

The British Government, Workmen's Compensation, and the Civilian War Casualties of the Easter 1916 Irish Rebellion Daithí Ó Corráin School of History and Geography, Dublin City University, Dublin, Republic of Ireland Email: daithi.ocorrain@dcu.ie

Abstract The Easter 1916 rebellion occasioned significant civilian casualties. Having initially resisted the idea of compensating bereaved or injured civilians, the British government relented by establishing the Rebellion (Victims') Committee (RVC) which assessed 550 compensation applications for death and injury. Utilizing these applications as well as Dublin Castle, Treasury, press, and parliamentary records, this article examines five aspects of the state's treatment of civilian casualties: why the government's initial opposition to compensation was eventually reversed; the establishment of the RVC, the bureaucratic compensation process, and the surveillance of working-class claimants; what the compensation claims reveal about the nature and circumstances of civilian casualties during the rebellion; how the Workmen's Compensation Act (1906) was used to determine compensation awards and, consequently, how this minimized the state's financial liabilities by treating civilian casualties not as victims of war but on a par with injured workers; and, lastly, why the workmen's compensation legislation was an inadequate means of treating civilian war casualties. The RVC compensation records enable a unique case study of how the 1916 rebellion adversely affected the lives of ordinary men, women and children, and how the British state endeavoured to limit its obligations to make reparations to them. The Easter 1916 rebellion was the most pivotal episode of the Irish revolution of 1912–23 and the bloodiest.¹ It effected a profound shift towards separatism and the eventual establishment of an independent Irish state. More immediately, the sudden and unexpected eruption of violence in Dublin on 24 April and the suppression of the insurgency by the British army led to 504 fatalities of which 276 were civilians.² Contemporaries such as William G. Smith, a St John Ambulance volunteer, observed several civilian casualties: 'an old man shot whilst going out to get a loaf of bread for his daughter ... a servant girl shot dead while sitting in her bedroom'.

¹The standard works on the rebellion are Michael Foy and Brian Barton, *The Easter Rising* (Stroud, 2004), Fearghal McGarry, *The rising: Ireland, Easter 1916* (Oxford, 2010), and Charles Townshend, *Easter 1916: the Irish rebellion* (London, 2005). On fatalities specifically, see Eunan O'Halpin and Daithí Ó Corráin, *The dead of the Irish Revolution* (New Haven, 2020), pp. 25–101. ²O'Halpin and Ó Corráin, *Dead*, table 1, p. 543. © The Author(s), 2025. Published by Cambridge University Press. This is an Open Access article, distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution licence (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0>), which permits unrestricted re-use, distribution and reproduction, provided the original article is properly cited.

<https://doi.org/10.1017/S0018246X25101271> Published online by Cambridge University Press

The Historical Journal 419 window; a woman badly injured in the jaw'.³ Notably, part of the rationale behind the insurgents' surrender on 29 April 1916 was 'to prevent the further slaughter of Dublin citizens'.⁴ While the destruction of the city's infrastructure by bullet, shell, and fire was immediately visible, the devastation of civilian lives through loss of breadwinners and injury was not. In recent decades, the previously insular historiography of the 1916 rebellion has been reframed. It is now better understood within the wider context of the First World War, without which a rebellion would have been inconceivable, and has also been examined using a broader comparative transnational lens.⁵ A growing body of research on the experience of First World War casualties, disability pensions, and medicine has focused understandably on military veterans.⁶ By contrast, the experience of civilian casualties on the home front has not received the same level of scholarly attention and has been overshadowed by research on themes such as atrocities, occupation, mobilization, public health, and bereavement, among others.⁷ The state's treatment of civilian casualties of the 1916 rebellion exemplified its unequal approach to

