

## Transcripts

Transcript of the Tubridy Show interview, RTÉ Radio One, Monday 22/10/2007

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Ryan Tubridy:

Tomorrow night, I want to tell you about a documentary which will be shown as part of the excellent Hidden History series on RTE One television. This one is called The Killing at Coolacrease, and it's one which has already ruffled a few feathers. It's interesting, in Phoenix magazine it has been criticised as "the mother of all revisionist polemics". People like Eoghan Harris for example have written very passionately about Coolacrease, calling it, quote, an appalling atrocity, unquote, and its effects are still felt today. The Killing at Coolacrease. It's about the killing of two young Protestant farmers called the Pearsons, at Coolacrease House in Co. Offaly, just days before the end of the War of Independence. Niamh Sammon is the producer and director of this documentary, and has produced some excellent goods for RTE TV before. She has joined us this morning. Niamh, it's nice to see you again, thanks for coming along. I suppose we had better put it in context, geographically whatever about historically. What is Coolacrease, where is it?

Niamh Sammon:

Coolacrease is a townland in Offaly. It's very close to a village called Cadamstown. Some people might know Kinnitty, that's very close as well. It's at the foot of the Slieve Bloom mountains. A very rural part of the country, not a lot of good land. And where the Pearsons were living, the farm they had, it was good land, and obviously at the time there was a huge degree of land hunger. And what we found in the documentary, that land played, probably played, a very important part in this whole story.

T:

Well there's a surprise, land in issue an Irish history and politics! But this was a very important element to it. Because I was watching the programme, a preview of it, last night. And you could see the land map. They had a good stretch of ground, surrounded by smallholdings all around it. And this seemed to be an important element to the story.

S

It's an important element of the story. And you know, land was so powerful a political tool at the time that it was almost impossible, I suppose, for Sinn Féin, you know, to walk away from the land aspect of this. So you can see in 1919 the way this has become, this is becoming wrapped up into our whole fight for independence. And if you look at the Pearsons' land, as you say, it's a big block of 340 acres, and it's surrounded by small uneconomic, unviable holdings.

T:

OK, so let's just call that Reason 1 as to why there might be problems for the Pearsons living in this area. Problem 2 is their religion. They had this kind of Amish element to them. What were they?

S:

That's right. I mean, obviously this is a difficult time for, you know, any Protestant, you know, living in rural Ireland at this time. You know, faith was always an important badge of identity, and, you know, the sectarian split along Protestant loyalist and Catholic nationalist lines had been cemented already in the nineteenth century. But for the Pearsons, I mean, they were different again because they were Cooneyites, they were members of this, ahm, low-church, ahm, dissenting Protestant sect. As you say, they were very like the Amish. I mean even in dress and appearance, you know, the women would have worn very simple clothes, simple dress. They were very peaceable. They didn't believe in any, sort of, established churches or any, there was no hierarchy in their religion. So these were very very simple people. I mean they would have been sort of quite isolated even within the established Protestant religions. And then they were isolated again because they had just moved to Coolacrease. I mean they had only been living there since 1911, and, you know, coming into an area, they were outsiders, they had bought this, this very big parcel of land, which many people would have felt in the area should have been divided up amongst local Catholics, because it actually came out of the division of a very very big estate under the 1903 and 1909 Land Acts

T

So they had lots going against them. And the case is now building against them as we speak. Albeit by accident of birth and politics and geography, if you like. And another one would be that one of the daughters appeared to be dating an English soldier. Which is not the sort of thing you do in their circumstances at that time. [Niamh Sammon laughs.] And I'm not being facetious about it, because I don't want to be, because the story gets quite serious and quite brutal. But it is an unfortunate, of all the men to date.

S

What we were told when we started researching, this was, that one of the daughters was dating a member of the Crown Forces, be it RIC, or British Army. So we obviously we investigated this. And then what we discovered, we went to Australia, and we talked to, you know, the family, the descendants of the Pearsons. And we opened a photograph album and there was a picture of this, this, this woman's father, has married this girl, called Tilly, And, and we said who is this person. Well she said, this is my father. He was an RIC officer and he was from Offaly. So it's quite possible that Tilly Pearson was actually seeing her husband at the time. So obviously it puts a much more innocent complexion on the relationship than, you know, she was seeing a British Army officer and therefore she was passing on information to the Crown Forces. It's quite a leap of the imagination to make that assumption.

T;

But that's what strikes me about the programme you made, there was a lot of leaping going on. So let's look further then at the local IRA Brigade, if you like. They seem to the kind of Keystone Cops of, of the IRA in Ireland at that time. I mean the official documents suggest that these guys were kind of eejits and they weren't up to much now by way of military excellence

S

They weren't up to a whole lot. I mean if you actually look at, you know, Richard Mulcahy who was the Chief of Staff of the IRA at that time, and he said they were incompetent, they were slovenly, you know, their shooting skills were absolutely dreadful, I mean, really they were appalling. And the War of Independence in Offaly was really, really quiet. What happens is it all starts to, to hot up in 1921, and an organizer came down from Dublin in 1921, and suddenly all these things start to happen.

T

What was his name? He was an interesting man.

S:

His name was Tom Burke and he was a very interesting character. Very, kind of like Ernie O' Malley, you know, he was a medical student in Dublin, he was bright. And towards the end of the War of Independence, I mean, we talked to one academic Richard English who said there was a sense that, you know, the IRA was looking after its housekeeping before the Truce. All these things were happening. So he's sent down from Dublin and suddenly, you know, the Offaly IRA are getting it together. They ambushed and killed two RIC officers in May. Remember the Pearsons were killed in June. This was a, this was a big success for them. And then spies are being targeted and they're being shot at the time as well.

T

So now we have the ...

S:

Suspected spies, I should say.

T;

Well, absolutely. But I just thought that Tom Burke's arrival was like the Cleaner (laughs). He came down to clean up this act, to get it sorted out. Suddenly people start droppin' like flies all around the place. An extraordinary power and a kind of macabre approach to things. But that's what they, what they did. Now. Now we have a political hothouse. We have the land, the religion, the political landscape, and we have the military difficulties. And let's enter the stage, then, the Pearsons', I suppose, truck with the IRA. How did it come to a head?

S:

Well, it all came to a head, I mean, the Pearsons were suspected as spies. We've looked at the evidence, we couldn't find any evidence that the Pearsons were spies. Then one night, the IRA fell a tree on the Pearsons' land.

T

Yeah?

S:

Blocking a convoy of Black and Tans coming through. The Pearsons find out about this. And remember this is 1921. At this stage they're probably terrorised. Because other Protestants have been burnt out of the area, its houses have been burned and so on. So they go down with their shotguns. Ahm. And there are two very different versions of what happened on that night. According to the Pearsons, they told the IRA to get off their land. And they fired, they had shotguns as every farmer in the country would have had at that time, and they fired their guns into the air to scare them off. Now according to the local IRA the Pearsons fired directly at them. And shot at and wounded two of their men. Now, nobody died, ahm, and the, you know, the nationalist side would accept that. But afterwards, ahm, we don't really know what happened that night, it would be true to say. Afterwards there was a meeting. And at this meeting, Tom Burke, he sent a statement to headquarters afterwards and he says, you know, the Pearsons are planters, he uses this language, they're suspected of running an underground militia from their home, and they shot at and wounded two of our men, and, you know, because of all these reasons, I have decided that they will be executed and their house burned.

T:

Now. The execution itself, it was exceptionally bloody, it was grisly, it was ugly. And It was just very different, by the sound of it. Tell us, tell us what happened.

S:

It, it was a beautiful June day. And the two boys were Richard who was 24, and Abraham who was 19, were in a hayfield with their friend William Stanley.

T

Yeah.

S;

Now, it is said. – the Pearsons always said they got a warning from a man who was at the IRA meeting, who liked them, because it is said they were very good neighbours and he told them this was going to happen. And, William Stanley believed this warning, the Pearsons weren't so sure. So William Stanley was the first to see this raiding party, and between 30 and 40 IRA men literally coming over the hill, descending on them. And he shouted to the Pearsons to run for their lives. He ran, and he escaped, he was a very good runner. But the Pearsons, I mean when he looked back he said they were rooted to the spot. And what happened was, they were rounded up, they were brought back to the house which was ransacked, the women were taken out, the house was burnt down. Then they were brought outside to the yard, the two boys were lined up against the stable wall, and then they were shot in a very bloody, brutal manner. The fatal shots were to the groin. And then they turned away from the fire. And they, they, they were shot in the buttocks. And they were left then to die, because none of the shots were fatal. So they bled to death. One of the boys, it took him seven hours to die. The other, Abraham, didn't die for another 14 hours. And they were nursed by their mother and sisters who witnessed this.

T

They saw it happening.

S:

They saw it happening.

T:

OK. The interesting thing is that nobody, there is no verdict as to who or what actually happened in terms of the innocence or guilt of the Pearsons. But here's some of the reaction that was given to you in the programme. It's a kind of mixed reaction to what happened that day.

[Music, clips]

It was crazy, it was brutal, it was wrong. Even in death a person is entitled to dignity.

People resented I suppose, the way they were shot. But they were executed. That was it.

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, you are the Other. You are an Outsider. We hate you. Go away and die.

...

[End of music, clips]

Of course that's Eoghan Harris there, ending that element of contribution to your programme. When you went down to research the programme, Niamh, did you find it a fairly straightforward operation to find, you know there's always local historians, people with a story to tell, people with links to the past, how did that go?

S:

Well, this really surprised me. We went down and we knocked on doors in Offaly and, ah, very few people would talk to us.

T:

Did they know what you were talking about?

S

Everybody knew about this story.

T:

Really?

S:

Everybody knew about this story. Everybody had an opinion about this story. For every person who said the Pearsons got what they deserved, other people would say it was absolutely dreadful, and really this was a land-grab and it shouldn't have happened. But a lot of the people who would say things like that, they just simply wouldn't go on camera, as they said we have to live in this area. We couldn't live in this area if we said these

things. I was also told, you know, it was a very strongly Republican area still, you know. So you know there would have still been, ahm, really a sort of lingering sympathy for the men who took part in this. But also you were talking to the descendants of the men who had been involved in the Offaly IRA. So obviously they wanted to protect the reputations of their, you know, their fathers and their uncles. And, you know, most of these people they were, they were good and they were decent people, but they got caught up in a really, ahm, horrific incident, and it was an ugly war.

T:

As one of the guys said in the programme, they had no choice, that's what they had to do. Take the gun, off you go.

S:

Well, I mean, I don't know. I mean it's very difficult to look back on this incident and, you know, obviously it's 2007, I think our judgements on these things are very different but, ahm, ... to ... to do such a thing, ahm, it seems extraordinary for us now, it was such a brutal act.

T:

But I think that the fact, it seems to be exceptionally brutal. The fact that they were shot in the groin, and then they spun around in pain and got shot in the backside, if you will. Was that meant? Were they aiming there?

S:

Again, there are two different versions of this. Some people say that a lot of these men, I mean, a very powerful contribution to the programme, his father was in the Offaly IRA, his father wouldn't have been there that day, but he said that a lot of these men would never have shot a gun in their lives. They might have only shot a dog in their lives, [laughs] and others not at all. And they just weren't used to handling weapons. But it does seem that a lot of them ended up in the groin area. So some people say it was deliberate. It was symbolic. I mean these were Protestants. They were Outsiders. And a lot of Protestants at this time, remember, they were being run out of the country, they were absolutely terrorized.

T:

It's funny, because you said land grab, that's known nowadays as ethnic cleansing isn't it, I mean, it's the language of the time.

S:

Well I mean, we've obviously, we've looked at this, and I don't think that was something that was being organized from Sinn Féin Headquarters. But at a local level, these things were happening, and there was very little attempt made to control these sort of – ah, this obviously was more than an agrarian outrage but, you know, in other parts of the country, when you think of Dunmanway in West Cork in April 1922, when ten Protestant men were shot over a three day period, a three night period, you know, the oldest man was 82,

he was blind, the youngest, there were two sixteen year olds, and after that hundreds of people fled from that area. Now some of them came back, but a lot of people stayed away. So, you know, we have to ask, why, why did these people go, I mean, they were terrorized.

T:

You went to Australia to find the Pearson descendants, obviously, and what's the mood in the Pearson descendants camp, I mean, do they feel they were run out, do they feel that they were innocents?

S:

Yeah, they, they do, yeah. I mean, you meet these people and they're very gentle, decent, people, and you really get this sense of confusion, how could this have happened to our family.

T:

Maybe their family were spies and traitors?

S:

Well, I mean, obviously, fine, we've looked at the evidence of that and we haven't found any evidence that they were. And it's presented, both sides are presented very clearly in the programme and I hope that people will watch it.

T:

But you feel that the evidence comes down firmly on the side of their innocence, and that they were innocent victims of a bloody time in Irish history?

S:

Well, it's very difficult for there to be any definites you know looking back at something that happened 86 years ago But all I can say is, you research a story very, very carefully. You look at every shard of evidence there is and we couldn't find any.

T:

Are you surprised by the reaction that you've been getting since the programme has been made?

S:

Ahm, yes , I am, I mean I think this is, ah, it's a side of our, our history that we don't look at very often., you know, ahm, ...

T:

Is it the mother of all revisionist polemics?

S:

Ahm, I wouldn't say that, but I think it's another side, ahm, to the War of Independence. You know, the War of Independence is always glorified in our history. You know,

obviously, winning our independence is something to be celebrated, but the brutality of a lot of the things that happened at this time has been hidden from us. And it is quite shocking to look back, and to realize that our fathers, and uncles and grandfathers, committed these acts.

T:

And had many acts committed upon them.

S:

And had many acts committed upon them.

T:

By Crown Forces and other people like that.

S:

It was, it was a cruel time. We've obviously, we've heard about the Black and Tan outrages and everything. That was equally terrible. But we have to look at what was, the, the things that were done, you know, to Protestants in this country.

T:

Horrendous story. Absolutely. ... It's another fine production from you, Niamh, congratulations, I thoroughly enjoyed looking at that and I think everyone who has even a passing interest in history, and Irish history in particular, will enjoy looking at that, well, not enjoy, but be intrigued to watch that story.

**Extract from July 28 interview of P. Muldowney in Kinnitty Castle**

*Ms Sammon's invitation to interview me on 28/7/07 arrived on 18/7/07. I received the British Military Court of Enquiry papers from the British Public Records Office a few of days before the interview. After leaving on July 27 to go to Kinnitty Castle for interview at 10.30 a.m. on July 28, I received a series of messages postponing the interview. It eventually started at about 4.30 p.m. on the 28th.*

The following is the Release Form that was used:

**RELEASE FORM**

*Production Company: Reel Story Productions Ltd. (The Associate)  
Production Title: "Coolacrease" (The Production)*

*I agree to participate in the production of the above mentioned programme, the nature and composition of which has (sic!) been explained to me, and hereby give consent for the filming and recording of my activities, acts and performances.*

*I agree that the tape may be cut or edited for the programme or publicity material associated with the programme, and may be used in association with the exploitation of same.*

*I hereby grant and consign to Reel Story Productions Ltd the copyright and all other rights and interests of whatsoever nature in my contributions to the programme and the right to exploit the same worldwide in all media for the full period of copyright including any extensions, renewals and revivals thereof and thereafter to the extent possible in perpetuity. I hereby also waive any moral rights that may be deemed to be in existence in relation to my contributions and participation in the programme.*

*I acknowledge and agree that my contribution towards the programme and my name and/or likeness may be advertised and used in the exploitation of the programme, at any time and from time to time throughout all the countries of the world in perpetuity. I hereby waive any claim I may have for loss of opportunity to enhance my reputation as a result of the non-inclusion of my contribution in the programme. I confirm and warrant that I m entitled to enter into this release, and am not under contractual or any other obligations precluding me from doing so. I undertake to keep confidential any matter which comes to my attention relating to the programme. I undertake to execute all and any deeds and take such steps as are reasonably required by Reel Story Productions to give effect to the intent of this release. I am not entitled to a credit in relation to my contribution.*

*Agreed & Accepted: ..... (PLEASE PRINT NAME)*

*Signature:*

*Address:*

*Rel/Mobile No.:*

*Signed for Reel Story Productions:*

*The nature of the interview, of which I made my own recording, is demonstrated by the following extract. I expected that I would be asked to prove that the Pearsons were spies or informers. I was determined never to give the only realistic response – that I had no documentary proof of this – because I expected that, if my interview was used, this would be only part of it to be broadcast. Essentially, the interview reduced to a duel to get me to utter these words. The fact that none of the interview was broadcast meant, as far as I was concerned that I won this duel.*

*Ms Sammon: Actually, I'd like to grab the Release Form there.*

P. Muldowney: I'd like to keep it until the end.

S: We usually ... we actually have to get you to sign it now.

