

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21

BURO STAIRÉ MILEATA 1913-21

No. W.S. 1653

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS.

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 1653.

Witness

Chief Supt. Henry O'Mara, B.A.,
Garda Síochána H.Q.,
Phoenix Park,
Dublin.

Identity.

Comdt., 6th Battn., East Clare Bgde., I.R.A.

Subject.

Murder of four I.R.A. men by British forces at
Killaloe, Co. Clare, on 16th November, 1920.

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

Nil.

File No S. 329.

Form B.S.M. 2

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SECOND STATEMENT BY CHIEF SUPERINTENDENT HENRY O'MARA,

Garda Síochána Headquarters, Phoenix Park, Dublin.

EAST CLARE'S CALVARY.

The death in Flanders of Major Willie Redmond on June 10th, 1917, left a vacancy in the Irish Benches in the British House of Commons which was of more than ordinary importance, for it was the constancy of the voters in returning again and again the man of their choice to that self-same seat, eighty-nine years before, that had paved the way to Emancipation and had earned for its occupant the title of "Liberator", and for the area, of which the constituency was part, "The Banner County".

The restricted electorate - only householders then had the franchise - was made up, for the most part, of staunch and seasoned Nationalists who credited, for sound enough reasons, the Irish Party with having wrested from the British the many rights which they enjoyed, and who, like their dead soldier representative, now trusted English liberal politicians to fulfil their promise of a generous measure of Home Rule. Like him, too, they accepted the slanderous propaganda which was depicting Sinn Féin and the Volunteers as well-paid German agents seeking only self aggrandisement. Irresponsible youths and a handful of pro-German cranks constituted the opposition to the Party.

Victory for the Redmondites in the forthcoming election seemed sure. To make it certain Mr. Paddy Lynch, K.C., a popular and charitable man with a good Irish outlook, whose family connections were deeply rooted and

much respected in every corner of every parish in the constituency, was chosen.

About the same time the 1916 prisoners were released. Sinn Féin supporters in Clare, realising that a contest offered them a grand opportunity of replying to their slanderers and of explaining their own aims, unanimously selected Commandant Eamon de Valera, the reprieved felon, to represent them. At the convention misunderstandings concerning the rising were effectively cleared up and the full and earnest support of Sinn Féin and the Volunteers was promised.

The pledge was honoured. From the four corners of Ireland speakers and Volunteers poured into East Clare. With enthusiastic help from the young women and men of the country they addressed meetings everywhere and made a personal canvass of every voter. The convincing honesty of their simple outspoken appeal quickly captured the strange sympathy for the oppressed which is a typical Dalcassian characteristic. The aggressive and officious attitude of some of the armed police, who were drafted in during the election, towards the Volunteers made the cause of Sinn Féin more popular.

Eamon de Valera addressed his first meeting at Scariff. This was never forgotten for Scariff by Ireland's enemies. It started a whirlwind campaign which ended in his spectacular return by a majority of 2,975. The bonfires blazing on the hillsides of one county after another, as the news reached them, announced that already the whole of Ireland was getting ready to follow the unmistakable lead given by this historic little constituency.

The local Volunteers, elated with their success, continued to drill and march openly. Arrests, threats, trials, refusals to recognise the Courts, escapes and an uncalled for shooting of Volunteers at Castlefergus followed. This was made the pretext for the imposition of Martial Law in February, 1918.

To enforce it military parties were posted to selected towns and villages. Although the district around Scariff was quiet, a strong military party under the command of Captain Rigby - a man devoid of common sense and incapable of consideration - was posted to it. Riding around on horse-back he tried to enforce the observance of curfew by the whip and the kick. By terror he sought to subdue. Instead he instilled hate and drove ordinary peace loving young men into active resistance. His antics provided the elixir necessary for promoting and maintaining an active organisation.

In the following June the threat of Conscription brought a National rallying of unprecedented solidarity. The ranks of the Volunteers offered the only prospect of successful resistance. Young men, who before were opposed to the Volunteers, joined and the organisation was so consolidated that nothing short of complete independence would now satisfy the National demands. The British Forces, led by some policemen, made themselves very objectionable. They resorted to the meanest methods to ferret out full information about every little contribution that everyone was making to avert the national disaster. It quickly became apparent to everyone that without police assistance the Military would be helpless and, as it was a matter of life and death to immobilise at once the enemy, a spontaneous general and

individual effort was made to get the more friendly disposed policemen to prevail on the others to refuse in a body to do such work. The effort met with a fair share of success but, unfortunately, one or two policemen were found to act as guides and spies for the Forces of the Crown in every area. Gradually the police barracks became armed jumping-off grounds for raids, round-ups, arrests and worse.

