

THE

Black

And Tans

1916 — 1923



My Name is Adam

Gilman - Burke.

I am 10 years old.

I got My information  
from my Dad.

I go to Dromore N.S.

My address is Aughaville  
Co. Cork

The Irish Black and Tans were formed in 1919 to assist the Royal Irish Constabulary (RIC) in the Irish War of Independence.

The official name given to the Black and Tans was the Royal Irish Constabulary Special Reserve (RICSR).

The black and tans entered Ireland for the first time on March 25<sup>th</sup> 1920 in a desperate attempt to regain control and defeat the Irish rebellion.

The Black and Tans were a force who were recruited to assist the Royal Irish Constabulary in maintaining their control over the Irish Republican Army (IRA) during the Irish War of Independence.

They were thought to be the "scum" of the British armed forces. They included the British ex-soldiers, ex-prisoners and some psychopaths. Majority of the recruits were from Britain; however, it also had some members who were Irish.

Their nickname the "Black and Tans" was associated with the clothing they wore. Which included a mixed khaki British army and rifle green Ric uniform parts.

They became known for their attacks on civilians and their property. Lt. Colonel Gerald Smyth stated in his first address to the recruits ***"You may make mistakes occasionally and innocent persons may be shot, but that cannot be helped, and you are bound to get the right parties some time."***



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The Summer of 1920 saw the Black and Tans burning small towns and villages in Ireland. They began with Tuam in County Galway in July 1920. They then continued to burn Trim, Balbriggan, Thurles and Templemore as well as a few more locations.

In November 1920, the Tans "besieged" Tralee in revenge for the IRA abduction and killing of two local RIC men. The businesses in the town were closed and no food was let in for a week. The Black and Tans shot dead three civilians.

On 14 November, the Tans were suspected of abducting and murdering a Roman Catholic priest, Father Michael Griffin, in Galway. His body was found a week later in a bog.

From October 1920 to July 1921, the Galway region was "remarkable in many ways", most notably the level of police brutality towards suspected IRA members, which was far above the norm in the rest of Ireland.

The Black and Tans disbanded in 1922. Just over 7,000 Black and Tans served in Ireland during 1920-1922. Over half of the Black and Tans received a government pension.

404 members of the Royal Irish Constabulary (RIC) died and over 600 members were injured.



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# Men Behind the War

Lieutenant Colonel Gerald Bryce Ferguson Smyth was born on September 7<sup>th</sup> 1885. He was a British army officer and he was also a police officer. Smyth was the centre of a alleged mutiny of the RIC during the Irish War of Independence. Gerald Smyth was born in India as his father was the British high Commissioner in Punjab.

Smyth went to Ireland in June 1920 where he was appointed as the Divisional Commissioner for Munster. Smyth made a speech where he was then called a murderer by Constable Jeremiah Mee. Smyth ordered his arrest however the RIC men refused this order. Smyth fled to Cork where weeks later he was shot several times and subsequently died. He was buried in his mother's hometown of Banbridge, Co. Down. Smyth was 34 years old.



## Listowel Mutiny

Listowel mutiny took place when RIC officers refused to relocate out of Listowel in County Kerry to another area. By the time Smyth had died many of the officers began to join the IRA. Smyth had granted permission to his men to shoot IRA members on site without any backlash.