military and civilian death and disability during the First World War. As Julie Powell has observed, whereas disabled war veterans occupied a valorized position in terms of efforts ‘to remake them ... bodily and socially whole’, and were the beneficiaries of private and state supports, nothing similar was bestowed on civilians.⁸ In October 1916 the British government established the Rebellion (Victims’) Committee (RVC) to adjudicate on 550 compensation awards for 246 civilian fatalities and 304 cases of injury. All cases, whether perpetrated by the state forces or the rebels, were considered by the committee. Notwithstanding the publication of a detailed compendium of the dead of the Irish revolution, official treatment of 3 Narrative by William G. Smith of his experiences as a St John Ambulance volunteer during the Easter Rising in Dublin, [1916], National Library of Ireland (NLI), MS 24,952. 4 Townshend, *Easter 1916*, p. 246. 5 Excellent surveys of the home front in Ireland are offered by Padraig Yeates, *A city in wartime: Dublin, 1914–1918* (Dublin, 2011) and Niamh Gallagher, *Ireland and the Great War: a social and political history* (London 2021). On the rebellion and the war, see John Horne and Edward Madigan, eds., *Towards commemoration: Ireland in war and revolution, 1912–1923* (Dublin, 2013); Keith Jeffery, *1916: a global history* (London, 2016); Fearghal McGarry, “‘A land beyond the wave’: transnational perspectives on Easter 1916”, in Niall Whelehan, ed., *Transnational perspectives on modern Irish history* (New York, 2015), pp. 165–88; Enda Delaney and Fearghal McGarry, ‘Introduction: a global history of the Irish Revolution’, *Irish Historical Studies*, 44 (2020), pp. 1–10. 6 See, for example, Ana Carden-Coyne, *The politics of wounds: military patients and medical power in the First World War* (Oxford, 2014); Julie Anderson, *War, disability and rehabilitation in Britain: ‘soul of a nation’* (Manchester, 2011); Anne Borsay, ‘Disciplining disabled bodies: the development of orthopaedic medicine in Britain, c. 1800–1939’, in D. Turner and K. Stagg, eds., *Social histories of disability and deformity* (London, 2006), pp. 97–116; Joanna Bourke, *Dismembering the male: men’s bodies, Britain and the Great War* (London, 1996). For an overview of the history of medicine in Ireland, see Catherine Cox, ‘A better known territory? Medical history and Ireland’, *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy: Archaeology, Culture, History, Literature*, 113C (2013), pp. 341–62. The study of disability as a branch of the history of medicine in Ireland is at best embryonic. 7 There is no specific essay on civilian casualties among the 1,000 essays in *1914–1918-online. International Encyclopedia of the First World War*. 8 Julie M. Powell, *Bodies of work: the First World War and the transnational making of rehabilitation* (Cambridge, 2023), p. 222. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0018246X25101271> Published online by Cambridge University Press 420 Daithí Ó Corráin wounded civilians remains one of the least researched aspects of the 1916 rebellion.⁹ The preservation of the RVC material in the National Archives of Ireland provides a rare opportunity to undertake a case study of how the British government treated civilian war casualties. This article has five aims. First, it explains the government’s initial opposition to the idea of compensation for civilians and the various factors that eventually overturned this stance. Second, it outlines the establishment of the RVC and the bureaucratic nature of the compensation process. This bore similarities with how the state approached wartime separation allowances and widows’ pensions, not least official surveillance of working-class recipients of such awards. Third, an analysis of the compensation forms is presented because it permits new insights into the nature of civilian casualties during the rebellion in terms of gender, age, and circumstances. Fourth, the article describes how, at the insistence of the Treasury, the awards recommended by the RVC were set according to the rubrics of the Workmen’s Compensation Act (1906). This treated civilian casualties of the rebellion not as victims of war but on a par with injured workers. In this way, state liabilities were limited as much as the consequences of state violence were elided. Lastly, the article concludes with a consideration of why the workmen’s compensation legislation was an inadequate means of treating civilian war casualties. In Italy and in Belgium, for example,