M: There.

S: Thank you.

S: OK Dr Muldowney, could you tell me how you first became aware of this story.

M: I read the Eoghan Harris piece in the Independent in 2005, and then I read Paddy Heaney's letter. I come from not far from here in Co. Kilkenny and know about the Stanleys through agricultural connections, and I'd heard a little bit about the trouble here. Through curiosity, in a sense, I got hold of Stanley's book. The events as described by Harris were horrific, and when I read Stanley's book it reinforced that. It was a difficult read, and I read it again, and problems with it began to emerge. For one thing, the first thing that struck me was his stance on the War of Independence, that the British made a grievous mistake in not dealing with this as a military operation. That presumably means a strategy of using their military forces as they were used directly afterwards in Iraq, for instance – bombing, shelling, perhaps gassing. That it seems is his view. What had happened is that a government had been elected in Ireland with an overwhelming mandate and the mandate was reinforced in successive elections, and the government then had to implement that mandate, it couldn't resile from it. And when the British government refused to accept it, and in fact sent in forces to suppress the legitimate, elected, democratic government then either people give up their democratic choice and resign themselves in effect to what would have been perhaps the first instance of overthrowing an elected government by force. There have been many instances subsequently in terms of the brownshirts, the fascisti, marching on Rome and so on ...

S: *May I interrupt you there, it would probably be better if you could make eye contact with me Dr Muldowney rather than looking elsewhere in the room.*

[Ms Sammon was asking questions off-camera, so I was following the camera.]

M: I can do that, but I'm thinking of the subject. Let's see, where are we now.

S: ...

M: The first problem with Stanley's book ...

S: *Let me interrupt you there ... Just to go back quickly, you said something, you said that when you read that story initially you found it quite horrific. What did you find so horrific about it?*

M: Well, the idea that ... the way that the execution is presented, these men are taken, stood up against a wall, they are fired at with dum-dum bullets to the genitals, the family is forced to watch, the object is to make some ghastly point about ethnic cleansing, and to send out a message, that anyone who would resist it would be treated accordingly. Of

course it turns out that that is a complete misrepresentation of what actually happened. That didn't happen at all, by the evidence that the family themselves gave to the Court of Inquiry. It was something quite different. In fact the execution itself was botched, they received superficial wounds, and died from lack of medical attention. As you go through the book there's a lot of ... in fact the whole thing turned out to be a recital of atrocity propaganda which is a complete misrepresentation of what actually happened, and I presume the purpose of doing it is to renew the propaganda of the time, which was, in order to subvert ... to accompany the military suppression and overthrow of the democratically elected government, that this kind of stuff would be fed into the public arena, for Ireland, for England, for America and so on. That is the problem with the book. That's how I got into it. My own sort of background, in a way, is, I come from Kilkenny which is not too far from here, and I've worked in the North since about 1970 and had an involvement, in a sense, campaigning for a recognition of a right of self-determination for the Ulster Protestants, which means in effect that they are recognised as a separate, independent national community of some sort, and that means the removal of the claim in the Irish constitution of a de jure right to rule the Six Counties. At the time that would have been seen by most people as quite outrageous but in effect that's what happened in the end. As the Peace Process went to a conclusion, there was a referendum to amend the constitution in that respect, and the general idea that there would be some sort of forced integration of the Six Counties ...

*S: Just to come back, why do you think the Pearsons were targeted by the IRA?*

M: Well, they engaged on the side of the military terror of the Imperial government in its efforts to suppress the elected government. There is no doubt about this, this is the nitty gritty of the whole thing. We have the responsible authorities on the Irish side, which is the officer in command of the executions, and the commanding officer for the county, reporting to the commander in chief who was answerable to the government, who had in fact insisted that the situation in Offaly, in terms of the presence and the activities of the Black and Tan forces and so on, that something be done about it in the crucial time of run-up to the elections [SHOULD BE Truce]. So that was why, on the Irish side that was the thing. And on the British side,... if you take for instance Stanley's standpoint on this, I presume he would rule that out of order [I MEANT HERE THE IRISH AUTHORITY AND REPORT OF THE EXECUTIONS] in the sense that he regarded them as criminal rebels as opposed to a democratically elected government with their armed forces and their various officials, the county councils which were part of it and supported it, the courts and so on ...

*S: (interruption)*

M: The point being, that if you rule that out if it, then the other responsible party would be the authority on the British side, which is the RIC. And the RIC give exactly the same reason, that the Pearsons were shot because of the fact that they had engaged in an armed attack on the Volunteer forces, shot two of them and, they thought, killed one. As it happened, that person was blasted in the stomach with a shotgun, but in fact he survived because he got medical attention, unlike the Pearsons when they were shot in a botched execution by inexperienced soldiers. Mick Heaney recovered in Tullamore Hospital. The Pearsons were seen by a local dispensary doctor after two or three hours, and then he died in the field by about ten o'clock. The other one was brought to Crinkle Military Hospital and was seen at two o'clock by the relevant army doctor who then went back to bed. He

reports again superficial wounds. When he got up the second man was also dead. So, the British side also comes to the same conclusion as to why these executions took place. So, the point being, as an action of the forces of the elected government, in terms of fighting, of resisting the attempt to overthrow the elected government by these Black and Tan forces, the forerunners of the Brownshirts, Stormtroopers, whatever you want to call them, this kind of anti-democratic militia, becoming a feature of the post-war situation; so, the British, then, also have the same interpretation. In fact this is the point, going back to Stanley's book, that, if you look closely at it, it turns out that his father was in fact a paramilitary from Laois who had been involved in a loyalist paramilitary outfit, and ordered out because of his activities. He reports to his son that the Pearsons and, I presume, himself, went down there to the roadblock, then returned with shotguns, he says, fired over their heads. In fact two men were shot. Three in fact, another one was a civilian who was under arrest; in fact he lost a lung ...

*S: Just to come back to that, actually, this is a very important incident obviously. Where is the evidence that anybody was shot that night?*

*M: The evidence is what was considered by the responsible authorities on the Irish side, at the time, and by the responsible authorities on the British side, which is the RIC. Now, they would have had the evidence presented to them. We take it that these people are not ... On the Irish side, these people are the forerunners of our present ... - as was Mick Heaney, of course, who was shot – of our present apparatus of state, our system of law and order and so on. And on the British side the RIC. They took evidence. They reported to a formal Military Inquiry, they reported in fact that the Pearsons had shot two men. Now we can't expect ... we don't have a video of the thing, we're not here to re-run that Military Tribunal. Of course we can't do that. It was done by people who weren't fools. This then is the fully documented explanation of the executions of the Pearson brothers*

...

*S: (Interrupts) In terms of documented evidence, can you tell me what that documented evidence ...*

*M: The documented evidence is in the British Public Records Office, on the one hand, on the British side, and in the Bureau of Military History and other archives on the Irish side. The British one is the Report of the Court of Inquiry which includes the RIC explanation of the ... of their investigation of the shootings, and their report on it. And it's quite clear, there's no doubt on any side. And it's clear from ...*

*S: (interrupts) ... I've actually read that Court of Inquiry file, and it doesn't actually say categorically that they shot members of the IRA.*

*M: The wording used ... obviously they don't say that the forces of the elected government executed two people who were collaborating with the terrorist forces who were organising a coup, a revolution, against the legitimate government. They don't do that. What they say is that it was a revenge killing by the IRA for shooting two of their men. That is pretty well verbatim, I can show it to you if you want. But ...*

*S: (interrupts) I guess that is the reason the IRA gave for the attack. But what I'm saying*

...

*M: (interrupts) Oh no, no, no ... it's the reason the RIC ...*

*S: (continues) There isn't any medical evidence that anyone was actually shot that night. You actually say, in one of your own documents, that Mick Heaney was mortally wounded that night. I suppose what I'm asking you is: **Where's the body?***

M: Mick Heaney was wounded sufficiently that he died later. If you want his death certificate ... But the point is, we are not, ...

*S: (interrupts) ...*

M: ... we are not running the British Military Tribunal, you see. We're hardly qualified to do it. They did it. The RIC are the investigating body on the British side. They report that the Pearsons were shot because they had engaged with gunfire against the Volunteers and shot two of them. They thought one was shot fatally. In fact the man recovered because he was treated in Tullamore Hospital.

*S: Did he die or did he survive? I'm not clear about that.*

M: It would appear that he survived for a number of years. Obviously, if you get shot in the stomach with a shotgun blast you're not going to be an Olympics candidate. So, the documentary evidence sends us back that RIC report. If you take the Stanley view that the Irish reports, the reports of the democratically elected government are somehow out of ... not to be considered – all of the reports say exactly the same thing. And we do know, from Stanley's book, that they went - they were armed – they went back to the thing, they fired shots, he says over their heads. The RIC say that two of them were shot, they thought one was killed, ...

*S: (interrupts) What the RIC report actually says, it reports the fact that **the IRA** say the two Pearsons were shot because they were involved in an altercation ...*

M: (interrupts) It does not. Let me check it ...

...

M: OK. "The C.I. of Queens County" (that's the Chief Inspector) "said 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." And so on. "It is further rumoured when the farm house was burning, two guns fell out of the roof." That is their report. They report to the Military Inquiry that the Pearsons had fetched guns, fired, and wounded two Sinn Feiners, one of whom, it is believed, died. That essentially is the same as the Cordial report, that is Michael Cordial who was responsible for the executions, responsible for administering the decision of the court martial of the Commanding Officer for the County, ...

*S: (interrupts) Were they not basing that on local reports though?*

M: (laughs) This is what it says. What other meaning can we take out of this, except that the Pearsons fetched the two guns, fired, and wounded two Sinn Feiners, one whom it is believed died – pretty clear.

(... Silence ...)

*S: ... medical records ...*

M: (interrupts) That is the RIC business. I presume they dealt with that. This is a Court within the legal system ...

*S: (interrupts) ... my question ... they were taken to a secret ward in Tullamore Hospital*

...

M: ... (interrupts) We need to talk about ... which are we talking about? Are we talking about the verdict of both the Irish authorities and the British authorities on this execution, or what? The point was that a military engagement took place. We have two forces at war in the county. They were civilian. They were not officially part of the British forces. They engage with the Irish Army when it's conducting its resistance to the Black and Tan

forces. It's too clearcut. There isn't much further to go on that. You can go ... you can look at William Pearson's deposition to the Distress Committee. He says ... what is it he says? "We worked for the Crown Forces", something of that sort. He didn't mean that they were making sandwiches for them or ironing their uniforms ...

*S: (interrupts) ... He didn't actually say that ...*

M: ... something of this nature ...

*S: What he said is that he was an ardent loyalist ...*

M: An ardent loyalist and ... let's check that ... no, I don't have it with me.

[HERE IS THE RELEVANT QUOTE FROM THE PEARSON DEPOSITION TO THE DISTRESS COMMITTEE (the British government's agency for compensating Irish loyalists, also known as the Irish Grants Committee) THAT I COULD NOT FIND in the heat of the moment:

*5. Do you claim that the loss or injury described was occasioned in respect or on account of your allegiance to the Government of the United Kingdom? If so, give particulars on which you base this claim. {Pearson's response:} Yes. I was always known as a staunch Loyalist and upholder of the Crown. **I assisted the Crown Forces on every occasion, and I helped those who were persecuted around me at all times.**]*

The thing is, the truth is that the .... every official, responsible report on the executions has this. There really isn't much more to say. And in Stanley's book - in fact that is the thing that really swung it for me in Stanley's book - he sort of casually says that his father William Stanley has been involved in an armed outfit which did target practice and worked with the Auxiliaries, the Black and Tan terror forces, you might call it that, that they went down to this roadblock, fired, but over their heads. Another interesting thing in Stanley's book is, he quotes his father's cousin, Oliver Stanley, - it's the same thing in fact - he says that the IRA thought, that at the roadblock two men of the IRA had been wounded - I can't remember whether he said killed or not. But that it was a mistake, it was the security forces, the Black and Tans or such had done it, so Oliver Stanley said it was sort of a genuine mistake, you know, that the IRA had mistakenly got the impression that the men had been shot, in other words, that the Pearsons had done it. That if they had done it, they had brought this upon themselves. Which is the general view of this thing. Tragic, of course. Who wants war? And who knows what individuals of particular backgrounds ...

*S: (interrupts) I suppose what Alan Stanley is saying is that late at night, when the light wouldn't have been great, and there was this uncertainty about ...*

M: There is no uncertainty in the reports. The thing is that Oliver Stanley wanted to believe that the Pearsons really hadn't done it, you see. He doesn't want to believe it. If they had done it, the implication of what he says is that, really, they got what was coming to them. Which is what everyone really understood - that's how everybody understood it.

*S: When you say everybody, who do you mean?*

M: This is why the story was a dead one, you see, until this Harris/Stanley publicity on the thing ...

[Technical pause.]

*S: To stick with this incident, this important incident ...*

M: (interrupts) It's a bit more than important. There is no other incident in connection with this case, in terms of the reasons for the executions. They were not executed because of some nonsensical squabble over a mass path. They were not executed for informing, spying or anything like that. That's not what they were charged with. Of course, if they were prepared to go out and engage militarily, ... If you prepared to go in and steal a video camera you're surely prepared to go in and steal a bag of crisps. You know what I mean? It's a much lesser issue, if you know what I mean. But the point was, in terms of

the official records of an event which was officially investigated, in a formal sense, according to procedures, at the time, by both sides, both the Irish side and the British side, that is what they were executed for. Nothing else came into it.

*S: Did Tom Burke's statement to Headquarters not mention that they were suspected of spying?*

*M: Why wouldn't they? You see, this is my point ... (interruptions) ... they were executed for – what it says in those documents is that they were executed for carrying out the attack. Now, spying – you can take it as read, if they were prepared to do that – why wouldn't they? If they had the bottle, if they had the bottle to go down and do that, that is no little thing. Do you think they would hesitate – these were people who knew and understood the area. They had strong beliefs. They had powerful beliefs. Their beliefs – they were destructive, negative, they were anti-democratic; in fact they conformed with the general trend of the time towards violent attacks on elected governments, assassination of elected representatives and so on and so on and so on. That was where their beliefs lay. As it did in many other countries. So the spying thing, ... is pretty much irrelevant. Obviously, if they had enough courage – they certainly weren't short of courage – then here is no question where their loyalties lay, and so on. And they put their money where their mouth was.*

*S: OK let's just examine those things. Obviously there is some distance between being a loyalist and actively spying. I spoke to Paddy Heaney and Philip McConway and obviously we looked at everything. Can you tell me what proof you have discovered that the Pearsons were spies?*

*M: I'm not interested in spying things. I just assume that ... We know that they were shot, or executed, for their actual engagement in the war ...*

**[The interview continued in this vein – P.M.]** ... they also mention the mass path, the mass path is also a kind of mood music, background music. It's a red herring, to be honest with you.

*S: Do you not believe Tom Burke's statement? [“THE ENEMY IS KEPT WELL-INFORMED OF THE ACTIONS AND PERSONNEL OF OUR FORCE IN THE DISTRICT AND ARRESTS HAVE BEEN FREQUENT. THERE IS GOOD GROUNDS FOR SUSPECTING THE FAMILY OF TRANSMITTING INFORMATION”]*

*M: I told you what I believe [THAT THE EXECUTION WAS ORDERED FOR THE ROADBLOCK ATTACK]. I told you what is reasonable. How many ways is it possible to explain this? That being seriously, and devotedly, committed to this particular cause [MILITARY SUPPRESSION OF THE IRISH GOVERNMENT], they were prepared to fight for it, they would be damn fools if they didn't do the simpler work [SPYING/INFORMING]. The formal reasons for the executions were what we discussed. The other things [SPYING/INFORMING]– they are interesting. We could go on and on. This whole argument is a five-minute argument. It's an open-and-shut case as to what they did, in terms of the reasons for them being shot. And ... there is no disagreement about it.*

*S: In one your letters to me you mention about them being guilty of helping the Black and Tan terror campaign. In what respect?*

*M: When they engaged ... You have two opposing military forces, the forces of the Irish government, and the forces which were seeking to overthrow it by violence, and by*

assassinations, and by hostage-taking, and by shooting up football crowds, and so on and so on and so on. You have this. And when they got into a fight with one side, it was because they were on the other side. How better can you possibly help the Crown Forces than by actually taking up arms on their behalf?

