposing these two statements, the deliberate (though unfounded) impression is created that the local people somehow were instrumental in unseemly and undignified interment. Burial arrangements had to be made from Crinkle Military Barracks in Birr, and had nothing to do with the local people. If we allow the possibility that the Pearsons were guilty of a vicious and unprovoked attack on members of the volunteer citizen army defending the elected government, after they had been welcomed, only a few years earlier, into the bosom of the local community, then the bitter sentiments reported by Paddy Byrne are perfectly understandable.

CU.....flowers...

CU....Killermogh church in Co Laois

.CU.....inside empty church..

C U....Byrne
WS...church..

CU...flowers...

<p>Sen. Harris...[vo].. <i>It was only a few days before the Truce. Everybody knew there was going to be a Truce...there was no need for this...</i></p> <p>Pr. Rich. English....[i/v]... <i>There is a particular poignancy in the Pearsons' story, as I think there is in other conflicts, insofar as immediately before a ceasefire, or before a Truce, because it becomes to look increasingly futile when you look back at through the lens of the Peace which is about to emerge.</i></p> <p>***** COMMENT 58: The war was most intense at that point, when the Pearsons decided to become active combatants. What happened to Mick Heaney, and to the others who were wounded and imprisoned because of the Pearsons, was also very unfortunate and poignant. This should also have been pointed out by the programme, in the interests of fairness and balance.</p> <p>Narrator...[vo]... <i>After burying their sons, the Pearsons decided to remain on at Coolacree, living in the coachhouse behind the ruin of their former home.</i></p> <p>***** COMMENT 59: According to Alan Stanley's book, and according to William Stanley's 1927 Grants Committee application, William Stanley moved his family to Wales and England, and stayed in the coach house himself during his subsequent visits to Offaly.</p> <p>Dr Terence Dooley...[i/v]... <i>Wm. Pearson had lost his two eldest sons who he had used to run the farm. Essentially he couldn't get others from the local community to work for him. Raids continued on his property, and his attempts to sell...his cattle were boycotted by the locals. He couldn't sell his farm because any potential buyer was put off, e.g., Wm. Percy, ah, "The price I offered was 10,000 and I might have gone higher only the people would not allow any outsider to purchase the land. I was not allowed to close the bargain." So he was becoming squeezed all the time. What he attempted to do was cut his losses by actually selling the land to the Land Commission for</i></p>	<p>Archive...B&w shots of Truce... CU...Harris...</p> <p>CU...English</p> <p>CU...burnt out house...Pearson family in foreground...</p> <p>CU.....Dooley.. CU.....farm..</p> <p>CU.....cows ..sheds..... cattle... CU.....Advert in paper to sell farm...</p> <p>CU.....letter...Wm Percy</p> <p>CU.....Dooley...</p> <p>CU... archive...Irish Grant Committee document,</p>
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around 5000 pounds...

******* COMMENT 60:**

The first sentence is correct. Re the second sentence, the King's County Chronicle of October 13 1921 quotes William Pearson as saying that his two boys had spared him the expense of employing a lot of workmen every year, as one man interested in the work would be worth six who were not. In other words, William Pearson was never too keen on employing locals. Locals who could not afford to be choosy about any kind of paid employment. (The same newspaper records the steadily developing atrocity stories being peddled by the Pearsons – no talk now of being moved to the shelter of the Grove; ALL the women, including the mother who was carried to the Grove in a faint, were FORCED to watch the executions in the yard.)

The next three sentences of Dooley's statement above are based on Pearson's 1927 application to the British Government's Grants Committee for loyalists who suffered injury or damages. That document is riddled with lies (the 500 raiders, the shooting of his daughter, about half of the items claimed for turned down as implausible or too obviously unjustified. The Grants Committee papers note that he had sold his farm equipment by public auction and received fair prices for it. The Midland Tribune of August 27 1921 reported that he had refused all bids for his farm when it was put up for public auction on August 23 1927. The papers of William Pearson's application to the Grants Committee report that he auctioned his farm equipment and received fair prices.

The Land Commission document shown on screen at this point on the programme gives the 1911 purchase price of Coolacree as £2000, a reasonable price for rather poor land between the bog and the mountain. Land prices went through the floor after the Great War agricultural boom. At £5000, the Land Commission paid a grossly excessive price to Pearson, probably because he extorted it by holding out and, in effect, leaving an economic resource unworked, unlet, unsold, uncultivated. After the prosperous Great War years, and not having had to employ many locals, he had £6000 (the price of three Coolacrees) in the bank, according to his Grant application. So he could afford to put the squeeze on the Land Commission. Dooley's statement is quite ludicrous. The Percy letter is an obvious fraud (as is another bogus valuation of £17,000 put forward by

showing purchase price of £2000 for Coolacree in 1911.

