

was the print of the stranger on the metal rim of the bag. The detective had quite a considerable amount of material to work with.

But it was a case with an apparent dead-end. No suspect was named or even hinted at and observed. Time went on. Two years passed. Then, hundreds of miles north in Newcastle, a woman was found strangled in Leazes Park. A couple walking in the snow had actually heard the woman's screams, but were too late on the scene to help. But a man was arrested, and it was noted that the victim was a prostitute. A link was made with London. Sure enough, the man's fingerprints matched the Torchon killer's.

In court, at the Old Bailey, the accused faced a murder charge. He pleaded not guilty and his real name was not used, nor was any reference to the earlier case. He claimed to have merely pushed Torchon backwards, and not to have strangled her. The great Bernard Spilsbury was involved, giving details of the width of the red mark on the neck, and noting that it was too thin to have been caused by a scarf, and was rather more obviously the mark left by a tape or string, maybe a bootlace.

This kind of thinking led to a discussion of the attack being motivated by momentary anger, not something

premeditated. The accused was found guilty of manslaughter, therefore, and received sixteen years penal servitude.

Cherrill's work had made the north-south connection possible, as he had managed to extract a workable print to have in the records when the second crime came along. Did this remarkable policeman have a credo? Only as much as common sense would allow; but he did say, memorably, that he felt the 'machinery set in motion to prevent crime should be just as formidable' as the detection process.

Cherrill impressed in an age when fingerprint work was mainly reliant on a lens, sheets of prints well reproduced, and a reliable magnifying glass. He made a wonderfully successful career from the basic tools and a good nose for detail. He won the MBE and worked on solidly, spending probably rather too much time marking shadows on an image on an overhead projector than in spending time at home. But he had other interests, such as listening to and reading poetry, and drawing cartoons of legal professionals who crossed his path. He may have been a 'back room boy' but when he moved into action at the scene of crime, the crowd parted and he was observed with awe.

IRISH REVENUE POLICE

Jim McDonald



The illicit distillation of spirit in Ireland has had a long history and even today as far as Northern Ireland is concerned those areas where this trade was practiced still remain the areas of activity.

During the 18th and 19th centuries the sale of this unlawful spirit provided a "cash crop" by which some farmers raised money to pay the farm rent. The landlords were part of this trade because they benefited not only by

receiving the due rent but also enjoyed the quality spirit produced. There is also evidence that courts did not actively pursue cases against the distillers. All sections of Irish Society had an interest in this trade whether it was in the supply of the raw materials, the production of the spirit or in its consumption.

The background to the whole trade was that until the mid 1700s each household in Ireland could lawfully distil without licence sufficient whiskey for its own use, provided the still did not exceed 12 gallons in capacity. However the Government suddenly saw the opportunity to raise taxation and so overnight it became illegal to use the home distillery.

Of course the traditional trade could not be disposed of and indeed in 1806 one Excise Officer estimated that in Inishowen in Donegal one in every two houses retained its home still. Yet another Excise man estimated there to be approximately 800 stills in Donegal.

Within the community there was no indication that they considered distillation to be a crime and therefore there was no desire to suppress the private stills. The Board of Excise were not disposed to support the small stills and therefore in supporting the local distillers the local community were seen to be supporting their own neighbours.

There was a major change to the licensing laws in 1812 when only in exceptional circumstances would small stills be licensed. The major distilleries, i.e. those with a capacity of at least 500 gallons, were all situated

in the East of the country leaving vast areas of the country unsupplied. To avoid duty the large distillers ran the spirit very quickly through the still and so produced an inferior quality spirit. This was known as "parliament whiskey". The difference in both quality and the reduction in price made the local spirit more attractive and of course the ready availability also helped.

The penalties for illegal distillation were substantial fines and the seizure and destruction of the still, and indeed a punitive fine on the town-land (or Parish) could be imposed where a still or the spirit was discovered. What happened of course in the less populated areas was that the still operator did his business not in his own town-land but in another adjacent town-land so that, when evidence of illegal distillation was found, the operator's own town-land remained "in the clear" while the neighbouring town-land had to pay up!