*S: In terms of these spying allegations, you say they would have been damn fools not to spy. What evidence do you have that they were spying?*

M: When I say they would have been damn fools not to spy, that's all that I am saying. The thing is, as far as I am concerned, it's not an interesting issue. I mean,.. I suppose you could say that, ... let's see – various things happened. Hmm ... yeah; we can operate at the level of, say, proof; in terms of the appointed authorities, that's to say, what findings they came to, and what they have left to us. Now, we could take endless pleasure in speculation, about history and so on. If we want to join in that, let's see. Yes. The case of the rows, this sectarian squabbling over the mass path. They fell a tree, they knock down a tree, then they spread excrement on a stile. And these are family groups going to Sunday service. Then they pull guns on them. Just think about it. These are women and children, in their Sunday best. And they threaten them. The IRA then have to restore order in some way. They make them back off. Those two guys, Horan and Dillon, are arrested the following day. So ... what happened? Are we to assume that the Pearsons said we can positively identify Horan and Dillon, they came up here and warned us off with guns, we'll stand over that. And we know where they live. This is the kind of thing. That's speculation, you see.

*S: (interrupts) You say that happened, or ...*

M: I can speculate about it. I believe that, if they had the bottle to actually go out and fight for their beliefs, .... they paid the price, as people around here actually said, that they brought it upon themselves. They paid the price for it. Tragic, of course. But that was it. They fought for it. Why would they not do anything else that was required? I mean, this is speculative stuff that you're asking me to get into ... There was no Court of Inquiry about spying. There was no Court of Inquiry about mass paths. What can we do, then, except take on board what is consistently spoken about. And there is consistency in it. On the other side, you see, there isn't consistency. William Pearson's deposition, it's so full of flagrant lies that the credibility ... And the same applies to David Pearson's letter, and to stuff that's coming through to us on the Stanley side. The misrepresentation of what happened, in terms of these ... let's call them advocates .. of the Pearsons, is so self-contradictory, and so ... What did William Pearson say, he said 500 men came into the yard; he said that he had gone to Crinkle that morning to get help, in fact when everyone else says he went to Mountmellick to a religious meeting, the Annual Convention of the Cooneyites. Yes, he said that his daughter was fired at, that she lost a chunk of her hair, a convenient thing to lose when you say it in 1929 [**SHOULD BE 1927**]. He didn't say that they blew her hand off. No-one fired at any of the daughters. Because if they had, it would have come out at the Inquiry, it would have been said at the time. Because the Dublin Castle propaganda statement would have picked it up to the nth degree. These contradictions on that side ... What we are trying to do here is trying to assess the various kinds of things which can't be verified by formal ... like, say, the Military Inquiry or the IRA Reports to the government. When those things agree, we know we are on pretty firm ground. (...? ...On these other issues(?)) we are not, obviously. There is no point in beating the air and demanding "Give me the evidence,

give me the evidence”. Do you want a video of it, or what? ( ... interruptions...) What I’m saying is that the ... in terms of this kind of mood music that’s coming down from the two sides, the Pearson side is very unreliable ...

LONG TECHNICAL PAUSE

[Conversation with camera man (C):

*C: Was there any autopsy done?*

*M: You can more or less guess from the medical reports. They were not proper autopsies. Actually it’s extraordinary ... I know Niamh’s position, I know what she’s at. But they were treated like dogs, you know, nobody had any time for them, you see. The young fellow, the other young fellow went up to neighbours, the Protestant Jacksons of Killnaparson. He told him to get lost, “just get out of here, you brought it on yourselves”. I’m not going to get into this thing, I know Niamh wants me to get into arguments about all this other stuff, which, you see, is all mood music, you see. It’s consistent on the Irish side, it’s contradictory and all over the place on the other side. You know, they lied, lied, lied, lied, lied. .... Alan Stanley has this thing about them being shot in the groin. What the doctor talks about is the left **[SHOULD BE RIGHT]** groin. You have two groins. The groin is the part of the body where your hip **[SHOULD BE THIGH]** meets your torso, the kind of recess there, you see. Now they could have been hit in the genitals, they could have been hit anywhere. These soldiers had no real experience of long-term warfare like they had in Cork or Dublin ...]*

The interview resumed. Though she kept returning (more or less at random), like a dog to a buried bone, to the spying/informing issue, at some point Ms Sammon moved on to the actual executions. Two questions were:

- 1. Why were they shot in the groin?*
- 2. Why were the family forced to watch?*

Question 1 would only be asked if it is assumed that “groin” is being used as the modern euphemism for “genitals”, rather than in the correct and anatomical sense, in which “groin” means the fold or hollow where the thigh meets the torso. The words “right groin” were what were in Dr. F.W. Woods’ (Kinnitty) medical report, so we must take it that his words were intended, not in the modern, euphemistic sense, but in the medical, anatomical sense. If the modern euphemism was then current, why would he say “right groin” rather than “groin”? Why not ask the question, why were they shot in the left shoulder, or some other uninteresting place? So Ms Sammon’s question really means “Why were they shot in the genitals?” My answer was to explain what the right groin actually is. Similarly, to the other question I explained that the evidence given by the two sisters to the Military Court of Inquiry proved clearly that the family did not witness (in the sense of “see”) the executions, and that Michael Cordial explained this in his 1957 Witness Statement.

### **Other questions in the interview**

Ms Sammon brought up the disposal of the farm. In William Pearson’s Distress Committee deposition, a farrago of professionally crafted lies tacked on to a small core of facts, he has a statement that, due to boycott and intimidation in furtherance of land-grab,

he was unable to arrange to sell the farm by auction or any other means. I pointed out that the local King's County Chronicle had a report of auction of Pearson place in which the highest bid (by Mr Finnamore of Kolcormac) did not meet Pearson's reserve price. In order to boost the compensation demanded from the Distress/Grants Committee (for a farm which cost £2000 in 1911) Pearson submitted the following letter: "*Regarding the sale of Coolacrease after the burning. The Price I offered was £10,000 & I might have gone higher only the people would not allow any outsider to Purchase the Lands I was not allowed to close the bargain. William Percy, Williamsfort, Frankford, King's Co.*" Ms Sammon raised this letter, and I pointed out how it was most unlikely to be genuine. Ms Sammon declared that: "We have Land Commission documents that indicate the sale was forced".

Some other interview questions: Ms Sammon referred to one of my letters to her which said the local people were "generous and forgiving". She asked me what the locals had to forgive the Pearsons for. She actually seemed not to understand (or perhaps this was just another throw of the dice, to catch me on camera saying that the Pearsons were spies and informers) so I explained yet again. She asked me why I thought the matter was best forgotten. I explained that exhuming the corpses (figuratively) meant that the real character of the Pearsons would now have to be exposed in order to prevent a travesty. She asked me why I was so passionate about the issue. (Earlier I'd said that if I'd known about the Report of the British Military Inquiry I would never have got interested, as the Report establishes in routine fashion the rather boring fact that a couple of commonplace loyalist Black and Tan collaborators received the standard war-time punishment. Whereas the challenge which originally interested me was extracting exactly the same truth which was concealed within Stanley's book). I said that what got me going was the Stanley/Harris attempt to slander, for instance, Mick Heaney who when he took a Pearson shotgun blast in the stomach at the roadblock, embodied and represented the dignity of the present Irish state – its President, government, opposition, law, courts, diplomats, officials, police, army. At the end Ms Sammon took some trouble to get some kind of closing statement from me of a conciliatory nature. I co-operated with this.

[Podcast of above available at:

<http://www.indymedia.ie/article/85285>]

**THE KILLINGS AT COOLACREASE**

**A “Reel Story Production”**

**FOR RTE**

**Hidden History Series**

**As broadcast on Tuesday 23<sup>rd</sup> of October 2007**

**Produced/Directed by: Niamh Sammon**

**Narrator: Orla Brady**

**Script consultant: Pat Sammon**

**Reasearch: 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

### [Picture/soundtrack]

#### **Wide Shot:**

.....Cornfields/trees/f  
lowers

**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

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.

contest they joined of their own volition was not a morally neutral one. They attacked the “good guys” on behalf of the “bad guys”.

**Main Title (White against black)**

**[Picture/soundtrack]**

**THE KILLINGS AT COOLACREASE**

**[Interview/Voiceover]**

**Voiceover/narrator:** *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.*

**Wide shot:** .....Slieve Bloom Mts/sky/landscapes/[gothic mood music]

**Voiceover/Jenny Turnidge (Great-grand-daughter of Wm. & S. Pearson) :** *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*

**Wideshot:**..... Fields/skies

**Voiceover/narrator:** *At four pm on the 30<sup>th</sup> 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.*

**Close up:**..... Turnidge

**Interview/ Senator E. Harris:** *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.*

**Close up:** .....Archive photo of house.

**Interview/Paddy Heaney (local Historian):** *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.*

**CU:** .....Ruins

**CU:** .....Harris

**CU :** .....Heaney

**V/O Narrator:** *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*

**Archive:**..... British Auxilary raid

**Wideshots:**..... Cornfields

: Farm House

*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.*

: Landscape  
: Sheep

**V/O Vernon Pearson (Grandson Wm. Pearson):**

*There was a number of kids from both families. At dinner time they used to go to where the best smell was, and that's where they all went for dinner.*

**CU:.....** Vernon

**Archive Pictures:**

.....Susan Pearson

**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.*

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

**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.*

**Family shots**

**Close up:** .....Flowers

**Close up:**.... William Pearson

**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.*

**Close up:** .....House ruins  
Fields  
Close up Vernon

**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.*

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

**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.*

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

**church choral music**

**Close up:** .....Ed Cooney and Cooneyites.

**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*

**Close up:**..... Gillespie

**(Music: Big House Choral**

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.*

**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.**

**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)

**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...

**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.*

**[piano music]**

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

**shots...** fields of hay

**shots...** of big house in ruins

**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.*

**[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.*

**[piano music].**

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

**[piano music]**

**\*\*\*\*\* 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.**

**C.U.** ...name of Wm.

Pearson on document showing purchase price of Coolacrease in 1911, £2000.

**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.*

**C.U...**map of farms..

**C.U.** Dr. Dooley....

**\*\*\*\*\* 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?**

**Narrator...[VO]:**

*In Co. Offaly, one estate of 4,000 acres was divided into almost 100 holdings. One farm at Coolacrease 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 Coolacrease 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.**

**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..**

**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]*

**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}...**

**[dramatic trill of piano music...]**

**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**

*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.**

**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. Compare this with: “By 1919, Britain had resumed a bloody campaign of suppression of Irish democracy.” The third sentence contradicts the argument made by Dr. Murphy later 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.**

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

**CU: Vernon  
[piano music]**

**CU...more hurling shots...**

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

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

**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 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.*

**Philip McConway..[local IRA historian..1919/1922]..**

*Richard Pearson, in particular, was particularly aggressive towards local volunteers who he viewed with contempt.*

**J .J. Dillon..[VO]....**

*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.*

**CU.....Pr. English**

**...[piano music]**

**shots** ....of 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 road with scythe...

**CU.....feet on road...**

**Mood music..**

**CU...P. McConway...**

**WS...two men on road with scythe...**

**...[mood music...]**

**Jenny Turnidge...[VO]...**

*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.*

**WS** ....men on road...

**CU**.....Turnidge

**\*\*\*\*\* COMMENT 11:**

**Opportunity for rebuttal given to a Pearson protagonist.  
No reciprocal opportunity given.**

**Narrator...{VO}..**

*But there may have been another reason for the rift between the Pearsons and their neighbours. During the 1<sup>st</sup> 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.*

**WS**....cornfield...

**CU**.....yellow corn

**[No music]....**

**Dr Dooley...[author]...[VO]..**

*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.*

**WS**...fields of corn....no music...

**CU**...Dooley

**WS**...Pearson House...

**\*\*\*\*\* 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 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, or £15000, or £17000), and many more such lies. No uncritical credence can be given to anything in this application.**

**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.**

**\*\*\*\*\* 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 incident.*

**J.J. Dillon...[VO]...**

*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.*

**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, expressing criticism of their military effectiveness, but from a standpoint of opposition to their political objectives (or, at best, critical neutrality).**

**Cu..Cadamstown IRA...looking shifty..**

**\*\*\*\*\*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.**

**Narrator..[vo]...**

*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.*

**Paddy Heaney...[vo]..**

*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.*

**Murphy...[vo]**

*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.*

**\*\*\*\*\* 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**

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

*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.*

**Ruth Kelly...[granddaughter ...Pearsons..]..**

*She was beautiful. She was a very strong woman, y'know. If she wanted to do something, she did it.*

**CU...Dillon...**

**CU...British Auxies in Ireland...**

**WS....IRA prisoners being rounded up**

**Ws...more prisoners ..**

**Ws..civilians being searched**

**CU...Murphy**

**CU..Harris**

**Ws ..Cornfields... [piano mood music]...**

**CU Ruth**

**\*\*\*\*\* 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.**

**CU...actress as Tilly Pearson. Lots of mood music]...Walks out with British soldier...**

**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.*

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

**\*\*\*\*\* 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.**

**CU....Heaney...**

**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.*

**"Tilly" and Soldier**

**\*\*\*\*\* 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.**

**CU.....Harris...**

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

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

**Archive...**B&W photo of Tilly Pearson

**\*\*\*\*\* 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.**

**[piano music]...**

**Narrator...{vo}...**

*At this time Tilly Pearson may in fact have been seeing her future husband.*

**CU ....R.I.C. man..**

**Ruth Kelly...[vo]**

*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.*

**Shots** of Ruth Kelly's parents...archive...

**Cu...**Ruth Kelly..

**\*\*\*\*\* COMMENT 20:**

**Further irrelevant misdirection against Paddy Heaney's argument – except that Paddy Heaney argued something quite different which is NOT refuted.**

**Cu...** house...

**Narrator...[vo]..**

*There were other incidents, however, cited as evidence that the Pearsons were enemy collaborators at a time of war.*

**WS....**cows cross avenue..

**CU** Stanley...fields/avenue

**Alan Stanley...[son of William stanley..]...[vo]**

*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.*

**\*\*\*\*\* 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.**

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

**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.*

**CU....**English...

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

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

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

**Narrator...[vo]...**

*But it was the presence of William Stanley at Coolacrease 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.*

**[piano music]**

**CU...archive**  
.Wm. Stanley

**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.*

**WS.....**haymaking..

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

**\*\*\*\*\* 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 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 was nipped in the bud 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.

CU...Heaney...

**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 met and knew in his rambles in the area.*

**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 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.*

**Ws**...cattle straying across avenue

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

**Archive** ....shots of auxies

**\*\*\*\*\* 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 weaken 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.*

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

**[spacey mood music]**

**\*\*\*\*\* 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.**

**CU...lad** walks in wood in a hurry...

**Paddy Heaney...[vo]..**

*I do believe that the Pearsons were spies. Everything added up, that the Pearsons were involved in an underground movement. And people knew that.*

**\*\*\*\*\* 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”).**

**CU McConway**

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

*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.*

**[mood music]**

**\*\*\*\*\* COMMENT 27:**

**The Narrator has already planted the idea editorially that none of this could conceivably be true – “pre-buttal”.**

**Narrator....[vo]...**

*At a time of war local speculations could have serious consequences. In other parts of the*

**various CU’s**  
conspiratorial lads around a table looking tense....dragging on

*country, notably Cork, alleged informers were shot without much hard evidence. But did the local IRA have more on the Pearsons?*

fags...meaningfully..

**CU's.....**

...more of same....

**\*\*\*\*\* 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 of the supposed interview!**

**\*\*\*\*\* COMMENT:**

The visual prompts show the Pearsons going about their farming work peacefully and innocently, while ominous, militaristic stuff is afoot all around them.

**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.*

**CU's....**

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

**Cu....English**

**\*\*\*\*\* 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**

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

further by the editorial methods of the documentary.