When the conscription scare had passed, the general election of December, 1918, gave more scope for activity. As there was no contest in Clare, volunteers were available for service in other areas. Sinn Féin swept the country. Its elected representatives absented themselves from Westminster and set up their own parliament - Dáil Éireann - to administer the affairs of the country. The volunteers were the executive arm of An Dáil and then, more than ever, they were tracked down by Crown Forces led by the same objectionable R.I.C. men whose provocation became unbearable. If An Dáil were to survive they must be driven out of their fortified outposts. Early 1920 saw the beginning of this grim struggle.

Scariff's big night came on September 18th, 1920. As twilight fell volunteer units throughout the Brigade area were set and ready to cut off all communications between the village and the garrisons at other centres, while others wended their way to an outhouse in "The Evicted Field" near Bodyke - the rendezvous - and, having picked up their arms there, they moved into pre-arranged positions in and around the village to help the men of the Fourth Battalion to capture the armed fortress which was once a police barracks.

On the stroke of 10.00 p.m., a single shot rang out. The deadly silence, which followed, was broken by desultory rifle fire above which the clear incisive voice of a Volunteer officer could be heard informing the police garrison that the town was isolated, that the barracks was mined and that an attack was about to begin in the name of Ireland; calling on them to surrender, and guaranteeing them safe passage. The reply to this was a challenging volley from the barracks. As rifle fire towards and from the barracks mercilessly raked the streets, specially selected Volunteers, operating from the adjoining houses - Duggan's and Moloney's - bestraddled the roof with bombs attached to ropes, some of which they slung down the chimneys. Verey lights from the beleaguered illuminated the whole countryside and the explosions of sound rockets re-echoed, like thunder, through the valley of the Shannon. Above the din could be heard the insistent demand of the Volunteer Officer to surrender, but volley after volley from the barracks was the reply. Not one mine and not one bomb exploded, and so at about 3 a.m., the attack was abandoned. Nobody on either side was seriously hurt - two policemen received slight injuries.

The raids and questioning which followed left no doubt in anyone's mind as to who were the wanted men in the Scariff area, and a goodly number had to leave the comfort of their homes and seek shelter in the country. Amongst them were Battalion Staff Officers Brud McMahon, Alfie Rodgers and Martin Gildea, who had always been companions.

A few days later the Scariff outpost was evacuated, and the garrison moved to Killaloe R.I.C. barracks to augment the local police and Black and Tan units there. Three companies of Auxiliaries occupied the Lake Side Hotel (on the Ballina side of the Shannon) which was their country headquarters. These were the Killaloe Crown Forces.

It is not out of place to mention here that the picturesque little town at the base of Lough Derg was a favourite resort for wealthy English fishing folk, some of whom came on annual periodic visits, and many of whom settled down more or less permanently in the attractive residences in the vicinity. They were all kind and generous. The villagers responded with respect and admiration and, looking back, it was hard to blame most of them for being pro-British.

The night after the evacuation of Scariff a detachment of mixed British Forces arrived back in the town, with incendiary and perhaps murderous intent. They proceeded to sprinkle petrol on the Town Hall when fire was opened on them from the other side of the bridge. Like redshanks they ran, and never again did that petrol-can contingent return. A couple of days later the town was surrounded by a very strong force and the population rounded up for insults while their dwellings were looted. Those who had their names in Irish on their shops were compelled to obliterate them. These raids became more and more frequent, and the volunteers, for self preservation, devised a system of signalling which was quickly developed to such a pitch that it was well nigh impossible to take the men on the run by surprise. The very perfection of the system brought about tragedy.

A Mr. Le Roy owned Williamstown House, close to Whitegate, on the shores of Lough Derg. In front of his house was a pier which he used for his yacht and other boats. He had made application to the Shannon Navigation Authorities to have the little harbour dredged, and had been notified that their boat, The Shannon, would go there as soon as possible. Michael Egan, a young man of 27 years, was Mr. Le Roy's caretaker, and lived alone in his quarters in the yard. Brud McMahon, Alfie Rodgers and Martin Gildea, anxious to avoid causing any trouble to the family households of their friends, frequently slept there, mostly in the daytime.

