

drunkenness caused a unionist Limerick landowner to complain, "These blackguards should never have been let loose in this country. They are not gentlemen". Their 'ungentlemanly' behaviour, often aimed at defenceless civilians, drove many moderate Irish men and women into the arms of Sinn Féin and the IRA as well as outraging public opinion back home in Britain.

Despite all these handicaps they still proved formidable opponents and an old Volunteer commander commented after Black and Tans were disbanded, "The IRA never beat the 'Tans', it was the British people who did it".

Meanwhile, T. Ryle Dwyer's book, *Tans, Terror and Troubles*, sets out to contradict the statement by General Eoin O'Duffy in 1933, that "Kerry's entire record in the Black and Tan struggle consisted in shooting an unfortunate soldier the day of the Truce".

The author attributes the somewhat tarnished reputation of his county between the years 1913 and 1923 to a reluctance to discuss the various stages of the conflict on the part of those most involved, whether due to trauma or a desire to move on. However, the chronological list of events with which the author opens the book, the attacks, killings and reprisals, give the lie to O'Duffy's statement.

While it has been accepted that de Valera was the last commandant to surrender in the 1916 Rising, this honour in truth goes to a Kerryman, Thomas Ashe, who later died on hunger strike while in prison.

Another claim made by the Kingdom is that the first military engagement of the War of Independence took place, not at Soloheadbeg in Co. Tipperary, but in Gortalea when the barracks was attacked in April 1918. A seemingly never-ending series of attacks and reprisals ensued, with casualties on both sides, though it has to be said that the account of the attack on the RIC barracks in Scartaglin presents a wonderful Keystone Cops-type picture.

Having succeeded in setting the building alight, the IRA activists hurled grenades at the beleaguered members of the garrison. Unfortunately for their plans one

of the grenades punctured a water tank at one corner of the roof and the resultant flow of water effectively doused the fire.

The better known events which took place in Kerry during this period, including the arrival of Sir Roger Casement and the atrocity at Ballyseedy, are given prominence and there can be little doubt that the people of Kerry were active in the country's fight for independence, though it is also true that some of the worst atrocities of the Civil War took place within the county. ♦

Darryl Armitage

BERKELEY'S TELEPHONE

Harry Clifton

Lilliput £14.99
ISBN 1 901 866 50 5

Given the prior works of the author—poetry and travelogue, it is perhaps surprising that the tone struck lacks application or accommodation of the technique of either discipline. Neither the clean phrase of poetry nor the chummy *mise en scene* of a travel journal occupy the two hundred plus pages of Harry Clifton's most recent work. The stories exist rather in a dread stasis (perhaps just as Joyce spoke of Dublin: that it was paralysed), with disembodied characters flitting through slim gift narrative consciously devoid of consequence or contact. Even working on the premise that this is a loosely appendaged short story collection, the format may still not be of uniform appeal.

The named exercise being—the human interior, outside of Ireland as well as in the claustrophobic Dublin depicted. The vignettes from the latter are familiar in an odd way. In the main story, 'Those who stand and wait', one finds an opacous narrative which is uniform to the collection. 'Life in the Civil Service' is prominently featured. It



The Black and Tans—unlikely to be commemorated in Dublin

possesses the charm of carpet tiles. In the aforesaid story rugby is too singularly utilized as constitutive of social location and character. The Brian character is tangible yet operates in an undeveloped fictive construct.

The exteriors Africa, Asia, Western Europe (as France, Italy *et al* are clump-tagged in the story of the title) are smattered with disconnected, people. The trunk of a headless man on the road rolls by in 'Heartlands'. Given causation—tribal warfare. Yet Clifton stays away from the detail. Whilst the book is a sometime dreaming exercise it strays too close to normalcy to avert the need for substance. One is intrigued by characters yet frustrated by the lack of contact with them.

This mirrors a sense of absence and exile in the narrative. Some does come across, but one wonders about the reason for the choice of stories. The book raises the question rather of the lack of locus of the writer; not conceptual concern about the writer, though the motifs of writing and painting repeat throughout. Instead, one senses that Clifton is unclear or else unwilling to elucidate his intention. It is of course difficult to write about journey within or without Dublin, without seeming to follow or evade the Victorian model, without repeating. Berkeley's Telephone is not derivative in that sense. It is involving, but could have been more so. ♦

Cian O'Neill