legislation governing disabled soldiers and military widows was substantially extended to civilian casualties. However, this was not the case in Britain.¹⁰ The RVC material powerfully captures how the rebellion adversely affected the lives of ordinary men, women and children, and how the British state endeavoured to limit its obligations to make reparations to them. Initially, the British government refused to countenance compensation for the death or injury of civilians during the 1916 rebellion, the majority of whom were from working- or lower middle-class backgrounds. This was in stark contrast to its acceptance of financial liability, in the form of ex gratia grants, for property damaged by military operations to quell the rebellion.¹¹ This unjust and classist approach was criticized by the Irish Trade Union Congress and Labour Party. In an appeal to the prime minister, it maintained that the families of civilians killed or injured have at least as strong a claim upon the good will of the state for some recompense ... as the property owner has for the loss of his property ... Life is more than property and we hope it may not be again the experience of the working class of Dublin ... that the rich will receive compensation because they 90’Halpin and Ó Corráin, *Dead*. ¹⁰See Fabio De Ninno, ‘Italian civilian victims of war: assistance, legislation and war pensions from fascism to republic’, *Journal of Modern Italian Studies*, 26 (2021), pp 291–313; Marisa De Picker, ‘Nation’s compensation for war wounds and work incapacities: The creation of a new welfare system for physically disabled veterans and civilians of the First World War in interwar Belgium, 1918–1928’, *Alter. European Journal of Disability Research*, 13 (2019), pp. 294–307. ¹¹Claims for property losses were assessed by the Property Losses (Ireland) Committee; see Daithí Ó Corráin, “‘They blew up the best portion of our city and ... it is their duty to replace it’: compensation and reconstruction in the aftermath of the 1916 Rising”, *Irish Historical Studies*, 39 (2014), pp. 272–95. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0018246X25101271> Published online by Cambridge University Press The Historical Journal 421 have friends at court, while the poor must bear their losses without complaint because, being poor, that is their just reward!¹² Although H. H. Asquith regretted that the government was unable to pay compensation for loss of life or injury, he, nevertheless, adhered to the advice of Sir Robert Chalmers, joint permanent secretary of the Treasury and interim under-secretary in Dublin, who maintained that such claims should be resisted because it would be impossible to discriminate between the innocent and those who were complicit in the rebellion.¹³ This negative stance differed sharply from the government’s readiness to meet claims for both property and civilian casualties in the wake of the German bombardment of the English seaport towns of Hartlepool, Scarborough, and Whitby – known as the East Coast raid – in December 1914.¹⁴ Between January and September 1915, the East Coast Raid committee, chaired by Lord Parmoor, assessed over 10,000 claims for property and 697 for personal injury (of which 178 were fatalities).¹⁵ The deaths of British civilians, particularly women and children, in German naval and air raids during the First World War occasioned outrage; the press portrayed them as the vulnerable victims of a barbarous enemy.¹⁶ Compensation was paid in the summer and autumn of 1915 and the example of the East Coast raids, though in very different circumstances as it did not involve the crown forces or an insurgency, was raised in parliament by Irish MPs.¹⁷ Several months elapsed before the British government altered its position. In the interim, the plight of those rendered fatherless, widowed, blind, or lame was raised by several organizations in addition to the Irish Trade Union Congress and Labour Party. A committee of the Dublin Chamber of Commerce, chaired by Charles Jacob, a well-known Quaker biscuit manufacturer, impressed on Asquith that ‘life lost is as deserving of compensation as property destroyed’ and called for a special commission to award compensation for death or injury on the same basis as the Workmen’s Compensation Act.¹⁸ The press, individual solicitors, employers, Dublin corporation, and Irish MPs also urged that provision be made by the government for dependants of wage-earners killed during the