On the 16th November, 1920, they were sleeping well into the day, when The Shannon put into the pier to carry out, from all appearances, some routine work. Concealed in the cabins, below deck, was a party of auxiliaries who, without danger of being observed (approach from the land side only was guarded against), came ashore, surrounded Williamstown House, surprised young Egan, as he was cutting a hedge, and captured, in bed, the three wanted men. It is doubtful if they were taken under arms as, for good reasons, they had been in the habit of putting their revolvers away when retiring to rest. Michael Egan was taken prisoner with them, and later two brothers, John and Michael Conway - local small farmers. When I have set down the story of the only surviving member of The Shannon's crew (Joe Hogan), I will give you John Conway's (the only surviving prisoner's) recollections of his thirty-hour enforced stay with the Killaloe Crown Forces.

Joe Hogan says: "I was employed by the Board of Works for 45 years as deck-hand on the s.s. Shannon. The crew consisted of Joe McEvoy, the skipper; George Shouldice, the fireman (God be good to them both), and myself. We were all aboard early on the morning of the 16th November, 1920. About nine o'clock skipper McEvoy was directed by Mr. Dudley Fletcher, the district engineer, to get the boat ready and bring her straight up to the jetty near the Lake Side Hotel - there was to be no delay. We pulled in there between half-nine and ten in the morning. Very shortly afterwards a party of about 30 auxies with four officers came from the Hotel and boarded the boat. All the auxies went down below to the cabins, except three, who kept guard over the skipper and myself in the wheel-house. None of us - the crew - knew where we were going. Nobody on the boat could be seen. We were ordered to pull out up the lake and go ahead. I was at the wheel all the time being assisted by the skipper. When the boat came opposite Williamstown House I was ordered to pull into the pier. The whole auxie party, except our guard, got off quickly and, crouching, stole towards the Great House. After about an hour they came back with four prisoners. They went off again and in about another hour came back with two more prisoners.

I was then ordered to pull out and down stream. We arrived back at the Lake Side jetty just before dark. On the way I could not see from the wheel-house what was happening on deck. When I was tying up the boat I said to one of the boys on the deck: "What in the hell happened ye to be caught?" He said nothing but shook his head. The auxies wanted to keep me on board that night

but my wife was sick and I asked Col. Andrews to let me home. He did, but I had to promise to come back next morning. I returned in the morning and they offered me £1 a day if I'd stay with them. I refused. None of the crew had anything to do with the boat afterwards. Later it was sold and scrapped. I heard the shots on the bridge that night, and when I went back to the Lake Side next morning I knew there was dirty work the night before".

John Conways says: "On Tuesday, November 16th, 1920 (I'll never forget it) my brother, Michael, my mother and myself had our dinner about twelve o'clock. Mick left to get Mike Egan to put a handle in the hatchet and I went out to cut scallops. I went along the road towards Williamstown House and walked right into the arms of the auxies. They were dressed in plain clothes and spoke with English accents. I never expected them for I heard no lorries.

They questioned me about the I.R.A. and the strangers who had been staying around the place. They searched me and found a bottle of milk in my pocket and tried to make me say that I was bringing it to the strangers. I had it for myself but when I wouldn't say I had it for "the boys" they marched me away down to the pier where I saw the Commissioners' boat. On the deck I saw Mike Egan tied up in his own ass reins. Young Rodgers, McMahon and Gildea were tied up in the same way with the thick boat ropes. My brother Mick was also there but wasn't tied. There was about 25 auxies and Joe McEvoy, Frank Shouldice, the engineer, and Joe Hogan, the deckhand, on board as well.

A bitter northerly breeze was blowing when the boat started off from the pier. We were all on deck. The

auxies were questioning us the whole way down and Alfie Rogers, Brud McMahon and Martin Gildea kept saying to them that Mike Egan was not to blame. It was duskish when we arrived at the jetty at the Lake Side Hotel, Killaloe. My brother, Mick, and I were put down the hatch, and the other four were taken off and into a big room in the hotel. They called it the dayroom. The other four were there before us and they were handcuffed. From the time they left the boat until we saw them again, Egan and Gildea looked like dead men - they were that shook and pale.