Because illicit distillation was often carried out by armed groups of possibly 60 to 80 men it was a dangerous mission for the Excise Men so when they were still-hunting the military were turned out to give protection. This proved a very unpopular duty in that the troops were often good customers and on occasions would also consume the evidence of the seizure. The officers were also not supporters of this type of duty as it tended to undermine the soldiers' discipline. In 1797 militia on revenue duty in Co. Armagh clashed with locals and several were killed.

As a direct result of this incident military support was withdrawn for two years. In 1817 orders were issued by commanding officers regulating the conduct of their soldiers employed in still-hunting. These new regulations made it very difficult to use soldiers since they could no longer seize stills and were to stay in sight of the excise men. Alternatives were explored with e.g. an area being proclaimed in a state of disturbance under the Peace Preservation Act of 1814 and a party of Peace Preservation Constables being used to suppress illicit distillation. This duty also was unpopular with the police since it brought them into conflict with the local population.

The first instance of that much-loved Government policy of privatisation now shows up. In 1787 one Patrick Carter approached the Commissioners of Excise with the proposal that he should be hired to deal with illicit distillation. The Lord Lieutenant for Ireland was consulted and he agreed to this experiment. Co. Leitrim was given over for this novel approach and although Carter stopped illicit distillation in the area in which he operated it was found that this led to the displacement of the crime to another area. Subsequently 7 more contracts were let on the same basis as Carter's terms and employing for the most part retired soldiers. The last of these private entrepreneurs retired in 1824 when a proper Revenue Police Force was established. The initial Force absorbed a number of those privately hired men who had experience. At first the new force could operate only if accompanied by excise officers who held a commission which empowered them to carry out their duties. However, it soon became obvious that it was more efficient to commission certain officers in the Revenue Police. We now had a self-contained force to concentrate

on the supervision of illicit distillation.

The new force patrolled those areas traditionally associated with illicit distillation. They patrolled in groups of approximately company strength. Each party was commanded by a lieutenant who held an excise commission. Under the legislation extensive powers were conferred on the police to enter, search and seize and the onus of proof was always on the person claiming to be innocent. The powers led one senior officer of the Revenue Police to say "The law has given to this force powers stronger and more summary than to any other armed force in the Empire" (Select Committee on the Constabulary of Ireland, British Parliamentary Papers, 1854).



Inspector of the Revenue Police, 1837, 1850

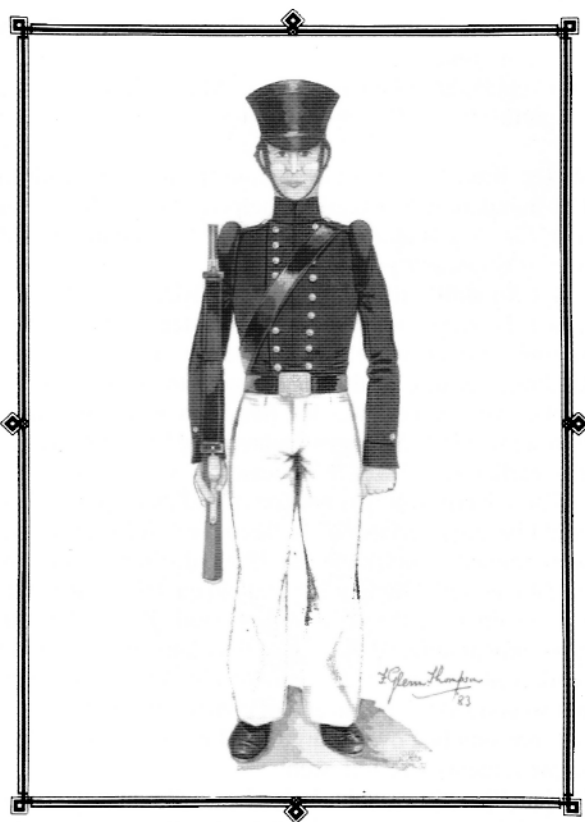
This officer wears an elegant single-breasted jacket, and frock coat, enhanced by brass shoulder scales.