Bros

CU.....Heaney

**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.*

CU.....archive  
British soldiers

CU McConway

**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.*

[blast of music]

CU.....fields

**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.

WS.....mass path

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

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

**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.*

**\*\*\*\*\* 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.*

**tree-growing strip of ground.**

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

**\*\*\*\*\* COMMENT**

**The local IRA Volunteers were not living in hideouts. They lived openly in their own homes, where many of them were arrested immediately following incidents involving the Pearsons. The McRedmonds, Joe O'Carroll, Tom Donnelly, JJ Horan lived adjacent to the Pearsons. It was not the IRA, but the Crown forces, who had to take precautions when moving around the area.**

**The impression is given here that, in the mass path dispute, the Pearsons responded to some external factor, challenge or provocation. But every account of this subject shows that the Pearsons took the initiative.**

**CU.....McConway**

**CU Stanley**

**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}*

**\*\*\*\*\* 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.**

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

**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.*

**CU Murphy**

**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.....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?**

**CU.....Richard Mulcahy  
inspecting IRA troops in  
field**

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

*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*

**CU.....IRA organizer.....  
TOM BURKE**

**Murphy ...[vo]**

*Tom Burke was a trusted organizer, well known in GHQ. Upon his arrival you can see a significant change in Offaly.*

\*\*\*\*\* 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?

CU.....IRA documents

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

*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.*

\*\*\*\*\* 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.**

**[burst of choral music]**

**Murphy ...[vo]...**

*There was a considerable number of shootings of spies in Offaly between May/July 1921. On 17<sup>th</sup> 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.*

WS....various.....SLIEVE BLOOM

CU.....typing...

CU.....RIC man outside barracks

CU...photo of Pearsons.... Police, document being typed

**CU English**

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

*....So those who were seen as closer to the British forces would have been at greater risk at this point in summer 1921.*

\*\*\*\*\* COMMENT 36:

**As were those who were actually in collaboration with the imperial terror. The sequence of contributions above is designed to give the impression that the trouble that befell the Pearsons was not of their making, but was a consequence of how Mulcahy and Burke amended their strategy in Offaly in 1921.**

CU .....big ominous night

**Narrator...[vo]...**

*There were deadly whispers in the wind. At this point an event occurred which sealed the fate of the Pearsons.*

sky.....

**[blast of gothic choral music]**

**\*\*\*\*\* 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.**

**Murphy ...[i/v]..**

*One night in June 1921, the local IRA embarked on an activity that was typical of that period, blocking roads.*

**CU.....Murphy**

**Paddy Heaney...[vo]...**

*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.*

**CU,S.....lads in woods with guns**

**[dramatic music]**

**Michael Donnelly...[vo]..**

*My uncle Tom Donnelly and another man were providing armed cover. Both of them were armed.*

**CU,S.....men in woods**

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

*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.*

**CU .....Stanley**

**CU,S....men shouting at each other**

**\*\*\*\*\*COMMENT:**

**This is the crux of the whole Coolacree 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. The tree was at the point on the roadside where the Pearsons' land adjoined the farm of JJ Horan, an IRA**

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.

**\*\*\*\*\*COMMENT:**

**This is one of many notable instances of the documentary**

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.

reversing situations from the way they are actually reported. There are only two detailed accounts of the roadblock incident, Paddy Heaney’s and Alan Stanley’s. The “Who goes there?” comment is reported by Paddy Heaney, not by Alan Stanley. But in Paddy Heaney’s account, this warning or challenge is given, not by Richard Pearson but by Vol. Mick Heaney.

**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.**

**\*\*\*\*\* 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!**

**MICHAEL Donnelly...[vo]**

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

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

**CU** Man firing gun horizontally

**CU.....**Heaney

**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.*

**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.*

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

**CU.....woods scene**

**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.*

**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.**

**\*\*\*\*\* 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.**

**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.*

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

**\*\*\*\*\* 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.*

**CU....**Heaney

**[blast of music]**

**\*\*\*\*\* 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***

## THE KILLINGS AT COOLACREASE

[Picture / soundtrack]

### PART TWO

[ Interview/voice over]

**Alan Stanley... (VO)**

*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.*

**CU**.....men sitting around  
Table ....conspiring

**CU**....faces looking tense

**CU**....Stanley

**JJ Dillon... (VO)**

*In conflict those things occur. Like hatred comes into it, revenge comes into it.*

**CU** ....men around table

\*\*\*\*\* **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.**

**Narrator... (VO)**

*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.*

[eerie music]

**CU** .....mountains

**Actors Voice...(statement of Tom Burke):**

*“ 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”.*

CU.....hand stubs out cigarette

**Ph. Mc Conway (VO)...**

*If the local IRA were to be criticised, it was that they were too lenient and that they showed consistent restraint, given the provocation by the Pearsons. And that restraint almost cost the lives of two volunteers.*

CU....men around table

CU....McConway

[doomy music]

**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”.*

CU....men around table...

CU ...hard faced men [actors]...around table...

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

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

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

*It's 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.*

CU.....English

CU....men around table...

[mood music]

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

**The Irish Military Court of Enquiry, or Officers' Battalion Council, 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.

CU...fields...

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

[music]

*“ 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.”*

CU... blue cigarette smoke  
.....snakes up slowly

**Ph. Mc Conway (VO)...**

*Ultimately it was the senior IRA leadership who took the decision to execute. In the context of the times it was a necessary military action to protect and safeguard local republicans.*

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

**P.Heaney (I/V)...**

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

CU...Heaney

[dramatic burst of music]

**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.*

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...

**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.*

WS... postman on bike  
cycling ...then he “vanishes”

\*\*\*\*\*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].”

Jimmy 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 Coolacree 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.)*

Jimmy Delahunty became postman in 1924. From 1982 Alan Stanley consulted Tom Mitchell of Kinnitty, who lived next door to Jimmy 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.)

### Pr. R. English (VO)...

*It's claimed that the Pearsons got a warning on the day of the 30<sup>th</sup> 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.*

**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]**

**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 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*

**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

**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...

*officer on the day, Joe Connolly.*

Pearson's house burnt  
out

**\*\*\*\*\* 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.**

**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.*

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

**Ruth Kelly (VO)....**

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

**CU,s...house burning...**

**CU,s.... house burning**

**\*\*\*\*\* 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.**

**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.)

**Heaney (VO)...**

*The Court Martial was read out.*

**CU.....**Heaney...

**Stanley (VO)...**

*They were told, apparently, that they had been sentenced to death, making it all nice and legal and proper, of course.*

**CU...**IRA firing squad...

**CU...**faces ...Pearson boys

**P. Heaney (VO)....**

*The executions were duly carried out.*

**CU...**firing squad shoots..

**CU...**Pearsons fall screaming ..clutching groins..

**Stanley (VO)...**

*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.*

**\*\*\*\*\* 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.**

**Stanley (VO)...**

*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.*

**Pr. Richard English (VO)...**

*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.*

**\*\*\*\*\* 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.**

**JJ Dillon (VO)...**

*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**

**WS**...firing squad fires again with five (!) adult women in background looking on

**CU**.....womans face in horror...

**CU**...more firing...  
Then.... ...[angelic choral music]...

**CU**.....Pearsons in **slow motion**... falling to ground...**much blood**...

**Hate-filled face of executioner**

**CU**,...,Richard on ground writhing in pain being attended by girls...

**CU**.....Abraham bleeding on ground...

[angelic mood music]

**CU'S**....women attending Pearson boys on ground in yard

**CU'S**.....women attending boys on ground...plus

[mood music]..

**CU**.....Dillon...

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

**CU,S** .....bleeding boys being attended to by women

*“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. on ground.....

**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.*

**CU.....Harris...**

**CU.....bloodied boys again..**

**\*\*\*\*\* 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.**

**[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.*

**CU**.....Susan Pearson..

**\*\*\*\*\* 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.*

**CU**...Sen. Harris

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

**CU**...Harris

**CU**.....Pearson family...outside burnt out house

....[**fade to black**...]

**[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.*

**\*\*\*\*\* 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**

**CU ...Turnidge**

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

**CU.....flowers...**

**CU....Killermogh church in Co Laois**

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

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

**CU...flowers...**

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.

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

*It was only a few days before the Truce. Everybody knew there was going to be a Truce...there was no need for this...*

**Archive...**B&w shots of Truce...  
**CU...**Harris...

**Pr. Rich. English....[i/v]...**

*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.*

**CU...**English

**\*\*\*\*\* 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.**

**Narrator...[vo]...**

*After burying their sons, the Pearsons decided to remain on at Coolacrease, living in the coachhouse behind the ruin of their former home.*

**CU...**burnt out house...Pearson family in foreground...

**\*\*\*\*\* 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.**

**Dr Terence Dooley...[i/v]...**

*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 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.**

**CU.....Dooley..**

**CU.....farm..**

**CU.....cows**

**..sheds.....cattle**

**...**

**CU.....Advert in paper to sell farm...**

**CU.....letter...Wm Percy**

**CU.....Dooley...**

**CU... archive...Irish**

**Grants Committee document, showing purchase price of £2000 for Coolacree in 1911.**

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 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 came away with 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.*

CU...Murphy

\*\*\*\*\* 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 earlier, 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 ....*

**\*\*\*\*\* 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 by anyone at all.**

**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**

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

**CU ...Heaney..**

**CU.....Poppies in field**

**CU .....English...**

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

**CU.....Newspapers...**

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 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.**

**Narrator...[vo]**

*In 1922, the Pearsons joined this exodus leaving first for England, and, some years later, for a new life in Australia..*

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

*The Pearsons became true forgotten ones. They became, literally, the disappeared of history.*

**\*\*\*\*\* 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.**

**[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.**

**CU Harris, catch in voice**

**Jenny Turnidge ..[vo]..**

*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.*

**\*\*\*\*\* 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.

**Voiceover...Actor....[Jan. Fri. 17 1930 ]**

*" 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...*

**Vernon Pearson...[i/v]...**

*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...*

**Narrator...[vo]..**

*The Pearsons reached Australia in 1930. After 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. ...that's 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*

**CU.....**Pearsons in front of burn out house...

**CU.....**Turnidge...

**CU...diary..Jan.17,1930..**  
[Sidney Pearson]

**CU.....**newspaper.."Irish loyalists to settle here. Two sons killed by rebels in 1921"

**CU...Pearson**

**CU...fields..**

**CU...fields..**

**CU...Mervyn Pearson..**

**CU...fields**

**CU...house..**

**CU.....**Photos of

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 family....*

**Narrator...[vo]**

*In the early 1930,s Wm. Pearsons health began to fail. He and Susan left the farm in Gipslan 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]...**

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...**

**WS.....Aussie**  
**town...[Gipslan/Bendigo]..**  
**WS.....Wm Pearson..**

**CU....golden sunset..**

*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.*

**CU**...Susan Pearson

**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.*

**WS** ...ruined house in Offaly...

**CU**.....windows..

**CU**.....Tilly Pearson...

**CU** ..... Doris Turnidge

**CU**..... Offaly

**CU**..... Doris Turnidge

**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.*

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

**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 ...*

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

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

**Narrator....[vo]**

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

**CU**.....ruins..

**CU** .....poppies...

**CU** .....graves

**[mood music]..**

**\*\*\*\*\* 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  
Coolacree 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...*

**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...*

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

CU.....cheering  
crowds

**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 Coolcrease 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.**

**END CREDITS...[SOME ]**

**Narrator; orla brady**

**Script consultant: pat sammon**

**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.]**

**Research: paul rouse  
Philip McConway**

**Produced and directed by: niamh sammon**

**A REEL STORY PRODUCTION  
FOR RTE**

**Transcript of RTE Joe Duffy's Liveline Programme**  
**Transmission date: 5 November 2007**

Joe Duffy: Hello, good afternoon and you're very welcome to Liveline...Paddy Heaney, good afternoon

Paddy Heaney: Good afternoon to you

J.D: Tell us where Cadamstown is for a start, Paddy

PH: Eh, Cadamstown is situated, it's a border townland between Laois and Offaly. If you come from the Dublin direction in to Mountmellick, Rosenallis, Clonaslee, you come to eh, cross the border there and you're into Coolacree, you're into Cadamstown

J.D Ok, and it's near..what would people know of that? Kinnity Castle is down that way there?

PH Kinnity Castle is about three miles from Cadamstown village

JD Ok, and isn't there a famous burial pyramid down there, somewhere in one of the graveyard [sic], where's that Paddy?

PH Oh yeah, there is in the Church of Ireland has a famous pyramid, well I don't know whether he's famous or not, but it was built by one of the Bernard families around 1832 or around that period

JD Ok, so it's at the foot - foot of the Slieveblooms, near Rosenallis, it's called Cadamstown and it's the Silver River that flows near there, isn't it?

PH That's right, now that you mention Rosenallis, it's not, it's near the Clonaslee but it's in County Offaly.

JD Ok.

PH Clonaslee's in County Laois

JD Ok. Now, it's been all over the pages of the Irish Times, almost every day now, the letters page. And this is as the result of a – a powerful - RTE programme, the Hidden History series, and it's about an incident that happened – what? - 86 years ago. Will you, will you tell us...now I know there's different interpretations of it, but you can...can you tell us the bare facts of what happened in Coolacree, which is near Cadamstown on June the 30th 1921, Paddy?

PH Well, em, I – I wrote a book “At the Foot of Slievebloom” about three, four years ago and I documented the history and folklore of the area. So, I – I mentioned all the episodes that happened down through the centuries so I didn't, I couldn't admit, or, omit the

incident or, or the War of Independence that took place at that particular time. It's locals, a lot of the local fellows were involved at that particular period as well.

JD Uh-hm.

PH Well, the, the, the Pearsons bought a farm I think around 1911 I think, around 345 acres or so, in the townland of Coolacrease. There's actually 685 acres in the townland of Coolacrease...

JD Ok

PH ..and they bought the farm and eh, the eh, they were very, very good farmers we are told, and they, they, all the children went to the local school here in Cadamstown. Actually, my mother went to school at that particular time as well, she knew them there. And ah, they had a little school hurling team and Dick, Dick Pearson - the eldest of the lads - he used to hurl with the local lads. But eh, they all grew up together in the area but when the War of Independence was, was eh, was going on and they seemingly began to, you know, fall away from the local people and they, and they...

JD Because they, they weren't Protestants as such, they were Cloonyites [sic]?

PH They were Coonyites, yes.

JD And, and what are Cloonyites [sic]?

PH I don't know much about Coonyites, they were only known at that time as Protestants. People didn't realise they were Coonyites I think, at the time.

JD The, the Coonyites are apparently a dissenting Protestant sect, but apart from that I don't know much about them, to be honest.

PH Nor do I, I don't know much

JD Yeah, but, but they were Protestants in, in that sense?

PH Yeah, they were classed as Protestants in the area, but that, that didn't matter because there were seven or eight Protestant families in the area as well

JD [As well, and they were integrated ?] And so why were the two, the two boys, two young men – Richard, 24; Abraham, 19 – both of them were shot?

PH Yes

JD Why?

PH Well, ah –

JD Tell us, tell us the details of the shooting, sorry, the ‘why?’ is contentious.

PH Well, you have to talk about the build-up to it first.

JD Uh-hmm.

PH Isn't that right? Well, they they, they were keeping away from the local people and they weren't associating with them. And then the first incident it happened, there was a Mass path coming down from the mountain, where people used to come down of a Sunday to Mass. And when they arrived there was a beech tree lodged across the stile. So, so they, some of the fellows proceeded to remove the branches of the tree some of them went to Mass but about 100 came back to clear the timber or the tree away from the stile. And while they were working on it, some of the Pearson family came up and there were a few words exchanged between Dick and an uncle of mine, John Dillon. And I think they drew revolvers on one another bewhat [sic] I hear. And the following day, Monday, two men were arrested by the Auxiliaries: John Joe Horan and John Dillon and taken to Tullamore jail. Ah, then the next incident happened a week later when the local Battalion got word to, to erect a roadblock out to Coolacrease outside Cadamstown, the Coolacrease side of Cadamstown. And eight – ten - men proceeded out there around eleven o'clock. Eight of them got ready to cut the tree. Now, the tree... I (was) reading some of the articles on the various papers..

JD Uh-hmm.