rebellion. At the end of May the Irish Independent 12 Thomas Johnson (chair of national executive) and David Campbell (treasurer) to H. H. Asquith, 20 May 1916, Bodleian Library, Asquith papers, MS 37, fos. 41–3. 13 Maurice Bonham Carter to Thomas Johnson, 8 June 1916, NLI, Thomas Johnson papers, MS 17, 234/3; Chalmers to Asquith, 11 May 1916, NLI, Joseph Brennan papers, MS 26, 186. 14 Asquith to Walter Rea (MP for Scarborough), 22 Dec. 1914 published in *East Anglian Daily Times*, 24 Dec. 1914. On the coastal urban experience of the war see Michael Reeve, *Bombardment, public safety and resilience in English coastal communities during the First World War* (London, 2021). I am grateful to Michael Reeve for his advice on this point. 15 *London Evening Standard*, 25 Sept. 1915; *Whitby Gazette*, 1 Oct. 1915; Reeve, *Bombardment*, pp. 160–3. German air raids caused 1,413 deaths and wounded 1,972; see Stefanie Linden, ‘When war came home: air-raid shock in World War I’, *History of Psychiatry*, 32 (2021), pp. 289–307, at p. 292. 16 See Susan Grayzel, *At home and under fire: air raids and culture in Britain from the Great War to the Blitz* (Cambridge, 2012), pp. 21–63; Thomas Fegan, *The ‘baby killers’: German air raids on Britain in the First World War* (Barnsley, 2002). 17 See, for example, the parliamentary question by Patrick White, *Hansard* 5 (Commons), 87, cols. 1225–6 (21 Nov. 1916); details of payments are contained in The National Archives, London (TNA), Treasury (T), 1/11780/11304. 18 Charles Jacob and James Douglas to Asquith, 13 June 1916, NLI, Brennan papers, MS 26, 187. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0018246X25101271> Published online by Cambridge University Press 422 Daithí Ó Corráin warned that many families had been ‘reduced to privation’. 19 At Westminster, Alfred Byrne, Irish Parliamentary Party (IPP) MP for Dublin Harbour, called for the government to grant compensation; he made the same demand at meetings of Dublin corporation. 20 Although these appeals received a stony response, they nonetheless kept the question of compensation for civilians alive. A number of issues coalesced between May and August 1916 which forced the government to perform a volte-face on the question of compensation for civilians. First, there was sustained public outcry over military ill-discipline during the rebellion. Two episodes posed great difficulties for the authorities in Ireland and London. The first involved the actions of Captain J. C. Bowen-Colthurst, who shot dead James Coade on 25 April and on the following morning ordered the death by firing squad of three journalists – Thomas Dickson, Patrick McIntyre, and Francis Sheehy-Skeffington, the latter a well-known pacifist and feminist. The second was the killing by the British army of thirteen civilians in North King Street. 21 A royal commission on the killing of the journalists damningly concluded that ‘the shooting of unarmed and unresisting civilians without trial constitutes the offence of murder, whether martial law had been proclaimed or not’. 22 Bowen-Colthurst was found guilty of murder but insane. 23 Controversially, there was no public inquiry into the North King Street deaths. However, the drip feed of reports about the plight of dependants was sufficiently detrimental that by early August 1916 General Sir John Maxwell, commander-in-chief in Ireland, recommended to Asquith that although ‘a very dangerous precedent’, monetary compensation should be paid to ‘families of persons killed during the rising, about whose participation there is a reasonable doubt and the circumstances of their death is not attributable to their own acts’. 24 The logic was inescapable and Asquith, who had been personally lobbied by several grieving families, underwent a Pauline conversion to find himself ‘strongly in favour’ of Maxwell’s suggestion. 25 A second factor was Henry Duke’s appointment as Irish chief secretary. 26 Before he left for Dublin, he had been instructed by Asquith to consider Maxwell’s proposal for monetary recompense. Duke was more disposed than Chalmers to compensate civilian victims of the rebellion, and in his first memorandum for cabinet saw no objection in principle to compensating claimants who suffered innocently by reason 19 *Irish Independent*, 29 May 1916. 20 See, for example, *Hansard* 5 (Commons), 85, c. 2678 (23 Aug. 1916); minutes of monthly meeting of the municipal council of the city of Dublin,

3 July and 4 Sept. 1916, Dublin City Library and Archive, Dublin corporation minutes. 21 On these deaths, see O’Halpin and Ó Corráin, *Dead*, pp. 39, 42–3, and 75–8. 22 Royal Commission on the arrest and subsequent treatment of Mr Francis Sheehy Skeffington, Mr Thomas Dickson and Mr Patrick James McIntyre (1916) Cd. 8376. Evidence was taken from thirty-eight witnesses but not Bowen-Colthurst. 23 ‘Enquiry into the deaths of Francis Sheehy-Skeffington and two others, executed whilst in custody’, TNA, War Office 35/67. Bowen-Colthurst was detained in Broadmoor Lunatic Asylum for two years, after which he emigrated to Canada, where he died in 1965. 24 Maxwell to Asquith, 3 Aug. 1916, Bodleian, Asquith papers, MS Asquith 37, fos. 116–17. 25 Note by Asquith to Henry Duke, 4 Aug. 1916, enclosing letter from Maxwell of 3 Aug., *ibid.* 26 On Duke’s tenure see D. G. Boyce and Cameron Hazlehurst, ‘The unknown chief secretary: H. E. Duke and Ireland, 1916–18’, *Irish Historical Studies*, 20 (1977), pp. 286–311; Eunan O’Halpin, *The decline of the Union: British government in Ireland, 1892–1920* (Dublin, 1987), pp. 134–5. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0018246X25101271> Published online by Cambridge University Press