As we came in, auxies in uniform took them out of the dayroom one by one. They kept them out a good long time. Alfie Rogers was the last to be brought back and he was pumping blood from the nose and face. I'd say he had lost all his blood before he was shot at all. McMahon was very, very quiet. They had more in for Rodgers and McMahon than the others.

Mick and myself were taken out then into a small room where the Colonel - Andrews was his name, I think - cross-questioned us and threatened us. He showed us revolvers and ammunition and said they were found with the lads. He tried to get us to say that we had seen the revolvers before and that we saw them with the boys. He wanted us to say that we were friends of Mike Egan, and that we knew the boys had been staying in Williamstown House for the last three weeks. We had nothing to tell him unless we started telling him lies. I had bad old shoes on me and one of the auxies said that anyone would know from our dress that we weren't Sinn Féiners. The Colonel asked us then if we had cigarettes and he gave us up to 50 between us. He promised to leave us home in the morning. I asked him to let us out and we'd make

our way home ourselves. He sent us out to our supper and we never saw him again. We were brought back to the dayroom and they gave us a good meal. As we were brought in the four boys were taken out. After about a half-hour Mick and I were given a blanket each. We were taken out along a long passage and into a small room where there wasn't a bed or a chair. We sat on the blankets. There was an awful hullabulloo away at the other end of the passage - shouting and roaring, and dancing and drunken men singing, When Irish Eyes are Smiling, but I heard no shots.

Suddenly the door was burst in on us and auxies shouted at us to get up quickly. Each of us was marched out between two auxies - I was first - up to the bridge. These two auxies weren't bad. The bridge was packed with auxies, tans and peelers. We were marched across it. We hadn't gone very far when the auxie flashed a light and told me to walk (step) over the body - stiff he called it. I knew it was the body of one of the four boys. About twenty yards further on there was another, and then another. The last body was right over the canal arch. There was a crossley tender at Shannon View Hotel with its lights on, facing us, and I saw by its light that that was Martin Gildea. He was dead. He was handcuffed and his face was bloody. We were halted near the tender. The tans used to come over to us, look into our faces and threaten us. While there we saw them throw the body of Martin Gildea into the back of the tender just like you'd throw in a dead pig.

After that we were marched up the hill by the same auxies to the R.I.C. barracks, and taken into the dayroom. As we got to the barracks the tender passed us and went

in the archway with the bodies. There was a Black and Tan officer - Gwynn was his name, I heard - in the dayroom. The Auxies handed us over to him and told him he would be responsible for us. The dayroom was full of tans. They jostled and pushed against us, but did no more. After a while they threw us into the blackhole. We were beaten then, and it was by two Irish peelers - they struck us and knocked us down and leaped on us. I was afraid and I asked to see a Sergeant Roche, who used to be in Whitegate, because I knew that he'd know me and that he'd save me. They brought me the wrong Sergeant Roche. Sometime afterwards a peeler came in with a baton in his hand. He drew at my face and I pulled back, but he got me on the point of the left cheek-bone and gave me a very sore black eye. In the morning I asked the man who came to see us for a glass of water. He said he was afraid to give it to us.

We were left there without bit, bite or sup until after one o'clock in the day, when we were taken out and handcuffed together, and marched from the steps into the back of a lorry. We were left there for ages before it drove away and brought us to William Street barracks in Limerick. There was another prisoner there who had sandwiches and tea. I asked him for some and he told me I could order a meal from Finn's. We were later moved from there to another R.I.C. barrack in Limerick and from there to another where we were put into a dark room with the walls all spattered with blood. Late that night we were put into Limerick Gaol and we were left there until Sunday. We had to pay for our food.

My mother came in to see us a few times by car, and we had to hire a car to take us home. It cost us £20 all told, and we could poorly afford it".

Killaloe Bridge connects Clare with Tipperary, Ballina village with Killaloe and the Archdiocese of Cashel with the Diocese of Killaloe. During that period it was so closely guarded at both sides that people were loath to cross, even in the daytime, and curfew was enforced with such rigour between 7.00 p.m. and 7.00 a.m., that it was at life's very peril anyone ventured out. As outbursts of rifle and machine-gun fire were of nightly occurrence much notice wasn't normally taken of them. On that night, however, the commotion occurred later than usual and after a very quiet spell. Residents on both sides heard before and during the shooting the piteous cries of men in pain and the appealing wail for a priest.