PH And they mentioned that the tree was in a wood, and it was here, it was there –

JD So, so it's your, it's your argument Paddy, that there's, there's motive in, in – and I use all these, these words loosely and in the context of the time – the motives at the time were that, the argument was that some of the locals believed that Richard and Abraham were co-operating with the Black and Tans?

PH Yes, yes.

JD Ok

PH They were.

JD Ok, the two, the two boys were shot dead by an IRA group?

PH Yes.

JD They were taken out and shot?

PH But what I was trying to explain to you - the reason they were shot. Now, Niamh Sammon wouldn't even listen to that. The reason they were shot was they fired on

fellows that were cutting down a tree on that night, and actually the, the RIC mentioned, in the, in the, when they were brought in Crinkill barracks the RIC mentioned about those two fellows were shot, and actually they mentioned that one of them died. Now he didn't die – he survived - because he was brought into the Tullamore hospital and he was kept there for about three or four months.

JD Ok. And in the Hidden History programme which was broadcast two weeks ago, this this, you say, you say to us that the image of Cadamstown is damaged because what, what was the impression you got – I don't know what other people got – what was the impression you got from the Hidden History's programme?

PH Well, and the impression I got, and I think I had forty two phonecalls the following two days, and there was two of them wasn't very complimentary. But there was, the forty phonecalls were, were very complimentary and they said that one phone, one man that phoned in from County Cork, he said that at least ye've [set?] up for those men who are dead and gone and who are not able to speak for themselves.

JD And what is your problem with the Hidden History programme?

PH It is biased.

JD In what way?

PH It wasn't balanced. Eh, well, any of us who live around here and who know the history of the whole episode, know clearly that the, the documentary showed those two boys taken out of the field, they showed them being executed -

JD But why, why were they being executed?

PH They showed, they showed they were being executed twice. But they did not do a documentary on the Mass [party / path] incident, or they did not do a documentary on the shooting of the two IRA men at the roadblock.

JD So, what was the motive given in the TV programme for the killings?

PH On the TV? Well, they... as you said, as I'm telling you now, the TV documentary was very biased, was completely biased.

JD In that you said the background wasn't included. Well Niamh Sammon is the director of Hidden Histories. Niamh, good afternoon.

Niamh Sammon: Hello, Joe

JD How are you Niamh?

NS I'm very well thank you.

JD What do you think of Paddy's criticisms that you left out references to what they believe – what some people believe – are the motive [sic], insofar as you can use that word?

NS Em, well, everything is included in the documentary. [I mean] I've listened to Paddy, I've listened to the points he's raised, he talked about the tree-felling incident, that was actually in the programme and it was covered extensively in the opening. [What we did we] presented both sides of the argument. They were two very different events – versions - of what actually happened that night. You know, Paddy said he spoke to the men involved he, he presented in the documentary his evidence that the Pearsons had fired directly on IRA men who were felling a tree on the Pearson's land. On the other side of the argument which [we hopefully] presented, we, em, you know, the Pearsons say that people were trespassing on their land and that they fired the shot in the air in order to basically get them off the land because they didn't actually fire directly at the IRA. I, I don't know how much fairer we could have been -we presented both sides very clearly and I think we [were / worked] extremely fair. I'd also like to say that if I'd made an unbalanced documentary Paddy Heaney wouldn't have been in it. It was absolutely essential to interview the people of the community, which we did – five local people were interviewed in the programme. If anything, people have said to me that the programme was almost too balanced because what happened to the Pearson's was so dreadful that there comes a point where you have to start to call a spade a spade because it was an atrocity that shouldn't have happened.

JD And Paddy do you think it was an atrocity?... [background noises, possibly Paddy's voice "Yeah,I thought..." further noises like phone lines crossed] Paddy? [possibly Paddy's voice "how'ya" someone laughs] ....what's happening there? Is Paddy there? Paddy are you there?

PH Yeah, somebody cut in there...

JD Niamh's, Niamh's point that it's, the programme, that the programme was balanced, that you were in it,

PH Yes, of course I was in it, but it wasn't a balanced programme

JD Well give me, give me, give me the reason why

PH Well, I gave you two incidents there that that was not documented, it wasn't shown. I mentioned it, I mentioned those two incidents, but why was it not shown, documented and -

JD Well,but people who saw that Hidden History programme, what would, what do you think they would have thought about the reason for the killing of these two men?

PH Yes, the, the main reasons were of course spying on the two –

JD No no, now you see - that's your point, but you're saying Hidden History was unbalanced -

PH It was of course -

JD This, this battle is raging in the Irish Times at the moment -

PH I don't mind the Irish Times

JD But, but tell me how you think it was unbalanced

PH It, it, the wrong impression was, was given.

JD Well give me, tell me the impression the programme gave.

PH Well the impression the programme gave was that those two young fellows, they, they were innocent.

JD And why were they killed, then?

PH They were killed -

JD - According to the programme?

PH They were... well, I'm, I'm not, the programme was biased, I told you a few moments ago, and everybody knows it was biased. But according to the local people here, that the programme was biased, and those two young fellows were executed because they were involved in undercover, they were undercover agents.

JD Ok. Niall Ginty has contacted us. Niall, good afternoon to you.

Niall Ginty: Hello Joe, how are you?

JD Are you like myself, you'd never heard of Coolcrease-

NG Not a word until I saw the programme.

JD And then you decided...

NG I had a good look at it, and eh, as I said I knew very little about it but generally I thought the, the balance was, was very good. I thought that you know, that both sides had their, had their say. And I thought in fact if anything, the balance was geared towards, towards the IRA side.

JD And in terms of watching the programme, can you articulate for me why, why some people in Cadamstown might be upset?

NG Yes I can. Because there's been, there's been, there's a crowd from North Cork, they're, they, they, they've been roaming the country, it's been going round the country stirring up trouble anywhere, where such an, any event as it happens. I don't know, have you heard of the Aubane Society?

JD No, I haven't no

NG Well anyway, they're, they're, they're -

JD They're a historical society?

NG Yeah, they're a historical society, yeah, correct. But there are people who are going around and particularly now with this story -

JD Ok, with what stories? Are you saying putting a complexion on stories of atrocities against Protestants?

NG Well they're muddying the waters you see,

JD How?

NG Well, what they're doing Joe, is for instance they're, they're trying to bring some of the blame for this on the people of Offaly. And of course that, that is, that's totally ludicrous. The people of Offaly are blameless. The, the people who carried this out, it was carried out by, by a, an IRA group who were not from that area for a start off.

JD And why, why having watched the programme and then read about subsequently, why, what do you understand happened to the two men? Why were they shot?

NG Well, eh, I tell you if you were to read the Sunday Times article yesterday you'd wonder what, what's going on altog- what is going on. But the, the, the eh, two lads, right, number one they were, they were deliberately - and I mean deliberately - shot in the genitals. Right?

JD Uh-hm.

NG Based on the doctor's evidence - I don't know if you are, are you familiar with the story yourself?

JD Yes, I am, yeah - I read up on it this morning

NG Based on the doctor's evidence they were shot in the groin - which is as near to the genitals as you can possibly get.

JD And why were they shot? Paddy says the reason they were shot was because they had attacked an IRA party, that they were collaborating with the Black and Tans. What's your understanding? Help us here - what's your understanding of the other side of the story? Is it because, they were shot simply because they were Protestants, were they shot simply because the land would, could be sold off to small farmers around or whatever?

NG I have to admit Joe I'm not sure, but I'd say there, there, there is a combination of situation [sic]. There is the question of the land, but there is also the question of the fact that they were just, they were Protestant. Plain and simply.

JD Brendan, Brendan Caf – Niall, I appreciate that comment, Brendan Cafferty, 1850 715 815. Brendan?

Brendan Cafferty: Congrats to RTE Joe by the way, for doing this documentary. I thought it was pretty balanced and –

JD You're a historian?

BC I'm not a historian but I'm into history –

JD Right

BC But eh, but this is a part of our –

JD Now Brendan, can you – I'm going to stop you and try and start again. I'll tell you why. Because...there's an ongoing row about this programme -

BC Yeah

JD – and I'm asking Paddy Heaney, I'm asking you now, tell me, having watched the programme, what do you think the row is about? Because I'm told by Paddy and other people who've contacted us, the row is about that the programme says we were just small-minded sectarian people in Offaly who killed them to get the land. And the other story Paddy says [woman's voice "that's right"?] they were shot because they had a background of collaborating or indeed attacking an IRA party, that was a war incident. What's your understanding Brendan?

BC Well, You know, there's a broader picture here: there's a certain sectarian element to, to that period. You only have to read Peter Hart's book about the killings in West Cork. You know, in order to justify that, I think, I think they were killed because they were Protestants, there was probably a land grab and people saw this as an attempt to take back what was supposed to be ours by the way. And you know, to justify that then they were all heaped with this thing of spies and informers. If you read Peter Hart's book about the killings in West Cork where old men, some of them blind or that and that were taken out and shot, just because they were Protestants, but they were incapable of being spies or

informers. And you know, those boys were left to die in agony for hours, you know, they were mutilated. And what eh, gives anybody the right? I see some letters in the Irish Times talking about this was a lawful execution and who can say that, like?

PH Could I come in there Joe? Could I come in?

JD Yeah

BC Who, who can give anybody the right to go out and shoot two lads like that? You know what I mean? I'm not au fait, with what, you know, previously took place, there was some rumour that there was an IRA volunteer killed but now I hear that isn't true at all, so you know, this is, this a fig leaf to –

JD So you're saying this was a straight-forward sectarian attack, shot because they were Protestants, get the land, and this was common in Ireland at the time?

BC And it, it succeeded -

JD - Despite what we saw in "The Wind That Shakes the Barley"?

BC There were killings in Cork, Tipperary, parts of Galway, and several places round the country. And this is a handy, this is a handy thing to label them as ('spies...collaborator..informers?' – background noise, indistinct)

JD Yeah, Paddy – stay there - Paddy come back in.

PH Yes, just to answer those two gentlemen who spoke last. They mentioned again, the, because they were Protestants. You must remember – and I mentioned it in my letter to Eoghan Harris when he had that ferocious documentary in the Qua- the Independent in regard to the locality here. I mentioned there were seven Protestant families living in the area; they were never harmed or molested in any way -

BC – Did, did, did they have big farms of land?

PH - They had – big farms – a lot bigger: a thousand acres and more.

BC Yes, you know, well, you know, this, this, this thing of labelling them you know, those people cannot speak for themselves

PH No, no, now -

BC And, and, and my question is who gave, who gave anybody the right to do that to them, you know? I mean can you please answer that? To mutilate, leave them die in agony without medical assistance for hours, you know.

JD ... there for eighteen hours or so(indistinct)

PH Could I answer you again?

BC Can you please justify that?

PH You –

BC I'd like to hear your justification for that

PH You, you mentioned something about land, land again

BC Well, the, the -

PH Now, the land problem, why, you mentioned there they were shot for their land. I think the documentary was trying to bring out that as well. Now -

BC There was a note, there was a note left on the plough –

PH That –

BC – a week later, you know -

PH That is ridiculous. That is ridiculous

BC That's not true, you say?

PH That is ridiculous.

BC Well, that is a historical fact.

PH Prop-propaganda at its finest.

BC Well now!

PH Now the land question: when the land was divided by the Irish Land Commission

BC Yes?

JD Uh-hm.

PH And there was a PP in Kinnity, the local - and he was anti-IRA, and he made sure that no IRA got land. The three first people to get land were three ex-British soldiers who served during the '14-'18 War. It wasn't for land, because it wasn't a good farm, as we, we saw in the documentary those, eh, the television cameras were focused on the good land up around Kildare, up around Meath, they should have brought down the cameras here around the Slievebloom Mountains. They should have shown the beauty of the Slievebloom Mountains. -

BC Eh.. (groan)

JD Eh..

PH - And people like yerselves should come down here and write about the beauty of the mountains –

JD (indistinct) We're not, Paddy don't turn the programme into 'No Frontiers'; now we're not, it's not a tourist programme, it's this debate that's going on and we're allowing people to talk to each other a bit, they've been talking independently, but now they're talking to each other -

BC Eh, eh [wants to say something]

JD - Brendan stay there, I want to bring Niamh back in - Niamh Sammon who produced and directed the programme. Niamh, do you want to respond to some of the points made there?

NS One point in particularly [sic], Paddy says there's absolutely no way this was about land; I mean we explored this evidence quite clearly. The Pearsons moved in in 1911 they were outsiders coming into the area, they bought a three hundred and forty acre farm which was surrounded by their Catholic neighbours who would have held holdings that were, that were much smaller; We talked to experts (in the field?) such as Terry Dooley, and it's only now that the social aspects of the War of Independence are being explored and what's very very clear in that there were all sorts of motivations for people joining the IRA at the time and fighting. And one of the motivations was land. Em, there's also evidence, there's also evidence that in 1917, I mean William Pearson's (father?) in 1917 was talking about members of Sinn Fein coming on his land and trampling his corn, because he was growing crops under (constructive?) tillage order. And , eh, also one thing Paddy said there I find really remarkable – he said that it was only former British soldiers who got land, when the Pearsons left the area. Paddy actually on the programme himself had said - and says - that two or three former IRA men got some of the Pearson's land.

PH Can I answer that?

JD Yes, Paddy.

PH Could I answer it?

JD Yes Paddy.

PH I said the three first people to acquire land – the three first people, Niamh, are you listening? An bhfuil tú ag eisteacht? Are you, are you listening?

NS I am, I am listening yes, Paddy.

PH I said ('I said' - indistinct) - of course you twisted it and turned it on the programme – I said the three first people who received land were three ex-British soldiers. Now, one of those wasn't wasn't able to pay for the land because there was, there was a terrific rent on it, and, and a former IRA man – a local man, who was jailed for four or five years – he got, he got land in it. Three ex-IRA men got land there, because the, the Land Commission could get nobody else to take it up; because the land wasn't the best; there was a, a double rent on it, compared to other land all over the country; and that was the reason. You know, Niamh mentioned there about the reason a lot of the IRA joined that time, was to acquire land. I think that's a slap in the face to a lot of the people who went out that time who died and lay in the ditches and left us the lovely country we have here today

JD Ok, but –

PH A brother-in-law belong [sic] to me went out, my mother... Cumann na mBan. I, I reject that completely, that, what Niamh Sammon is saying. She should be ashamed of herself.

JD (indistinct)

NS Sinn Fein, Sinn Fein itself (indistinct – we've seen this?) extensively – Sinn Fein has [sic] exploited the land issue. There was an IRA leader in Clare who said “of course some of these men are motivated by land (indistinct) incredible amount of (indistinct)”

JD Let me bring in Patricia Howard who's in Wexford. Patricia, good afternoon.

Patricia Howard: Good afternoon Joe, yeah.

JD You're listening, you believe this, these killings in Coolnacrease were an act of, were - ethnic cleansing?

PHo Yes, I do yeah. I saw the documentary I watched it, particularly I was horrified by the way those two young men were killed (it was) quite gut wrenching. And I, em, remembered what happened to my grandfather, em, he was a shopkeeper - or merchant, if you will - in Limerick, at the time of the War of Independence. And ah, a member of the Church of Ireland. And his house was, he was raided one night, and men came to take him out and shoot him, and at the time he wasn't there as it happened, he was away on business, he was in the fish business, and he was away. But one of my aunts was on her own in the house, and they didn't harm her or, or do anything, any damage to the house; but, but it was always told in our family that he, he had a lucky escape that night.

JD And you're saying, Patricia, your grandfather, they came, the IRA came for him that night to shoot him because he was a Protestant?

PHo – yeah, we always believed that, yeah. That was always what we believed. And I believe that those people - the Pearsons – this is just my own belief, I haven't done research obviously or, I was just listening to, you know, watching the television, I believe that they were defensive rather than proactive, if you know what I mean. When the, the war started, Protestants would have felt defensive, and they would have drawn into themselves, what else would you do? You have to get on with your life. And you would have been part of the local community, but people make you feel unwelcome and you draw back into yourself, and that's what I believe they did. And also I think, I don't know a lot about the Cooneyites, but my mother – my maternal grandmother's family were Quakers, and if there's any similarity, they were pacifists! Wouldn't have got involved with, with military –

JD And are the Cooneyites pacifists, in the sense I understand the Quakers - I know most people are pacifists anyway, but...?