Pearson) – probably recognised as such by the Grants Committee, who seemed to swallow the by now out-of-control Pearson atrocity propaganda, and who seemed to latch on to the Percy letter as a device to compensate Pearson, not for his farm (for which he was excessively paid by the Land Commission) but to compensate him for his cleverly spun and highly imaginative atrocity tale.

Narrator...[vo]...

There was some consolation for the family. The Irish Grants Committee, a British agency, established to compensate loyalists who had lost out during the war, granted Wm. Pearson 7,500 pounds

******* COMMENT:**

Bringing the total amount that Pearson received for the land to about £10,000.

Dr. W. Murphy ..[vo]...

Pearson describes himself as an ardent loyalist, but he does so in the context of applying for compensation from the British Government for his sufferings. Therefore, at that time, it is going to be in his interest to describe himself as an ardent loyalist.

******* COMMENT 61:**

Here is how Pearson describes himself: “I was always known as a staunch Loyalist and upholder of the Crown. I assisted the Crown Forces on every occasion”. **Using misdirection, Murphy addresses the first part of this and evades the second part. It was perfectly obvious he was a loyalist, he had nothing to prove on this score. Anyway, Murphy accepts him as a loyalist (page 12 above), so why is he now quibbling about it? The Pearsons crime was not loyalism, but engaging in armed combat against the elected government.**

Narrator..[vo]...

In 1911, the Pearson family had bought the land at Coolacrease. Now, just under a decade later, they were leaving, never to return.

Paddy Heaney [vo]....

..When the land was divided by the Irish Land commission, I think two, maybe three whose people were involved in the IRA received parcels of land there

CU...Murphy

CU...red poppies in field of corn..

CU ...Heaney..

CU.....Poppies in field

***** COMMENT 62:

Paddy Heaney's position, well known to the programme, is and always has been, the opposite of what editorial chicanery is ascribing to him here. His position is that the Pearson place was divided by the Land Commission, and the first three people to be allocated land were ex-British soldiers. Two or three ex-IRA people got land there subsequently. A number of people failed to farm successfully, because of the high repayments to the Land Commission resulting from the price extorted from them by William Pearson. There is no evidence of Land Commission complicity in a land grab by Republicans, or that there was any such land grab.

Pr Rich. English...

[vo]You can justify killing someone on the grounds that they are an enemy of the war for freedom. But it could also be that in this case they own a large farm ...as in this case....becomes divided up amongst the local people.This was an attack not just on the Pearson boys who were actually killed. It was an attack which drove effectively the Pearsons out.

***** COMMENT 63:

Having deliberately turned Paddy Heaney's words and meaning into the opposite of what the programme knew he meant, English is allowed to expand on his unfounded speculations, seemingly as if Paddy Heaney was providing actual evidence for his speculations - not a shred of which English could produce himself.

Sen. Harris ...[vo]...

60,000 Protestants were driven from the South of Ireland. They usually scattered, ah, in the night, grabbing what belongings they could. As time passed the usual mist and fog that descends over any incident....descended.

***** COMMENT 64:

This is the ethnic cleansing theory signalled in RTÉ's May 30 slide in the Clontarf Castle meeting, through to the Tubridy Show October 22. There is no evidence for it, and the Pearson executions were the result of their participation in the war as combatants. It had nothing to do with land grabbing or ethnic cleansing. British loyalists were expelled from the British colonies in America in its war of independence. British people in India had the option of taking Indian citizenship, but almost all of them left. In Ireland nobody was compelled

CUEnglish...

CU.....archive...photo of Pearsons..

CU.....Newspapers...

[1]....."widespread expulsion of Protestants"...

[2]"terrible double tragedy:two farmers shot dead"

CU...Harris...

[3] "County Wicklow JP shot dead..son seriously wounded"

[4] "terrible night inWest Cork:further shootings over a wide area"

CU ..passport..Pearson and sons

CU.....steamer ship and passengers.

*****COMMENT:

Without actually uttering the loaded words "Ethnic Cleansing" which RTÉ used in its internal May 30 meeting in Clontarf Castle, the viewers are presented with the unfounded propaganda of the period. No counter-balancing visuals are presented.