The Historical Journal 423 of military action by crown forces. 27 The secretary of the Mansion House fund, established by the Dublin lord mayor to relieve distress following the rebellion, left the new chief secretary in no doubt that the condition of affected civilians was ‘one of almost absolute helplessness’. 28 By June 1916 the fund had disbursed 3,600 grants amounting to £3,000; a similar sum was spent on relief employment schemes before it closed in April 1917. 29 The Society of St Vincent de Paul, the largest Catholic charity in Ireland, also played a critical role in maintaining many desperate families. For example, having been a ‘self-supporting’ citizen before the rebellion, Ellen Dillon had been ‘saved from starvation by relief from the Vincent de Paul’. 30 These voluntary relief efforts proved vital in the aftermath of the rebellion, but the scale of the crisis necessitated state intervention. A third factor was the stance of the IPP. For much of June and July 1916 the party’s attention was absorbed by ill-fated negotiations with Lloyd George to settle the Irish question. Despite a ‘dazzling display of verbal conjuring’, his scheme ultimately foundered on the issue of partition and the trenchant opposition of southern unionists. 31 Subsequently, as Herbert Samuel, the home secretary, observed, a bitterly disappointed IPP became more antagonistic towards the British government so as ‘to impress their followers in Ireland’. 32 Irish MPs truculently raised anew complaints about the internment of republicans, martial law, the conduct of the military during the rebellion, and compensation for civilians – all of which had soured public opinion in Ireland. None was more vocal in championing the plight of poorer victims of the rebellion and haranguing Dublin Castle than John D. Nugent, MP for College Green (which was acutely affected by the outbreak), a member of Dublin corporation, a poor law guardian for Dublin’s Arran Quay ward, and influential national insurance secretary of the Ancient Order of Hibernians. 33 In early August he furnished Asquith with the details of fifty-one cases of dependants of non-combatants and fifteen cases of persons wounded and rendered unfit for work. 34 The final factor was the Law and Procedure (Emergency Provisions) (Ireland) bill, the legal implications of which inadvertently opened the way for compensation of civilians. The measure protected the local authority from claims for compensation for criminal or malicious injuries to persons or property arising out of the rebellion. 35 When introduced in the Commons in July 1916, Thomas Heath, permanent

27 Confidential memorandum by Duke for cabinet, 16 Aug. 1916, Bodleian, Henry Duke papers, Dep c. 714, fos. 83–7. 28 M. J. Fitzpatrick to Duke, 28 Sept. 1916, National Archives of Ireland (NAI), Chief secretary’s office registered papers (CSORP)/1918/33149. 29 *Irish Times* (IT), 24 June 1916; *Freeman’s Journal*, 14 Apr. 1917. 30 Affidavit sworn by Ellen Dillon on 28 Aug. 1916, NAI, CSORP/1919/29332. 31 K. T. Hoppen, *Governing Hibernia: British politicians and Ireland, 1800–1921* (Oxford, 2016), pp. 314–15; on the Lloyd George negotiations see Alvin Jackson, *Home rule: an Irish history, 1800–2000* (London, 2003), pp. 180–202 and Conor Mulvagh, *The*

Irish Parliamentary Party at Westminster, 1900–18 (Manchester, 2016), pp. 137–41. 32Daily reports to the King on proceedings in parliament, 31 July 1916, Parliamentary Archives, Herbert Samuel papers, A/52/4. 33See Marie Coleman, ‘Nugent, John Dillon’, Dictionary of Irish Biography online, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.3318/dib.006252.v2>. 34Nugent to Asquith, 8 Aug. 1916, NAI, CSORP/1917/20445. 35Law and Procedure (Emergency Provisions) (Ireland) Act (1916) (6 & 7 Geo. 5, c. 46). <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0018246X25101271> Published online by Cambridge University Press 424 Daithí Ó Corráin secretary to the Treasury, observed the possibility that depriving citizens of legal redress against the local authority might ‘have the effect of giving them an equitable claim to compensation from public funds’.36 So it proved. During the committee stage of the bill on 17 August, Duke indicated that the cases presented by Nugent were in the course of investigation and that valid claims would be favourably considered.37 At the end of August the chief secretary drafted terms of reference for a committee so that, as he put it to the chancellor of the exchequer, ‘some good may be done without extravagance’.38 The desire to avoid profligacy profoundly shaped the compensation process. II A Rebellion (Victims’) Committee (RVC) was appointed by the lord lieutenant on 11 October 1916.39 It sat sixty times between 14 October 1916 and 14 July 1917 and was chaired by Charles St George Orpen, president of the Incorporated Law Society of Ireland, senior partner in Messrs Darley, Orpen and McGillycuddy solicitors, and brother of the architect Richard and the artist William. He was joined by Charles H. O’Conor, a senior local government board inspector who had been involved in relief schemes in the immediate aftermath of the rebellion. John J. Taylor, head of the finance division of the chief secretary’s office and a future assistant under-secretary, completed the triumvirate.40 Hugh C. Love, an official in the office of the commissioners of national education, was appointed secretary. The RVC’s office was at 13 St Stephen’s Green, Dublin.41 Sitting in camera, the RVC was instructed to inquire and report on claims for two categories of compensation. The first was persons who ‘suffered loss by reason of personal injuries sustained by them, without misconduct or default on their part’, during the rebellion.42 In this way, injured rebels and looters were ineligible. The second category was ‘dependants of deceased persons who, without misconduct or default on their part, were killed or injured in the recent rebellion’.43 In exceptional cases not within the two categories – where death or wounding occurred in the course of military operations – a compassionate grant could be recommended.44 Applications by dependants of soldiers or policemen were not admitted.45 Neither were cases involving psychological distress, those unable to demonstrate dependency, or cases where injuries owed to the misguided actions of the applicant. An example of the latter was fifteen-year-old Nicholas Murphy. He picked up a gelignite 36Heath to R. S. Meiklejohn (Treasury), 27 July 1916, TNA, Treasury (T)1/11982. 37Hansard 5 (Commons) 85, c. 2113 (17 Aug. 1916). 38Duke to Reginald McKenna, 30 Aug. 1916, TNA, T1/11985. 39Warrant of appointment, 11 Oct. 1916, *ibid.* 40IT, 11 Oct. 1916; Brendan O’Donoghue, *Activities wise and otherwise: the career of Sir Henry Augustus Robinson, 1898–1922* (Sallins, 2015), p. 123; Richard R. Pyves, *Sir John James Taylor – de facto ruler of Ireland: assistant under-secretary of Ireland, 1918–1920* (Pickering, Ontario, 2021), p. 72. 41G. E. Shanahan (assistant secretary Office of Public Works) to Love, 25 Oct. 1916, NAI, CSORP/1918/33149. 42Warrant of appointment. 43*ibid.* 44*ibid.* 45RVC meeting of 6 Nov. 1916, minute book, NAI, CSORP/1921–22/3114. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0018246X25101271> Published online by Cambridge University Press The Historical Journal 425 cartridge on Sackville Street and when at home applied a lighted candle to it. The resultant explosion blew off the fingers of the boy’s right hand. Although raised in parliament by Nugent, the case was dismissed by Duke.46 Dependants of deceased breadwinners had to attempt a twenty-one-question application form. A modified eighteen-question version was used for personal injuries