PHo That's what I'm saying, I'm not sure about that but (indistinct)

JD - But the difference, the difference in this is that -

NS If I could just jump in there? I should say that Cooneyites, Cooneyites are pacifists, anyway... essentially (indistinct)

PHo Yeah..

JD They would be similar to the Quakers, Niamh?

NS They'd, they'd still, well, they'd be very close to the Amish, I mean -

PHo - The Amish, yeah.

NS - They'd be non-political to the extent that they don't even vote.

PHo No, that's right. And the Quakers didn't take oath and they didn't pay up tithe, so they were actually disliked by both the Roman Catholic hier- you know, authority and the Church of Ireland authority.

JD But in the case of the Pearson family, Patricia, they all left and, and Niamh found some of them in Australia, they all left, and they, they don't feel -

PHo Well, A lot of my family have left too, they went to Australia, they went to England – I'm here -

JD - Because, because of the War of Independence?

PHo Oh, there was, yes. There was an exodus of Protestants after that. They didn't feel welcome. My father said to me once that, em, 'we're not wanted in politics'. And I mean,

you know, those, those are the kind of things you grow up with. There's a defensiveness about it and there's eh, yo know a keeping into your own little group if you like.

JD Hmm.hmm

PH Could I answer that question Joe?

JD Paddy, yes

PH That last lady who, who spoke there -

JD - Patricia Howard, yes

PH Yeah, yeah. We appreciate her, her, her ideas on it. The reason – that is being talked about by revisionists and those who are trying to rewrite Irish history for the last twenty years. And they always come up with this thing about 'the Protestants left'. And the reason a lot of them left was, a lot of the (specific) landed Protestant farmers they got broke, they weren't able to pay a labourer or anything –

PHo Hm

PH - times were changing. And also – those, a lot of the Protestants, they left because the British military and the RIC weren't here to back them up when they do [sic] some dirty work, or something like that -

PHo Well, you see – that's, that's one way of looking at it, Paddy,

PH I know –

PHo And I don't wish to argue with you really because I, I (indistinct)

JD Paddy, hang on – Paddy, I wish to argue with you – would you hang on, Patricia? - Paddy, what do you mean the RIC weren't there when they were up to some dirty work, what would Patricia's family have been doing that would have been classified as dirty work?

PH Well I, I didn't mention that Patricia's family –

JD What about Protestant families?

PH Joe, I'm surprised at you stating that over, over the airwaves

JD But you're saying that they, they left because the RIC wouldn't be there to back up their dirty work. What does that mean? Just –

PH There was lots of, of landed gentry or landlord [sic] who were, who were doing a lot of dirty work down through the years –

PHo Yes - [wants to come in]

PH - They evicted people, they drove people out on the road -

PHo - Yes, yes, but you have to see Paddy, you have to see, [both PH and PHo talking] hang on a minute – you've got to make a differentiation between the landed gentry, the Anglo-Irish and the ordinary Protestant working – I mean, not working class, but people who owned farms – small, three hundred acres would have been classified as a small farm, if you compare it to the landed gentry. It is a different group of people. And the people in the cities like my grandfather who was in Limerick, that's a different group again. They weren't in cahoots with the authorities, they weren't doing dirty work. He, ah actually lent, he gave employment, he lent money to people, he was, he was seen as, as a good person. And yet because of his religion, he was a suspect.

JD Ok, ok, hang -

PHo Mainly at a time when there was a lot of inflamed feelings -

PH Joe -

PHo – and I totally accept that [sighs]

PH Joe, what I was trying to explain there, was - and yer inclined to twist it round to suit yerselves –

JD Who? Me, now, is it?

PH Yeah, that -

[indistinct – someone mutters in studio]

PH - that a lot of

PHo No, you're not -

JD - Paddy, the great thing about this radio is that you're live, and you can say exactly what you say and I can't edit anything you say, ok?

PH I know –

JD Off you go

PH I said that a lot of the Protestant people left the country

JD Uh-huh

PH - a lot of them went down to the North, some of them not, not too far away from my area, twenty miles of a radius from here, because as that lady said there a few minutes ago, maybe they felt isolated when we got our freedom. And in years gone by, when anything would happen if there was an eviction they always had the authorities there to back them up and they always had the RIC – well, they were gone, and they felt isolated as that lady said a few moments ago.

PHo Yeah, but it's not just that they were getting back up, that they were wanting to do bad things to the Catholic community – that's not the point! The point is that they weren't wanted. And many and many of them left because they just felt that there was no future for them here. Or for their children. Because the whole thing went against them. I mean the [sighs] civil rights, I mean I could go on. You know, we didn't have our civil rights, for what? – eighty years. Only just really beginning to open out since we joined the European Union [sic]. For people who didn't see things the way the majority saw them. You have to accept that, it's the fact – I'm not trying to rewrite history here – history was written for the majority.

PH Listen, my good lady, we all suffered, we, all our ancestors suffered -

PHo – please don't patronise me – I'm not your 'good lady'

PH yeah

PHo [short laugh] Sorry. I just wanted to put that viewpoint. Thank you.

PH Whatever you are, whatever you are

[Patricia hangs up]

JD Are you there Paddy? Is the line gone? Claire? I'll come back to you Paddy. Claire Guerin is in (indistinct)

Claire Guerin: Hello, Joe, I just wanted –

JD What's your interest, interest in this, Claire?

CG I've studied, myself, em, the specific area of intelligence and -

JD Are you an historian? (indistinct – 'or into academia'?)

CG I'm, I'm doing a research degree

JD You don't have to be anything, ok,

CG Well, I'm on a break but I've, I've done a couple of years of research, a research degree in history.

JD Ok

CG And, the, the specific point about the, the execution of the Pearsons, now the decision to execute them was made at Brigade level by the Offaly Brigade officer and Battalion –

JD – of the IRA?

CG Yeah. So the point that there's the decision to execute them was made on a local basis and was influenced by local animosities I don't think would have been the case.

JD And how do you know that the Offaly Brigade made the decision?

CG Well, because I've seen, it's in the papers – the Beasley papers.

JD And where are they located?

CG They're in the National Library

JD Ok, fantastic, so you've gone through these [CG – Yes] they're what, the minutes of a meeting or... signed orders?

CG It's a report submitted to Headquarters, General Headquarters by the Offaly Brigade

JD And why do they say that they'd singled out these two young men to be, to be shot?

CG They said that there was evidence that they had been conspiring with the enemy, they said that they had been involved with the UVF in the area, previously, and there were specific reasons – I'm not, I can't actually remember whether they went into the specific details of the ambush and so on, but, and they said there was definite evidence that they had been conspiring with the British military in the past that there were definite grounds for their execution. Now, as regards the, the point that the IRA targeted Protestants, Protestants in particular, I would have to say that I never found that that was the case. Now, Catholics were targeted, as well as Protestants, and I'm not ruling out the, the possibility that there were local factors, often because obviously the IRA was very, eh, was organised on a local basis, and GHQ couldn't always initiate – regulate – their activities no matter how they tried, and they did, they tried very hard. But on a whole, on the whole there were always investigations into every case, and reasons had to be given for every execution. Now it was Tom Barry, I think, who said that there were, the fact that there were Protestants executed was always brought up by British propaganda to discredit the Movement and to try and say that, that, that it was a sectarian war. But he pointed out that the number of Catholics who were executed as spies was never brought up. And you know I just find it rather interesting that in this whole debate, you know, when points of history come up –

JD Uh-hm

CG – Dublin – you know, the, the, the kind of propaganda that was put out by Dublin Castle is utilised so much. Now, I'm not saying that people don't have these concerns about what happened. But, you know, I remember a quote from deValera in which he says that 'we, we know that something may be propaganda, but the future generations may not know that and take it as fact'.

JD But the programme as far as you're concerned gave the impression...?

CG It gave the impression that there were reasons behind the executions which I think, could not have been the case.

JD And what were those reasons which the programme proffered?

CG Well, well, I'm not saying that the programme didn't try to give both sides but, but some historians have the view that, that people were targeted unfairly for sectarian reasons -

JD Because they were Protestants and to get their land –

CG – Exactly

JD And char- allegations were trumped up

CG Yes,

JD In other words, spying a lot of the time, as someone said earlier, it could have been after the event the allegations were [made], Brendan Cafferty made that point, didn't he?

CG Well, well, as far as I'm concerned that is not the case because the documentation that is there in the papers, clear, and from the time clearly gives the allegations that they were spies and this was on a Brigade level. So it did not come merely from the locality.

JD OK, I need to take a quick break - I'm fascinated that so many people want to talk about this, come back after this...

[commercial break]

JD You're with RTE dot i-e... Pat Muldowney has e-mailed us. Pat?

Pat Muldowney: Hello, Joe

JD You saw the programme?

[static]

JD We're dogged by bad lines, can you hear me Pat?

PM Yes, yes I can hear you Joe, fine

JD Yes, go ahead, you're fine, please

PM Ok, the point is that the, the actual reasons for the execution was, was adjudicated on by two courts – one the Irish Courts Martial after the attack on the roadblock and I have the report of that one in front of me

JD And who carried that Court Martial?

PM Sorry?

JD Who carried out the Court Martial?

PM The responsible officer at, at at the, under the Irish government at the time,

JD (indistinct)

PM - it was a Courts Martial. And subsequent, subsequent to the executions – and this is the important point – the, the –

JD Was the brother, were the brothers brought before a Court Martial?

PM This is a war, Joe, the Courts Martial, the country was under, under military rule –

JD No but I know (indistinct) there wasn't, there was a British government running the country, there wasn't an Irish government, but you say there was a Courts Martial?

PM There was an elected government Joe, you see, that's the whole point, the elected – the legitimate – authority there was held by the, by the, Irish, by the elected government -

JD But therefore -

PM - They were, they were -

[both trying to speak]

PM But the important point you see is that point that the evidence that was excluded from the Hidden History programme which I tried to present to them and I was interviewed for by [them] -

JD - Ok, what's the evidence?

PM This was the evidence of, presented at the British Court of Enquiry which took place two days later and which had medical experts, high-level police reports, and eyewitness reports. And it confirmed to the letter the, the, the reasons given for the execution by the Irish - that had been determined by the Irish Court Martial. I can read the two, the two, the two reports to you

JD Well, paraphrase, because we've been doing this for a long time

PM Well, here's the one, here's the report sent in by the, by Thomas Burke on behalf of the Irish Court Martial. He says that 'the men who fired were recognised by the men present to be three [blood?] brothers named Pearson. Having satisfied myself by enquiries from the Company Captain in Kinnity and officers present at the time in counsel that there was no doubt about the identities of the men who fired I ordered that these men be executed and their house destroyed' Now I'll give you -

JD And who gave that order? Who signed that?

PM That's Thomas Burke, he was the Officer in Command of the -

JD Of the IRA, yes

PM - of the area, of the Irish, the Irish army.

JD The, the IRA

PM Responsible to the Irish Government, yes.

JD Insofar as we had an Irish government

PM Here's the report of the Chief Inspector of Queen's County given to the sworn, a sworn and solemn inquiry under British law, held two days later on the 2nd of July, and he was the Chief Inspector of Queen's County, he said that, 'the two Pearson boys a few days previously had seen two men felling a tree on the land adjoining the road, had told the men concerned to go away and when they refused - [just lost the line, sorry?] when they refused, eh, had fetched guns and shot the two Sinn Feiners, one of whom they thought died' Like the,

JD We know, we now know that

PM This is the, the - there's all sorts of other reasons being put about like land hunger, spying, and all the rest of it. But the actual reason, in terms of the, the, the legal - legality - of the thing, whichever authority you choose to recognise - whether you choose to recognise the elected government, or whether you choose to recognise the authority of the government that was trying to impose its rule by military force - that is, the British government - [JD tries to come in] they're both agreed on it, you see. All the other -

JD Ok, there's arguments there. Let me bring in Senator Eogahn Harris. Eoghan, good afternoon.

Eoghan Harris: Good afternoon Joe.

JD You want to respond to a number of points?

EH Well, I'm, first of all the programme was worth doing just to hear Patricia Howard because her direct testimony of her own Protestant family history is a, a another useful piece of the mosaic, basically the – I won't call it ethnic cleansing – but what happened to Southern Protestants, and particularly to Low-Church Protestants: those caught between the rather posh Church of Ireland and those who were Evangelical, Methodists, Cooneyites, they tended to have farms around the same level as their Catholic neighbours – they seem to have got the brunt of the IRA's ethnic cleansing or what then was very looked like it in the '21 – '22 period. And the problem is this – that most modern – Paddy Heaney said that I attacked the people of Offaly – I have been going round for years trying to dig up some of that buried history because, the last taboo in Ireland. And I've been doing it because if we don't dig up that history and tell the truth about that period, what chance have the people of Fermanagh, or the Northern Catholics, what kind of chance have we of any kind of peace on the island, of any kind of truce? And in every time I bring up, or I publish, or anyone else publishes an atrocity against Protestants, a group of people, of which Paddy Muldowney is one, who seem to make an itinerant travelling circus of – they're like Holocaust deniers – flood the letters, bombard RTE with letters, proving that it really didn't happen at all. They did that about the twelve Protestants shot in the Bandon valley and now they're doing it in Coolnacree. Look, the facts are very simple, two lads were taken out in broad daylight in front of their sisters and their mother and they were shot in the groin or genitals as I recall it because I thought there was a deliberately sexual kind of, form of contempt to shoot them like that. And the fact is that all of this is a [nest?] of whitewash afterwards. Now, the important point is this: I'm down in the Dail and Senate, and I'm meeting people from the Offaly area, and I'm getting letters, I got letters off, I wrote in the Sunday Independent about this, and most Offaly people – I believe – are thoroughly ashamed of what happened. Because of course it wasn't an IRA execution as per the normal IRA executions used to take them out shoot them in the back of the head, shoot them at night, but, this thirty men arrived in broad daylight to the farm of a little peaceful Cooneyite sect is what they were, and they took out two young lads and they shot them in the groin [*and there's a lot of this rubbish being pushed out by Muldowney and his friends like Niall Meehan, and the Aubane group that were mentioned in the programme, they're like a professional crowd of holocaust deniers. They run around the place bombarding, and trying to tell lies about simple facts, and everyone ...*]

JD Alright, hang on,

EH Everyone in Offaly, basically – I believe – most people in Offaly are ashamed of what happened and would like to apologise. **(Words in italics omitted from RTÉ podcast)**

And its doing the people of Offaly no service to drag this out like that mystifying and mudraking and trying to pretend it was IRA Court Martials. It would be far better if the people of Offaly just accepted that a bad thing happened and just allowed the ordinary people of Offaly to deal with it by apologising. Paddy Heaney is doing no service to the people of Offaly.

JD Paddy, Paddy, do you want to respond to that?

PH I, indeed, I was reading Eoghan Harris' letter, article in the Sunday Independent a couple of years ago, people were raging, were actually raging about it. You know to try and label people here – a great tourist area – and to try and bring about a bad name on the people. I think Eoghan Harris would be, be better off if he wrote something reasonable about people and not be digging up dirt about people. There's a little, a few small little lines in the today's Independent which said 'with so much revisionsim in the air these days I presume this government will shortly apologise to the Queen of England for the 1916 Rising' And I know, that's a short little notice on today's Independent.

JD Is Pat Muldowney, does Pat Muldowney want to come back?

[2 Voices: one, possibly EH: 'It's catch-22, you see about the.. hello?' The second, possibly PM '...remarks by Senator Harris']

PM The, the, I actually have the medical report in front of me there were no, there were no wounds to the genitals, there were wounds all over, superficial wounds – [EH tries to talk, something about 'groins and genitals'] – the women were reported [as / by] eyewitnesses that were moved to a group of trees to the back of the house: they couldn't see anything from the grove of trees in the back of the house.

JD [tries to speak: '- tell you,we have –' EH still trying to speak in the background]

PM – the Ordnance Survey map is totally impossible to see anything. So the atrocity allegation is –

JD Ok, I just,

EH – But, I – can I just comment on that? That is exactly what I mean by mystification and muddying the waters –

PM – What? He made a report, he made a due sworn inquiry held on July 2nd 1921 [EH speaks also, so both indistinct]

EH [finally speaks over Pat Muldowney for second time] he makes two distinctions - you had your chance, could I just comment [PM still trying to speak] could I just comment on the two points you made? Can I comment on the two points you made?