<p>to give up British citizenship, and the newly formed Senate was practically a preserve of Unionists. No historian, not even Peter Hart, has openly espoused the ethnic cleansing theory implied by Eoghan Harris and explicitly trumpeted by RTÉ.</p> <p>Narrator...[vo] <i>In 1922, the Pearsons joined this exodus leaving first for England, and, some years later, for a new life in Australia..</i></p> <p>Sen. Harris...[i/v]... <i>The Pearsons became true forgotten ones. They became, literally, the disappeared of history.</i></p> <p>***** COMMENT 65: Balance would require some corresponding emotional display on behalf of those who suffered because of the Pearson engagement on the imperial side. No proof was given in the programme that the Pearsons were innocent of what the official Irish Military Court of Enquiry found.</p> <p>Jenny Turnidge ..[vo].. <i>This family had nowhere to go, no one to turn to}. I really admire the fact that they effectively walked away, because I don't know that I could.</i></p> <p>***** COMMENT: According to Alan Stanley's book, from the mixed bogland and mountain of Coolacree they were able to buy a 200-acre farm in the Home Counties (Suffolk) – and that was BEFORE the massive award received from the Irish Grants Committee, when they went on to purchase farms and businesses in Australia.</p> <p>Voiceover...Actor....[Jan. Fri. 17 1930] <i>" watch ship coming up river into harbour....look out for our people...see them waving to us...Interviewed by pressman. Have our photo taken, to be put into paper...</i></p> <p>Vernon Pearson...[i/v]... <i>They arrived in Australia from an English winter and when he arrived in that he said ...the sweat, what on earth...he wondered what they were coming to...</i></p> <p>Narrator...[vo].. <i>The Pearsons reached Australia in 1930. After</i></p>	<p>CU Harris, catch in voice</p> <p>CU.....Pearsons in front of burn out house... CU.....Turnidge...</p> <p>CU...diary..Jan.17,1930.. [Sidney Pearson] CU.....newspaper.."Irish loyalists to settle here. Two sons killed by rebels in 1921"</p> <p>CU...Pearson</p> <p>CU...fields..</p> <p>CU...fields..</p>
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a short period in Melbourne they went back to farming and bought land in South Gippsland, Victoria...

Mervyn Pearson..[grandson...Wm./Susan Pearson]..[iv]...

My grandfather Wm. And Susan settled here with their son Sid and my dad settled further over there where he bought his own property and that's where he settled. The original house here...[points]...would have been where that new house is being built at the moment. ...thats where the original house would have survived until two years ago,I believe,where it was burnt...

Vernon Pearson...[vo]

They had a big battle, cos the conditions in australia were so different to the conditions they had in Ireland and a lot of them took a long time to get into a place where...y'know..they could say they were comfortable.

VO Mervyn Pearson

I saw the results of what had happened in their lives. They were all affected by it by the time their life was over

Edna Black..[grand daughter..Wm./Susan Pearson] [Vo]...

Grandma Pearson, I sort of remember her sitting beside her window, and the blind would be drawn and very little light, sitting there...and she seemed to be sitting there with her eye on the window just wondering what could happen again.

Ruth Kelly..[vo]...

Aunty Ethel...she was very security conscious...oh so many padlocks,...and the windows were all pasted over with brown paper, y'know, she was just terrified.

Doris Turnidge...[vo]...[granddaughter]

Tilly was definitely the strongest one. But it hit her the hardest.She would sort of stamp her feet a little and her husband would say " Its all right Tilly...its all right now...you're here in Australia, you're fine"...but it effected her quite badly nerves wise..

Edna Black....[vo]...

The tragedy really did shatter the family and it was a life time sentence really to the whole

CU...Mervyn Pearson..

CU...fields

CU...house..

CU.....Photos of Pearsons

CU...House

CU Vernon

Photo William Pearson

CU...grandma Pearson

CU...window

CU.... Aunt Ethel

CU ...house..

CU...Tilly..

CU.....Doris Turnidge

..

Archive

photos.....Pearson family in Australia...plus Aussie flag...

family....

Narrator...[vo]

In the early 1930,s Wm. Pearsons health began to fail. He and Susan left the farm in Gippsland and travelled north to the sun settling in the mining town of Bendigo

Doris Turnidge...[vo]...

Grandfather used to say to them prior to all of that, "No problems, I'll die amongst the gold " and they used to laugh at him...but actually , he did ...he died in Bendigo..

Narrator [vo]...

Susan Pearson moved to Melbourne to live closer to her daughter Tilly until her death in 1947. She never returned to Ireland. Some of her children eventually made the trip back.

Doris Turnidge....[vo]..

We walked up the avenue, right to the front door. Some of the glass was still in the windows. The memories flooded back . She was home. That's the point. But she would never go and live in Ireland because of fear. I can understand that.

Vernon Pearson....[vo]

My father went back to Ireland in 1975 Well, he went back to look at the old areas where he saw the troubles and he couldn't get out quick enough.