which focused on income, the nature of the injury sustained, and its impact on earning capacity. Both versions of the form had to be completed by a signed declaration before a justice of the peace and returned before 16 December 1916.⁴⁷ A handful of particularly deserving cases were admitted after this deadline. For example, in February 1917 Catherine Veitch successfully submitted an application on behalf of her twelve-year-old son Peter because he was wounded while aiding a soldier near Mount Street Bridge.⁴⁸ All applicants had to supply their personal details; details of the deceased, including a certified extract from the registry of deaths (or a hospital certificate showing date of death); relationship to deceased; the circumstances of death or injury; evidence of dependency and its extent; the income and employment record of the deceased or injured party; monies from other sources such as benefits for injury under the National Insurance Act; and the names and addresses of two witnesses. Several applicants sought to strengthen their claim by emphasizing that brothers, sons, or husbands were serving at the front. Six of Joseph Geraghty's sons were in the British army: two had been killed in France, while Joseph junior had been invalided out of the army in November 1914 and was killed during the rebellion.⁴⁹ Commitment to the war effort was looked on favourably. The extensive nature of the RVC application forms reflected two overlapping bureaucratic phenomena. The first was the fixation, since the introduction of the poor law system in the nineteenth century, with determining deservingness when it came to welfare recipients.⁵⁰ The second was the expansion of the state and increasing state surveillance in the everyday lives of citizens following the Liberal social reforms of 1906–14. During the First World War, this grew significantly when the Defence of the Realm Act permitted what one historian has described as 'pragmatic authoritarianism'.⁵¹ Ann-Marie Foster has noted the state's bureaucratization of death in this period, Louise Jackson has highlighted the 'assiduity with which claimants were scrutinised' when seeking separation allowances or war widows' pensions, and both Janis Lomas and Fionnuala Walsh have observed the persistence of negative official attitudes towards working-class women and the use of police surveillance as a mechanism of social control.⁵² All of these tendencies were evident