PM Yeah, go ahead

EH Someone who makes the distinction between shooting them in the groin and genitals, and someone who tells me they were taken around the corner rather than being killed in front of their sisters is somebody who's not in touch with reality.

PM But the report that was made, I mean, they, the wounds were in the leg –

EH – [interrupts again, shouting] But I, I look, you, [indistinct, EH shouting over PM: EH 'look, I've got, got forty pages...you're famous for sending enormous boring letters to people, you did the same, you did the same thing...']

JD [trying to intervene to restore calm] Ok, ok there's no - by the way I just want to point out that it mentioned earlier by Eoghan about different people on Live; now I know it was a general [sop?] about revisionism, history and all that carry-on, but the people that are mentioned, Niall Meehan for example, is a respected lecturer in Dublin and there's no allegation of untruth there, I just want to clarify that.

Roger Pearson, Roger, good afternoon!

Roger Pearson: yeah, Joe is it?

JD Yeah

RP Yeah, g'day mate, how are you?

JD And you say you're a grandson of..?

RP That's right, under Sid Pearson, he was only one of the other brothers, and he, em, he had to flee the country, to Australia,

JD That was your grandfather?

RP That was my grandfather Joe,

JD Where are you now?

RP I'm in Dublin – living in Dublin

[short laugh, possibly EH]

JD And were you contacted for this programme? For Hidden Histories?

RP No, well actually my father was on it, ok?

JD I, I thought, I thought all the Pearson family had left the Cadamstown area after this atrocity but, but you, but you, you're telling me you did, after your grandfather's whose two brothers were killed?

RP That's right

JD Is that correct? [both speak indistinct] your grandfather, his two brothers were killed, Sid Pearson he went to Australia, you are the grandson, and now you are back home in Ireland?

RP I'm back home in Ireland, yeah, yeah

JD Are you living here or are you -?

RP Yeah, I am at the moment, I'm, I, I I've been coming and going for like six years, yeah, yeah, so I'd just like you know,

JD well, what's your understanding then, in your family what are you told about what happened to your two grand uncles?

RP Well, my grandfather would never, you know, he would not talk about it, I mean, you know, he would just like, tell a few things, but we did like you know, here's a story that well basically, [I believe?] they were just farmers, you know, wealthy farmers, going about, em, their business, and what happened was, was pretty rough you know. I'd say at the least, you know.

JD Have you, have you been back to Offaly?

RP I have been back to Offaly, yeah, yes

JD Have you gone back to where the, to where the -

RP I have - I have been there, that's right. The ruins and the -

JD And what was it like for you going back to the ruins of the, where your ancestors came from, and where two of them were killed?

RP Yeah it was, you know, em, it was, you know, I'm not really sure like, you know, how I felt, ah, it was you know em, It was some experience yeah, for sure. You know, Joe, yeah. But, em you know em, they were dirty days and you know I, we don't, like you know, hold, [harbour?] any grudges or anything you know, what happened happened and you know,

JD How did the family get on in Australia when they -?

RP Yeah they done pretty well, I'm into the wind farming out there and em [tree farming?]

JD And what did your father do for himself?

RP He's a dairy farmer as well, He's, he's now taken over from my grandfather, yeah yeah, so, this wind farming, you know,

JD And do you consider yourself, Roger do you consider yourself Irish or Australian?

RP Oh, I'm an Ozzie. Yeah

JD An Ozzie, yeah, Ok

RP Yeah. But I mean there's you know, a bit (indistinct)

JD From, from what you know of this argument, which as I say is raging in certain quarters here, and, and it's fascinating how our phones light up when we talk about something that happened, what? Eighty, eighty five, eighty six, eighty- seven years ago!

RP That's right, yeah

JD Do you think it was ethnic cleansing or do you think there was other motives?

RP Ammm, you know, I don't know, you know, look, I was very, you know, like – it's still very clouded isn't it, you know? I mean there's like a lot, you know, I mean there's a lot of things that people say happened that, look you know...I'm not prepared you know like, I still think you know, I mean what happened, em, em, em was terrible, but you know,

JD OK, Paddy is, Paddy is – stay there Roger, because Paddy is, Paddy Heaney who is in Cadamstown, Paddy?

PH Yes, yes

JD Paddy have you ever spoken to a member of the Pearson family?

PH Ah, indeed I have, I, actually I met two grandnieces of Sid Pearson that come back from Australia

JD Ok, well now we have [to / two], Roger, who's a grand nephew of the two men who were, who were -

PH Yes, I appreciate what he said there. Ah, y'know

JD And do people apologise to the Pearson family? I don't know whether, that's not what Roger wants? I know from what he's saying, but -

PH Well, nobody apologises for anything. If we were start apologising we go back to when the Normans came in here, 1169 and start apologising up through the centuries. I, you asked me a question there Joe a moment ago; I spoke to two grand nieces of the Pearsons, and they were two lovely girls, they came here, spoke to me about it, one of them was a bit aggravated, and I brought them over and I showed them where the, the incident took place, and actually one of them broke down and cried, and she writes to me every Christmas

JD Yeah, well, they could be, they could be Roger's either sisters or indeed cousins

PH Oh, they could be. They were grand nieces of Sid. Two lovely girls.

JD Roger, have other members of your family come back?

RP Yeah, my parents were over, they come back with me, I mean like, they come over like six years ago, they were down there as well,

JD Eoghan, Eoghan Harris makes a very strong point and that is, if we don't start looking at these incidents 80, 90 years ago we won't start looking at incidents 20, 30 years ago. But, you, you, you still think Roger it's clouded, it's still clouded as far as your concerned?

RP Well, you know, look,

JD Or you've moved on?

EH Joe? Joe? Joe?

JD Yes, Eoghan

EH Can I ask a question of Roger through you? Did Roger get any personal reaction, did anyone say anything to him? Because there was other relatives, there was one relative reported as saying that she wondered if there'd be reprisals. I just wonder if Roger feels totally free to say what's in his mind in all this?

RP Aw, yeah I do, really, you know,

EH Yeah

RP - I mean there's work mates that have been, you know, clowning around with me, and em, you know, you know, but I sort of know like they're just joking, I feel pretty free about it, like. You know, I'm not too worried really. I mean, ah -

JD Do, do you – Roger, sorry, just to continue on Eoghan’s point there – do you, have you told your workmates in Dublin for example that your family left after –

RP I did, I did actually, yes, I did tell them yeah, and they were shocked, (indistinct) you know, but -

JD And they were shocked.

RP They were shocked, yeah – they were shocked, you know. Because I never said anything about it because I’ve been here for like six years and like I’ve just never said anything but when it come [sic] up I just told them one day – in the morning like when the programme was on, and em, yeah, and I mean like, eh,

JD (indistinct) they heard this guy who they knew to be from Australia and that they worked with telling them ‘oh, by the way, that, that, that documentary last night about that family down in Offaly were my unc – my grand uncles?’

RP Yeah, they were two great-uncles yeah, yeah, yeah. So ah, you know,

JD But you didn’t, you haven’t, you haven’t encountered any animus?

RP No, not really, no. No, I haven’t no. No, not so far anyway, no. So eh, yeah. But you know, it’s just a bit, there’s a lot of, you know, there’s a lot of things that have been said and that you know, em, you know, look, you know

JD I see, I see Roger are you wor –

RP You know, I mean like you sorta – I don’t know – you sorta get on with it, too. You know what I’m saying? You know like, you gotta move on in life

JD Well, Eogahn, Eoghan Harris, is that not a point, do these programmes help or hinder?

EH Well, I think you see the tip of the iceberg is only there, you see, I, to be honest again and again in West Cork and now listening to Roger I don’t think that – if you’ve local people in West Cork, and for example, one of the extended Pearson family asked the other night if people thought there would be reprisals. I don’t think you see, if you’re a tiny Protestant community living in a place like Offaly or West Cork I don’t think you’re free actually to speak out and say what you really think about what happened to your relatives. I mean for example, Roger – he’s been very good there and he’s trying to sort of put the best face on it but I doubt very much like, if it’s as simple as, I, I would ask him straight out did any workmates say anything about, did the word ‘informer’ cross anyone’s lips?

JD Roger?

RP Aw, yeah, you know, yeah (indistinct)

JD Did they say your great-uncles were spies?

RP They did you know, but, I mean you know,

EH And Cooneyite? Was the word 'Cooneyite' used to you?

RP Yeah, it was used yeah, because, I can tell you one thing, that we're not, I mean we've broke away from them actually, I mean we're not really the Cooneyites at all, I mean Adam Cooney, ok, he was the guy who, like, started it off, but then (indistinct) broke away

JD Ok, to come back to, to come back to, to come back to Eoghan's point, I see from your call you're in the centre of Dublin.

RP Yeah

JD Yeah, Ok, You're working in the centre of Dublin?

RP I am working in the centre of Dublin

JD That's where you work? The address you've given us is where you work?

RP I'm in the city centre, yes.

JD That's what I thought. But Eoghan Harris' point is, did anyone say to you 'well, your family were spies or informers'?

RP Oh, they did, yeah

JD And how did you react to that, Roger?

RP Oh well, you know, I just sort of like, took it with a pinch of salt really, because I sort of knew, you know, it was only my work mates really, and they were just like, messing really – well, I think they were!

[laughter from Roger's workmates in the background]

EH Just a bit of slagging, you see

JD Ok, ok and I can tell, see by the address, Eogahn Harris, that Roger Pearson is living about 400 yards from the Dáil or working about 400 yards from the Dáil.

EH He's just got a bit of slagging but there's different ways of keeping social control, like that. I think that sometimes Paddy Heaney's voice, when you heard the sort of patronising sounds he made to Patricia Howard – you see the way a certain kind of

person with Sinn Féin sympathies can keep a grip on, on quite a timid Protestant community, there's no-one talking for them, they're not represented by Church of Ireland rectors, who would talk out for them? And if people like RTE and Niamh Sammon, yourself and others don't publicise that, who would talk out?

JD Ok, ok, thanks indeed. Back after this break.

JD Ok, welcome back 1850 715 815... Niall Meehan, good afternoon to you.

Niall Meehan: Good afternoon Joe

JD How are you?

NM Fine, thank you

JD You're, you're participating in this debate, now your name was mentioned earlier on I made the point that you are a respected academic

NM Yeah, the reason I rang in was because I heard my name was mentioned on the programme. But it's in relation to this issue, in relation to Coolacrease, which I had a letter about in the Irish Times this morning, the reason I wrote the letter was because I'm currently researching what Protestants said at the time. And Southern Protestants said almost unanimously that they weren't attacked for sectarian reasons during the War of Independence. And the, there was a Protestant convention on May 11th 1922 at which, the Mansion House which was packed out, and speaker after speaker said that apart from one exceptional incident in Cork in April 1922, Protestants were not attacked for sectarian reasons in the south. And the reason they said that was because in 1920 Edward Carson – the northern Unionist – had alleged that Southern Protestants were under attack – it was a sort of a quid pro quo – for the allegation that Catholics were attacked in the North.

JD They said they weren't attacked for those reasons or they weren't attacked, full stop?

NM Well, Protestants and Catholics were attacked during the War of Independence, but the point the Protestants were making was that, em, em, there was no sectar- there were no sectarian attacks on Protestants. And even Lionel Curtis, who was an advisor to the British government, to Lloyd George after a tour of Ireland, he said if a Protestant farmer is attacked it's not for reason of being a Protestant, but for reason of being a loyalist. The distinction is a fine one, but also a real one. In other words it was recognised at the time and I think it is important to, when a lot of this controversy is going on now – to go back and actually look and see what people said at the time. And these events were reported openly. They were reported in the Irish Times, the Irish Independent, there was no problem, it's not a Hidden History, and it was, they were openly commented upon.

JD But the point, one of the points that Eoghan Harris was making, he was making it to the grandson, sorry, the grand nephew, of the two men that were killed, who is ironically

now living back here in Dublin, I wasn't aware of until he contacted the programme but he is, apparently –

NM Yeah

JD – And he made, Eoghan Harris made the point that sometimes people don't feel free to speak out and say that a spade is a spade

NM Yeah, well,

JD – so would Protestants at a convention on May 11 1922 at Mansion House stand up en masse and say actually we're being attacked by the Free State?

NM Well, it'd be the first time in human history when a group en masse said that, denied they were being attacked, and said that they were in fact being protected. There's no, no evidence of that ever occurring in human history. In fact these are Protestants who were outraged by the statements made by Carson. You must recognise at the time in relation to the land the Minister for Agriculture in the Sinn Fein government was a Protestant, Robert Barton. The government set up a national land bank at which, in which a number of representative Protestants were participants, including Protestant bishops.

JD OK, well,

NM And one of the things I'm researching at the moment is, in Skibbereen a guy called Willy Kingston wrote a memoir about his participation in Sinn Fein courts. He was a Protestant. He wrote about some of his friends joining the Irish Volunteers, about the 1916 rebellion not having much support but then people turned after the executions. He participated in the illegal courts, his cousin Jasper Wolf (Wolfe?) was Crown Solicitor at the time, the IRA were after Jasper Wolf. Willy Kingston worked with, worked with him in the office. Wolfe said if he was caught in the Sinn Fein courts he'd be arrested. So again, it's not as, eh, you know, as grim as it is made out.

JD Ok, stay there for a sec, Luke is on the line, Kilkenny, Luke, you say your grand-uncle was shot?

Luke yeah, eh

JD Why?

Luke Good afternoon Joe. Just a quick one, I don't want to stay on the line too long at all, I'm not comfy about being here at all, right?

JD Ok, why was your grand-uncle shot?

Luke Ethnic cleansing, Joe. Plain and simple, that's it. That's the story.

JD Because of his religion?

Luke Yeah. The likes of, as you say, low church – deadly combination, to be low church, nobody back you up, [you have to?] you have a few quid, you've worked hard all your life, and expanded the farm, expanded the farm, got along well with the neighbours all along, and then all of a sudden it's time for you to go, you have to sell out and move, 'no, we're not selling out – well, you're all going to be killed'. Well, we'll take our chances. So time went on anyway, and they were, the understanding in the family is that they were tipped off, we'll say, by friendly people,

JD Uh-hm

Luke Until, I mean these guys were only like 16, I think one was 16 one was 18, goes out one day and was shot and that was it. And these people, believe you me, they wouldn't have been colluding or co-operating with anybody.

JD And who shot them Luke? Who shot them?

Luke You know who shot them, Joe. You know.

JD You're saying, the local IRA?

Luke There you go.

JD Simply because of [their religion?]

Luke Listen, these, these – I won't say exactly how many – but there were two or three young men in the family anyway, and they knew that the time was up if you like, they were only young men, they had nothing to do with anybody, they worked hard from early morning till late at night, that's all they did, they built themselves up, and they were tipped off consistently – 'look you're about to be done away with, don't go home [this?] way, the other way, and they managed to avoid it one day, and the others were very cute and the youngest fellow went out one day and they killed him. And everybody was absolutely heartbroken and devastated, left the country and stayed away from it. Ethnic cleansing, Joe.

JD You're saying it's the same complexion that's being put on the Pearson brothers killing?

Luke It's purely ethnic cleansing Joe. Believe you me, these people relatives of mine if you knew them, they wouldn't have been colluding with anybody. Believe you me. You know.

JD And why did you say at the outset that, Luke, you were anxious almost not to talk about it?

Luke Eh, It's not something you talk about Joe, you know. It's new Ireland, it's all different, it's all great and it's all changed. It is different, yes, up to a point [indistinct]

JD Uh-hm. Have you ever said to your, I, I, I know that your address is there,

Luke Yeah yeah,

JD You're living in Ireland, do people you work or, or trade with or colleagues or friends know of this history?

Luke I tell you what Joe. A sister of the man that was a shot – of the young boy that was shot, right, lovely lovely old lady, she died only a few years ago, an old lady, she would never set foot in the Republic again after that, it was just a principle with her you know, whether she was right or she was wrong, and she said to me, 'remember' she said to me when I was only a little fellow, she said to me, 'remember this – Luke - never talk about religion or politics in public. Absolutely never. Unless you're in your own front door'. And it's no different today.

JD Ok, back after this break....

JD ...Apologies on the time, no more time for more calls, indeed lots of them on Coolacrease..... Margaret Curly produced, Derek Mooney is next.