In spite of all this power and the system of rewards given for their successes the force of some 1,100 men was only partially successful. Illicit distillation could be suppressed but when the Revenue Police party moved on the locals were back at their trade. The movement of a large party of men could be spotted by look-outs from afar and gave the locals time to hide their stills and wash. Each party operated independently and with little training and no records were kept of prosecutions or convictions. The famous police administrator observed



Officer of the Revenue Police

The officer is wearing the shell-undress garment popular at that period.



Constable of the Revenue Police, 1835

Shoulder wings were a characteristic of the Revenue Police Uniform. For full dress, the head gear was a plain shako and during the summer months, white trousers replaced the blue. Their armament was the carbine.

“What I saw gave me no favourable opinion of their proceeding. It is difficult to conceive anything more ridiculous than half a dozen men, very conspicuous on account of their uniform strolling out of town at noonday. They might as well send a messenger to give notice of their approach”.

By the early 1830s illicit distillation had spread to virtually every part of the country and the Excise Commissioners expanded the Revenue Police. In spite of the increased numbers there were also calls on the military for assistance. The Commissioners of Inquiry into the illicit trade were looking at a number of alternatives. They reviewed the possibility of a second military force to help with supervision. The Commissioners also expressed surprise that no use had been made of the existing agencies of the constabulary, or the coastguard and the excise men. In fact, the County Constabulary had orders not to render assistance to the Revenue Police. The Commissioners recommended in their seventh report of 1834 that this obstacle should be removed and that the Revenue Police should not be augmented further. They stated that both the constabulary and coastguard should operate with the deployed police parties and a hard look should be taken at the need for a Revenue Police. The rate of duty was also to be reduced to make the illicit stills less profitable. At this time it was calculated that a reduction of one shilling per gallon of spirit brought more spirit into charge with a loss of some £30,000 to the revenue

whereas the cost of the Revenue Police was about £35,000.

In 1836 a major re-organisation was taking place with the passing of the Peace Preservation Force. The Revenue Police were also to be re-organised. One Col. William Brereton, a retired officer of the Royal Horse Artillery, was appointed the Chief Officer. He was an able administrator and introduced major changes both in organisation and operations. About two-thirds of the existing force was weeded out and stringent requirements for new recruits were introduced. Only single men aged twenty-five or under who could read and write were to be recruited. They were to have two recommendations from character witnesses. A training depot was set up in Dublin at Clontarf and all recruits were trained in field craft and tactics as light infantry. Col. Brereton was a strict disciplinarian and required the keeping of detailed records of each day's work. Each party had to march 200 miles per week. 72 parties of police were formed to cover the country although some counties did not have Revenue Police other counties had several parties, e.g. Donegal and Derry had about one-third of the total force.

In 1854 the Revenue Police were deployed as follows:-

- Ulster: Cavan, Donegal, Tyrone, Fermanagh, Derry and Monaghan – 34 parties.
- Munster: Clare and Tipperary – 4 parties.

- Leinster: Carlow, Longford, Dublin, Queens County – 5 parties.
- Connaught: Galway, Sligo, Mayo, Leitrim – 29 parties.

Whilst Brereton was in command the relations with the Constabulary were excellent, helped no doubt by the fact that his opposite number in the Constabulary, Col. McGregor, was a personal friend.

To help with “still-hunting” in the islands off the West Coast the Revenue Police acquired steam cutters as the sailing cutters were ineffective in mounting quick landings because of the requirement to “tack”. The last of the two steamers was the Sea Mew which was taken into service in 1853 under Commander Robert McKindy. The earlier vessel was the Warrior.