46Case of Nicholas Murphy (injured), NAI, CSORP/1919/29335; RVC to Margaret Murphy, 15 May 1917, NAI, CSORP/1921–22/3114; Irish Independent, 23 June 1917. 47RVC meeting of 4 Dec. 1916, minute book, NAI, CSORP/1921–22/3114. 48J. M. McDowell (solicitor) to Love, 13 Feb. 1917, NAI, CSORP/1919/29337. 49Joseph Geraghty to Duke, 27 Apr. 1917, NAI, CSORP/1917/10597. 50On this see Virginia Crossman, *Poverty and the poor law in Ireland, 1850–1914* (Liverpool, 2013), p. 3. 51André Keil, 'A very British dictatorship: The Defence of the Realm Act in Britain, 1914–1920', *First World War Studies*, 14 (2023), pp. 51–70, at p. 53. 52Ann-Marie Foster, 'The bureaucratization of death: the First World War, families, and the state', *Twentieth Century British History*, 33 (2022), pp. 475–97; Louise A. Jackson, 'Crime and policing' in Hew Jackson, ed., *The British home front and the First World War* (Cambridge, 2023), p. 546; Janis Lomas, "'Delicate duties": issues of class and respectability in government policy towards the wives and widows of British

<https://doi.org/10.1017/S0018246X25101271> Published online by Cambridge University Press

426 Daithí Ó Corráin in how applications to the RVC were adjudicated. The most obvious mechanisms deployed by the state to control RVC compensation claims were medical surveillance through physical examinations (discussed in section IV below) and police surveillance. Lists of claimants were sent to the police to verify the absence of misconduct or complicity in the rebellion, report on the circumstances of death or injury, and comment on the general character of the deceased or injured. In a typical report, the late John Brennan was considered 'a quiet respectable man' who had 'no connection with any extreme political organisation'.⁵³ The model of policing in Ireland was different to the United Kingdom in that it had always acted as a highly centralized information-gathering entity. As Elizabeth Malcolm has

argued, 'no arm of the state was quite so ubiquitous, so intrusive or so rigidly controlled'.⁵⁴ Few if any Irish people, and especially the urban poor, escaped the prying eyes of the police. That approach to policing based on class structure was also the case in Britain.⁵⁵ A striking feature of the compensation process was the degree to which legal representation was engaged. There was a brisk stream of correspondence between Love's office and various solicitors who requested application forms. John M. McDowell, solicitor of 26 Bachelors Walk, sought almost 100 forms and was peeved at the committee's reluctance to supply such a large number.⁵⁶ A solicitor was employed in 65 per cent of the 550 applications. There were several reasons for this. First, claims pursued under the Workmen's Compensation Act normally required legal representation, though this was not strictly the case for applications to the RVC. Second, given the legalistic nature of the compensation process, a majority of applicants calculated that they stood a stronger chance of success with legal representation to negotiate bureaucratic hurdles. This was particularly true of illiterate applicants who typically marked their applications with a crooked X. They dictated their cases to solicitors, and though their voice was constructed it was at least preserved. Lastly, some solicitors touted for business and grasped the opportunity to charge fees. McDowell lodged no fewer than forty-nine claims on behalf of dependants who lost breadwinners and thirty-three claims for personal injuries. Politically and professionally, he was well positioned to gain clients or have them directed towards him. Close to John D. Nugent and other nationalist politicians, McDowell also acted as solicitor to the Ancient Order of Hibernians, the most prominent 'approved society' under the National Insurance Act of 1911.⁵⁷ Thomas Heath later suggested that McDowell assailed Dublin Castle with questions about payment because he was 'not able to bleed these unfortunate people according to the scale he appears to have laid down'.⁵⁸ One of the most poignant cases was that of Catherine Foster soldiers in the era of the great war', *Women's History Review*, 9 (2000), pp. 123–47; Fionnuala Walsh, "'A fanatical separation money mob': The British army soldier's wife in wartime Ireland, 1914–1918", *British Journal for Military History*, 9 (2023), pp. 106–24. ⁵³Sergeant John Bruton to chief commissioner Dublin Metropolitan Police (DMP), 28 Nov. 1916, NAI, CSORP/1919/29332. ⁵⁴Elizabeth Malcolm, *The Irish policeman, 1822–1922: a life* (Dublin, 2006), p. 96. ⁵⁵On British policing during the war, see Mary Fraser, *Policing the home front, 1914–1918: the control of the British population at war* (Abingdon, 2019). ⁵⁶McDowell to Love, 3 Nov. 1916, NAI, CSORP/1918/33149. ⁵⁷IT, 20 Apr. 1925. I am grateful to Michael McDowell for sharing details of his grandfather's career. ⁵⁸Heath to Magill, 23 May 1917, NAI, CSORP/1917/10244. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0018246X25101271> Published online by Cambridge University Press