Related Link: <http://www.indymedia.ie/article/84547>

## JOE DUFFY'S SECOND LIVELINE PROGRAMME ON COOLACREASE

RTÉ Radio 1

Transmission date: 6th November 2007-11-22

Podcast at

[http://www.rte.ie/radio1/podcast/podcast\\_liveline.xml](http://www.rte.ie/radio1/podcast/podcast_liveline.xml)

Joe Duffy interviewed Elizabeth Pearson, an Irish relation of the Coolacreese Pearsons. She said she had heard about the case, but had forgotten about it until Alan Stanley's book came out. There was fear about talking about it. She thought they were not killed because they were Protestant but because they had land, and she thought that big landowners, Catholic as well as Protestant, were under threat at the time. She said she did not think that the Pearsons had attacked anybody, as Cooneyites were pacifist. She dismissed the ethnic cleansing theory. She thought that they were shot in the genitals because they may have been going out with local girls.

Joe Duffy: I was surprised by the level of passion on yesterday's programme. Senator Eoghan Harris was on the programme and he made a number of allegations about a number of people, and as I said at the time we are not condoning those allegations, and Dr Pat Muldowney was one of the people mentioned, and he's contacted us, and he wants us to say that: "Senator Harris called me a liar and likened me to a Holocaust Denier when I read out the British documentary evidence censored by, he says, Hidden Ireland, or Hidden History, confirming that the Pearsons were executed for attacking and wounding Irish forces on duty, and evidence that refuted Eoghan Harris's atrocity allegations, that the Pearsons were shot in the genitals while the women were forced to watch." Pat Muldowney, Dr Pat Muldowney, points out that "I am neither a liar nor a Holocaust Denier". That's very straightforward, I am happy to read that out, to clarify that.

Joe Duffy – Joe at RTE.ie. Back to the murders in Coolacreese in 1920 - 21 wasn't it, Jack Lane good afternoon, you're from the Aubane Historical Society?

Jack Lane - That's right yeah

JD What's what's Aubane, where does that name come from, Jack?

JL Oh it's just a local townland and we set up a local history group some years ago, you know like

JD Townland where?

JL In north Cork.

JD Oh, north Cork, ok. Now you have a view on the killing of the Pears -

JL I mean I was listening to the programme yesterday and there was a lot of emot - heat and light generated, especially when Senator Harris came on. I mean the basic fact – I did some research on this in London in the Public Record Office, on the, on the Pearson, on the Pearsons – I mean the basic is that there was a war on, between the Irish government - the elected Irish government - and the British government.

JD Um

JL Now that obviously took all forms including a military form. The Pearsons joined the military conflict. Now that's the crucial thing. They, we all know the incident where they, they shot at the IRA guys setting up a roadblock, wounded two of them and -

JD They alleged, they were alleged to have shot at them, there wasn't a court

JL Well, I mean, they didn't, I don't think the, the IRA guys imagined that they were being shot at,

JD No, no I don't doubt they imagined, but it could have been someone else!

JL [How do you mean some - ?] Besides the Pearsons?

JD Yes

JL Well, I mean how, how –

JD Well there wasn't, well there wasn't a court, that's my point

JL Look, well,

JD The only, the only courts - and I know you would say unfortunately - a lot of people would say the only courts at the time were the British courts

JL Yeah, well there was an Irish court system as well

JD There was, there was, there was a Court Martial

JL Yes -

JD – Where the Pearsons weren't asked to attend

JL I know but this was a military affair, I mean that's the way military matters go. But what I wanted to explain was I looked up the Pearson's evidence that they gave - that the father of the Pearsons, William, he gave evidence a couple of years later to, in the course of getting compensation – more compensation – for his farm. And he was asked why this happened. He, the question was, and I quote “do you claim that the loss or injury described was occasioned in respect or on account of your allegiance to the government

of the United Kingdom? If so, give particulars on which you base the claim” And his answer was and I quote – 14th of April, 1927 – “I was always known as a staunch loyalist and upholder of the Crown. I assisted the Crown forces on every occasion” That, you know -

JD You see, at at that stage he was looking for a grant from the UK government

JL Yes, but was giving – now he wasn’t a liar, I don’t think – he took his religion seriously – as Mr.Harris has told us often enough, and again –

JD Well then, if he took his religion seriously – he was a Cooneyite - none of his family would have took [sic] up a gun ‘cos there wouldn’t have been a gun in the household

JL No, no – as far as I know that went with, they were a militant tendency, in the, in the, and they were more militant against fellow-Protestants than anybody else as far as I know. But that’s, I mean that’s the man’s own words.

JD Co - Cooneyites – any discussion we’ve had, I know it’s a very small grouping, but any discussion we’ve had so far on the Cooneyites, everyone has agreed that they were pacifists!

JL No, no –

JD - Like the Quakers or the Amish, the Amish community

JL No! They were not! How could they be pacifists if they took up guns and, and shot, shot at the - shot the IRA guys who were creating a roadblock? I mean this this man –

JD He, he –

JL – now hold on – this man says he – it’s words out of his own mouth “I was known as a staunch loyalist and upholder of the Crown. I assisted the Crown forces on every occasion”

JD [interrupting] ok, ok, ok –

JD But do you think, even if what you say is true –

JL It IS true –

JD [sighs] ok – [sighs, pause]

JL I’m not inventing this am I?

JD Well, well are the Pearson family inventing their analysis of it?

JL What's their analysis? I'm try- [indistinct]

JD Well, you've heard, they're saying it was a land-grab. They're saying -

JL – Well, who got the land?

JD That the land was subsequently –

JL Who got the land? Who got the land?

JD I don't know who actually got the -

JL - The first people who got it were ex-British soldiers

JD Yeah, but they were, now let's go through this again, let's not be too economical with it, and I'm not suggest- you, I'm not suggesting – but there's other people got land as well, the first three people –

JL That's what happens with the Land Commission; the Land Commission did that and the Land Commission was, as far as I recall -

JD But can I go back to my question? Even if what you say is true, ok, about the Pearson boys firing at an IRA party, did that necessitate or justify them being executed?

JL Well...that's war. Unfortunately. I mean they were a threat, they were a military threat to the army of the Irish government. The IRA the ar- were the legitimate army of the Irish government at that time. That is a fact that is, that seems to be overlooked.

JD They were the legit – legitimate army of the –

JL –Of the Irish government!

JD – of the party that got the majority votes!

JL Exactly!

JD But there wasn't a constituted government as such. Un -

JL There was a government!

JD - unfortunately.

JL Yeah, there was a government! And a cabinet, and a Prime Minister and they raise, run Departments of State. And there was a Chief of Staff – Richard Mulcahy, who actually was the man who insisted that the people down in Offaly do something about the situation down there. Richard Mulcahy, a most respectable Free State man later on. I

mean, he was as legitimate as you can get. I mean the 1918 election legitimised the War of Independence. There would be no war if that election result was taken note of. There would never have been an IRA, there would never have been a single man killed after 1918 if the British government [indistinct] –

JD But let's –

JL –election!

JD But let's be clear about this, whether you like it or not: in 1918 the government of Ireland was the British government.

JL Yeah, and it was -

JD It WAS the British government.

JL And it was –

JD It WAS the British government.

JL It -

JD Whether, whether you like it or not!

JL No, no -

JD - Because you can't say, you can't say that the IRA –

JL It was a government by pure physical force

JD But you can't say that the IRA, in 1918 were, were, the army of Ireland – they weren't, whether you like it or not

JL I certainly can! I certainly can! Who, who, what other army represented Ireland?

JD The British army were in Ireland.

JL They represented Ireland? They, they represented the electorate who voted for independence? Did they?

JD And if - ok, ok, take - I hope you can understand that argument. The next, well then, the next point I made to you is if, if if the IRA were a legitimate army at the time, which, as you say they are and I know the argument you're putting forward, if they were a legitimate army, is it, is it the actions of a legitimate army to march up to a house, take two men out in front of the house and shoot them dead?

JL All, all armies do it.

JD Well, that that's – [indistinct, both JL and JD talking at the same time over each other] that to me sounds like a war crime.

JL What do you mean?

JD That to me sounds like a war crime. Now, that to me, even, [JL interrupts] taking, taking your precepts on board, that to me sounds like a war crime.

JL Why is it 'a war crime'?

JD The men weren't tried. They weren't tried! Simple as that!

JL In, in war you don't have perfect justice, you have Court Martials: that, that in itself alone is not a very democratic system –

JD [interrupts] – Milosevic, Milosevic was brought to the Hague and tried.

JL Eh?

JD You're, you're saying the Pearsons were worse than Milosevic?

JL I'm not saying they were worse than anybody, I'm –

JD [interrupts] but you're saying it was legitimate that these two young fellows should be taken out and shot [JL 'the war'] in the groin [JL 'the war'] and bled [JL 'the war'] to death

JL The war that was fought for Irish independence was legitimate.

JD And then why weren't they legitimately dealt with then if they had committed a crime?

JL If you, if you're in a war and you're attacked militarily, you respond militarily. By whatever means, I mean all is fair in love and war.

JD So you walk up, you walk up to them, take them out of the house and shoot two unarmed men dead?

JL They weren't they weren't the only, what, how do you think the Auxiliaries and Black and Tans operated?

JD Oh I know, but do never benchmark yourself against badness. I say it to my kids all the time: do never benchmark yourself against badness. Including your own parents in

my case, if I'm the [cursing?] the house or whatever. But anyway I don't want to trivialise, I want to bring Tom Carew in. Tom Carew good afternoon to you.

Tom Carew; Joe, Joe my ulcer is back again, very quiet for many years, I never heard such nonsense: court martials -

JD Well, hang on, from me or from - ?

TC No, not at all, no, from Jack Lane.

JD [I'd be surprised?] to say it's nonsense from me as well.

TC I could spend a long time telling you about the writings of Jack Lane and the people in the organisation he represents. Because the people in Aubane include people who are involved, not in innocent local history -

JD Now, yeah, yeah, just, just [sounds like warning tone]

TC - in the British and Irish Communist Organisation, but I won't go into that -

JD But that, that was a legitimate party in the 70s

TC Oh yeah, but I mean the ideology, the ideology is, is particularly weird. When you talk about military court martials, that's the military way, way, he says. Military court martials involved the defendant being put in front of a trial. Not somebody being put up against the wall without knowing there was any such court martial. He talked about 'they joined the military conflict'. If you were in Offaly there was no military conflict. He just mentioned, conflicting himself out of his own mouth, Dick Mulcahy asked Offaly to do something, because nothing whatever happened down there. Now if there's no action going on there's not a military action to join, and there's nothing for spies to spy on because the Offaly Brigade was a paper outfit which did sweet damn all. So the idea that there was any threat to the Offaly Brigade was unreal because the Offaly Brigade achieved absolutely nothing. Compared to west Cork or south Tipperary for example, it was a completely different planet. So the idea that there was any reality to all of this is totally and completely unreal.

JD But in fairness, Jack's substantive point is a document he says he's come across in London where William Pearson is quoted as saying "I was always known as a staunch loyalist and upholder of the Crown, I assisted the Crown forces on every occasion". He was looking for a grant for compens -

TC The [number of?] incidences where the Crown forces needed assistance in Offaly were zero, because the Crown forces in Offaly - it was like in northern Ireland in recent years. There were parts of northern Ireland where you could see an RUC sergeant in shirt sleeves as I did on many occasions, which was absolutely quiet, places in parts of Antrim and Down. There were parts in south - south Armagh which was [sic] totally different.

The equivalent in the past thirty years to parts of north Antrim would be a place like Offaly where the police could have gone around in their shirt sleeves as you could find them in, in summertime in the north. It was an absolute complete nonsense to say that there was any real conflict in that area. So the whole thing collapses on that reality.

JL ? [right]

JD Jack, do you want to come back in there?

JL Were there any Black and Tans, Auxiliaries, were the IRA guys building a roadblock for fun?

TC [indistinct – ‘Tim’?]

JL Were they? Were they?

TC The incidents in 19, 1920 – 1921

JL Were they? Look, look –

JD Now, now let, let, let Tom answer, Jack, let [the man answer ?]

TC [indistinct] The incidents in 1920 – 1921 did not happen on the island of Ireland, they happened concentrated in certain areas of which west Cork and south Tipperary were among the most prominent examples. Offaly was a place which was an absolute backwater. If you wanted to know where incidents happened you look at where the 15 Auxiliary companies were located. They brought in 15 companies of ex-officers, highly trained, highly armed who were put in the hot spots. Offaly never saw an Auxiliary unless they were passing through to a race meeting somewhere. There was absolutely nothing to be done to tackle the Offaly Brigade and the idea that there was anything – justification for anybody being shot for assisting the Crown forces in Offaly is a complete and total absolute joke –

JD - The UVF for example was mentioned yesterday by a woman caller.

TC [indistinct] well this really a fantastic red herring. The UVF organised in historic Ulster – in the nine counties of Ulster. They never, ever organised in any shape or form anywhere else. And some woman came on yesterday telling us about the UVF in Offaly. There was never a UVF in Offaly or anywhere else. They had 90,000 people all of them in Ulster, in the north. So that just shows, when people call themselves historians and make statements like that and again Pat Muldowney told us about the Chief Inspector’s report: there was never, from 1836 up till 1922, in the entire history of the RIC, they never had any rank of chief inspector and I checked online as well and he repeats the same sort of error elsewhere. It’s amazing that somebody who calls themselves –

JD – Well maybe it was a ‘County Inspector’?

TC – well hold on – but a County Inspector is somebody two ranks above the British rank of Chief Inspector, which is a British, not an RIC or RUC rank. It's amazing that they call themselves expert, they pretend to know the details, and when you start checking some of the details you find them absolutely, totally, completely inaccurate. But again, like the whole thing, the idea Offaly was a war zone, no way was Offaly a war zone. So therefore idea that military operations are justifiable against an enemy – there wasn't an enemy in existence in Offaly.

JD Jack?

JL Right, yes, so as I say, apparently there were no Auxiliaries according to Tom, no Black and Tans, the –

TC - In Offaly? In Offaly?

JL Like in Offaly. So the IRA –

TC How many companies, how many companies of Auxiliaries in Offaly? How many companies?

JL I'm not an expert –

TC You know? I do. I do where [each?] Auxiliary company was.

JL Ok

JD Well tell us then, Tom

TC Jack mentions north Cork. In Macroom you had an Auxiliary company, right? And there was a real conflict involved in Cork in [indistinct]

JD But how many were there in Offaly?

TC Not one. There was nothing for them to do.

JD There was no Auxies in, in Offaly?

TC Does Jack even know that? He calls himself an historian, does he even know that?

JL I'm not a historian, no, but all I'm [indistinct, TC interrupts]

JD But what about the Black & Tans?

TC There was no Black & Tans there was no Auxiliaries, therefore there was - what were the IRA doing then? What were they doing creating the roadblock?

TC If you looked, if you looked, [JL same time: Why were they creating the roadblock?] If you looked, can I tell you? Can I tell you? If you look at the record of what happened in 1919 to 1921 Offaly was a place where almost nothing happened for the entire two and a half year period.

JL Well, all this happened anyway.

TC All they did, all they did in Offaly was to murder two unarmed young Protestants. In Cork and Tipperary at least [indistinct, JL interrupts 'after, after...'] In Cork and Tipperary at least they were [indistinct – 'decent young'?] men who engaged in stand-up armed combat in places like west Cork and south Tipperary. In Offaly the people who did nothing [sic]. And you know the same thing happened in, in the Northern Ireland. When the ceasefire happened you had some thugs who ki- murdered people when it was safe to do so after the ceasefire situation -

JD - OK. Quickly Jack, last word?

JL Well the, the, the, he says all that happened in Offaly was two decent boys were killed. Well they tried to kill IRA guys first. They started the military conflict of this incident in -

JD Ok, Ok that's the kernel of the row – that's the thing, that's the thing that's denied and was -

JL - Can I just say?

JD Briefly

JL This is to be fair to everybody including the Pearsons themselves. I think it's quite wrong that, that, that any descendants of the Pearsons today would get the impression that people took it into their heads to go out and attack -

JD - Ok, Ok, Ok And I said we heard from some of the descendents as well who a lot of people didn't know exist, but it was great to hear from them. Thanks indeed great to hear from all our callers, back tomorrow, 1.45 (pm). J Murphy produced, Derek Mooney is next, good afternoon.