The government was not convinced that a police force could be fully successful. A large force fully armed and well trained could suppress illicit distillation but this proved to only temporary and when the police party moved on then the stills re-appeared. In Scotland the government reduced the rate of duty and this appeared to work well. In Ireland “Parliament Whiskey” was deemed not so good as the poitin and of course lots of the country was not supplied by the large distillers and these areas of improvement were followed.

Equally important in Ireland was the social attitude and with the emphasis of the Church on temperance because of the evils of excessive drinking the tide began to turn. The Church decreed that illicit distillation would be a “reserved sin”, i.e. only the local Bishop could offer absolution and this put great pressure on the illicit distillers. These combined pressures led to the eventual decline in the use of poitin.

In 1855 two years before the Revenue Police were disbanded the force strength was as follows:-

- * 1 Chief Inspector: Major Gen. Alex McLachan, R.A.
- * 1 Inspector: Jasper John Barry Esq.
- * 9 Second Inspectors
- * 11 Sub Inspectors
- * 66 Lieutenants
- * 22 Sub Officers
- * 66 Sergeants
- * 1020 Men
- * 1,196 IN TOTAL

The running costs for that year amounted to £62,720.

Many members of the Revenue Police were later absorbed into the Constabulary which also recruited an extra 400 constables to take on the duties associated with illicit distillation. The trade has never faded entirely even though today in those areas traditionally associated with poitin a drop of “holy water” – if you know the right people – is still available.

Uniforms and Badges

The Irish Revenue Police were dressed in a dark blue uniform with brass or gilt buttons. The officers in full dress wore shoulder scales with shamrock devices which indicates their rank. These shoulder scales were gilt. The cap badge was as shown below although they also wore a bugle horn device with initials of R.P. all in gilt. On the shoulder straps of the shell jacket a bugle horn was worn.

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OFFICERS CAP BADGE

OFFICERS BELT BUCKLE

OFFICERS SHOULDER
SCALESOFFICERS SHOULDER
SCALES

SERJEANTS BELT BUCKLE

In summer the heavy blue trousers were changed for the much lighter white "Duck" trousers.

Above are shown a small number of badges. If the reader refers to the earlier drawings, these can be seen

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the RUC GC Museum, Jim is a founding member of An Garda Historical Society. He lives in Belfast and is a former Chief Officer of the Labour Relations agency. He is the Independent Assessor of the Military Complaints Procedures in Northern Ireland. With a background of working with young people he has worked with the Princes Trust for some 25 years

NOTHING NEW UNDER THE SUN Part 2

H. Stanford

A previous article (Vol. 17) dealt with the problems faced by modern police officers in their attempts to deal with criminals, in particular their difficulties in trying to identify, recognise and supervise offenders. The article showed that whilst the terminology might have changed and that many years had passed the actual policing difficulties were much the same in the 19th century as they are to-day. In this way it is a fact that history, whilst never exactly repeating itself, does have lessons for us all and this can be seen in the way that other issues prominent in policing and public circles in the period 1860-1870, whilst using different language, have re-appeared in recent years.

One of the main issues faced by all sectors of the judicial system in the last few years has been that of Human Rights. The right of an accused person under arrest or otherwise to have their human rights respected is often seen on the front pages of newspapers and as leading topics in TV and radio programmes. Of late this

has come to the fore as a result of acts of alleged terrorism and the needs of police in investigating such incidents. This can particularly be seen in relation to the length of time that a suspect may be detained before being charged or released as against the need for investigating officers to have sufficient time to complete their enquiries. It is currently the situation that, subject to approval from courts, terrorist suspects may be detained for up to fourteen days and there is a move, supported in some police circles, for this to be extended to at least a month. Many of us will remember, in the not to distant past, when the time limit was two days, with extensions being approved only in exceptional circumstances. It is said that the need to efficiently investigate situations, to properly use the ever improving scientific aids requires longer periods and the debate is around the need for this to take place as balanced against the rights of the accused person. How long should a suspect be detained in police custody before being charged or released?