The Historical Journal 427 whose three-year-old son, John, was shot in his perambulator on Easter Monday 1916. Her husband had been killed in France in 1915 while serving with the Royal Irish Fusiliers. She was in receipt of a War Office pension of 18s. 6d. for herself and her two children, which was reduced to 15s. after the death of her son. When she was awarded £10 funeral expenses by the RVC, McDowell protested the inadequacy of the sum.⁵⁹ Heath observed that 'the tears shed at his [McDowell's] instigation over the smallness of the grant did not prevent him from putting £3 into his own pocket'.⁶⁰ John Saturnus Kelly, leader of the short-lived Rail Workers' Trade Union, wrote on behalf of several applicants who did not engage a solicitor; members of the Society of St Vincent de Paul also assisted some claimants. III The RVC received 550 applications: 246 pertaining to fatalities and 304 to injury.⁶¹ They merit some brief analysis given the unique insights they provide on the civilian casualties of the rebellion. Figure 1 illustrates that the total number of civilian casualties (killed and injured) for which compensation was sought increased day on day during the week-long rebellion from fifty-six on Easter Monday, 24 April 1916, to eighty-nine on Saturday 29 April, when an unconditional surrender was agreed. On the first day, the number of wounded civilians was three times the

number killed, which suggests that civilians were unintentional targets while holidaymaking on the Easter bank holiday. Three factors explain the increasing number of casualties as the rebellion progressed. First, the fighting intensified as the British army moved against insurgent positions, all of which were in built-up urban neighbourhoods, and artillery was deployed to crush the revolt. Second, civilians became increasingly desperate to secure food, to feed animals, to fetch a doctor or a priest, to check on relatives, or to flee from burning buildings. Third, as many insurgents did not wear uniforms, civilians could be mistaken for rebels. After the surrender, the casualty toll continued to rise as sniping and a general sense of chaos persisted for some days. The RVC received forty-six applications (thirty-two fatalities and fourteen cases of injury) for dates on or after 2 May 1916 as some civilians died weeks or even months after being wounded. For example, Elizabeth Kane was shot in the mouth on 30 April but did not die until 13 November 1916.⁶² Table 1 provides a profile of the total number of casualties by gender and age. Only a quarter of the 550 claims concerned females (forty-seven deaths and ninety-one injuries). Women were less likely to be shot because of their gender, whereas men, apart from the very young and old, were more likely to be mistaken for insurgents. Males accounted for 199 compensation claims for deaths (81 per cent) and 213 (70 per cent) for injuries. All age groups were affected. The youngest victim was two-year-old Christina Caffrey, who was shot in her mother's arms on Easter Tuesday as she fetched another child who had wandered into the street.⁶³ The oldest casualties were in their eighties. ⁵⁹McDowell to Love, 10 May 1917, NAI, CSORP/1917/11609. ⁶⁰Heath to Magill, 23 May 1917, NAI, CSORP/1917/10244. ⁶¹Report of the Rebellion (Victims') Committee, para. 8, 30 July 1917, NLI, Brennan papers, MS 26,175. ⁶²Case of Elizabeth Kane (deceased), NAI, CSORP/1919/29334. ⁶³Case of Christina Caffrey (deceased), NAI, CSORP/1919/29332; O'Halpin and Ó Corráin, *Dead*, pp. 65–6. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0018246X25101271> Published online by Cambridge University Press

428 Daithí Ó Corráin Figure 1. Civilian casualties for which compensation was sought, 24 April–1 May 1916. Under the rubrics of the compensation scheme, children were categorized as being fifteen years or younger. They accounted for almost 10 per cent of all compensation claims with twenty-four deaths and twenty-five cases of injury. Notably, more male than female children were killed; 63 per cent of those boys were between twelve and fifteen years and were probably mistaken for rebels. For example, fourteen-year-old Patrick Ivers had been sent for milk on 28 April but was prevented by a sentry from accessing his home on Gloucester Street. He was shot dead while climbing a neighbour's rear wall to get home.⁶⁴ Civilians in their thirties and forties accounted for one-third of compensation claims as they were more likely to be economically active, have dependent children who needed to be fed, or be mistaken for insurgents. The circumstances in which civilians were killed or injured are presented in Table 2 under ten broad categories based on information gleaned from compensation applications. That one-fifth of casualties occurred while civilians were in their own homes, lodgings, or in the house of a relative is particularly striking. It demonstrated the perils of urban warfare, stray bullets, and edgy soldiers who mistook anyone at a window or in the street for a rebel. Some families were doubly unfortunate. On 28 April, a bullet came through the front window of 27 Wellington Quay and struck Kate Doyle in the right thigh before wounding her husband, Stephen, in the stomach,