Olive Boothman, Grand-niece...[iv]..

I came upon it unexpectedly. I found myself in Cadamstown and I drove out the road and saw Coolacrease.. the ruins... and trees growing out of it and I just said ...noway would I walk down to the house...you didn't want to disturb it in some way ,y'know , you didn't feel you had any right to tread on the ground, then you kind of shook your head and drove on. ...It lives on... and its not a good memory ...

Narrator....[vo]

When the ruin of Coolacrease House finally fall asunder the last physical connection between family and community will

WS.....Aussie town...[Gippsland/Bendigo]..

WS.....Wm Pearson..

CU...golden sunset..

CU...Susan Pearson

WS ...ruined house in Offaly...

CU.....windows..

CU.....Tilly Pearson...

CU Doris Turnidge

CU..... Offaly

CU..... Doris Turnidge

CU.....photo ..old Pearsons..

CU..... various shots of ruined house...

CU.....Pearson Grand daughter/niece..

CU.....ruins..

CUpoppies...

CUgraves

disappear...land...religion...and politics... separated the Pearsons from their friends and neighbours. They will , however,. Always be bound by what happened on that day at Coolacrease...

******* COMMENT:**

The incident in Coolacrease was a relatively unimportant one, and had fallen into oblivion. But not in the local area, where the pro's and con's were keenly debated and digested down the generations. It was NOT the dark and guilty secret that the Hidden History/RTÉ trumpeted in their propaganda and advertising, to be opened up to the bright light of day by the sharp sword of truth wielded by their fearlessly self-regarding reporters. The local community was way ahead of them. The first published account of the incident was produced in 2002 in the village of Cadamstown itself by Paddy Heaney, in his book *At the Foot of Slieve Bloom*. And as more light is shed on the incident, his accuracy, authority and spirit of generous forgiveness are evident.

Sen. Harris ...[vo]

Yeats said it, he said...."Though gravediggers toil be long... Sharp their spades and muscles strong... They will thrust their buried men .. Into the public mind again...."

The more you try to put them down...the more they come back up. The Pearsons of Coolacrease is a good place to start to look at what happened in the war of independence. It wasn't all heroism. It wasn't all Four Glorious Years, and a lot of the stuff that our grandfathers and uncles and cousins did wouldn't bear looking at in the light of day..

******* COMMENT:**

So how come the Senator has lapsed into relative silence, after his initial bluster about the Pearsons was challenged and exposed? Has he bottled out? Does he want to bury the Pearsons' story again? Or could it be that his version of the story "won't bear looking at in the light of day"?

But he can rest assured that it will definitely be "*thrust ... into the public mind again*" – as a caution against revisionist fantasy!

Alan Stanley....[vo]...

I don't harbour bitterness...but it's not quite as simple as that. There has to be a sort of cleansing from some source, from somewhere, so that we can look back and say... "how was it that we acted that way, thought that way, behaved that way. Perhaps it's more than we can deal with in some cases, I suppose...

[mood music]..

CU.....grave..
CU.....Harris..

{mood music}.

CU.....Pearsons..on front out of burnt house...
CU.....gurgling stream..
CU.....archive..cheering crowds..
CU.....old photo..

CU.....waterfall
CU.....Stanley
CU.....cheering crowd...
CU.....river

Paddy Heaney...[vo]

Speaking to people who were involved at that time, they regretted a lot of things...that happened.... and maybe that shouldn't have happened. But that's what happens when you have a war of independence. It's part of our history. We can't change it and we're not responsible for it...

Edna Black....[vo]

Ye cant change the past, can ye, but ye'd like to think that what was left on record, whether it be history, or what would be a truthful, honest, and correct interpretation of what happened.....

******* COMMENT 66:**

Harris's and Stanley's summing up on the basis of assumed Pearson innocence needed to be balanced by some overview predicated on the much more likely scenario that the Pearsons were combatants. This balance is NOT provided by the remarks by Paddy Heaney, which are true of any side in any war, and have no special relevance to the Coolacrease incident

A fair and balanced programme would have included the subsequent human and family history of the people who suffered injury and imprisonment because of the Pearsons. The final contributions are chosen and combined in a way which suggests strongly, contrary to the actual evidence, that the Pearsons were innocent victims of an atrocity.

CU.....cheering
crowds

CU.....stream

{mood music}

CU.....flag..

CU.....stream

[mood music]

CU.....stream...

WS.....Pearson
boys walk down the road
with scythe...look back at
camera...walk over hill out
of sight....

**[music swells to finis
and fades.]**

END CREDITS...[SOME]

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