Mr. Denis Crowe, manager of the local office of the Board of Works, whose house was on the bridge itself, can still describe how he was roused from his sleep by the moans and screams of men who were suffering great pain. It was pitiful to listen to them, he says. He dared not put on the light for he knew, had he done so, he would have been shot instantly. He had been listening to the cries of the tortured for seven or eight minutes when he heard the first volley of rifle and machine-gun fire. As far as he could judge - and he was only yards from the scene - the four men were placed at the same spot with their backs to the north wall of the bridge and they were shot at point blank range.

Within hailing distance were the Parochial Houses of Killaloe and Ballina; yet no priest was called, but the

priests on both sides heard, and gave absolution. Canon Flannery, on the Killaloe side, was ill in bed and was being nursed by his niece. On hearing the cries he sat up in bed saying, "They are murdering someone", and he gave conditional absolution.

Father Russell, then a young curate on the Ballina side, says that, because he knew there were prisoners at the Lakeside, he lay uneasily awake. The night was particularly quiet until midnight. Then he heard the tramp of marching men coming from the direction of the hotel. On reaching the bridge, within fifty yards of his house, the marchers turned right towards Killaloe. Shortly afterwards they were halted. Immediately moans of unforgettable agony rent the midnight air and after a time there came heartbreaking cries for a priest. These died away as shot after shot rang out. Realising that the prisoners were being shot he jumped out of bed, threw the stole over his shoulders, flung open the window and, having given conditional absolution, recited a short form of the Apostolic Benediction. Using Father Russell's own words: "God had heard their last request - a priest and absolution had been given to them".

After about an hour a lorry came from the R.I.C. barracks to the bridge and returning with the bodies went through the archway to the barrack yard. People, who heard the moaning for a long time, still live.

The first civilian to cross the bridge after the shooting was Michael Daly, a railway worker, who had a pass

during curfew. He says: "I crossed to prepare for the departure of the early train to Limerick. I saw pools of blood on the bridge. On my way back I examined it and I saw what I thought was brain matter mixed with it. I found a cap, which I discovered afterwards was Brud McMahon's. All the pools of blood were at the same place. I marked the spot and that is where the plaque now stands". It was fair-day in Killaloe and people coming to the fair saw the same sight. While there was fear for the safety of the prisoners the want of definite news raised hope.

A policeman named Fitzgerald, who had been on duty at the barracks during the night, fainted on his return home that morning. When his wife had revived him with stimulants he told her he had been sent with a barrel to the store in the barrack yard just before he came home; and that he had seen a most sickening sight there.

Father Creed, the senior curate, called to the barracks to inquire about the prisoners. He was turned away so abruptly that he did not consider it wise to sleep at his home afterwards. After events justified his fears for on a Sunday morning following, he and Father Spain, the other curate, were arrested, on their way to say Mass, and detained for a few days. The people of Killaloe would have been deprived of Mass (that was evidently the intention) if Father Russell of Ballina hadn't come. He asked the congregation to pray for the souls of the four boys. He was visited nightly afterwards, the house next door to his was destroyed and his own badly damaged.

About 12.00 noon, Dr. Patrick Holmes who was Medical Officer to the Forces was called to the R.I.C. barracks. He adjusted the bodies and bandaged the heads and faces.

Scraps of news indicating that the boys arrested at Williamstown had been killed on the bridge trickled through the fair. This was definitely confirmed at 3.30 p.m. when District Inspector Gwynn handed to Constable Garvey four telegrams for despatch to the parents of the men. They read: "You are informed that your son was shot dead when escaping from custody last night. - Gwynn, District Inspector". Miss Burnett, who was postmistress in Scariff at the time, very kindly sent for Father John Clancy, C.C., to inform the relatives.

Denis McMahon (Brud's brother), Ned Rodgers (Alfie's father), Frank Scott and P.J. Hogan set out right away for Killaloe, R.I.C. barracks. There they had to await the return of District Inspector Gwynn, who was making a social call at the Deanery. When he did arrive he told them that he could not release the bodies until a crown inquiry was held. They were not permitted to see them.

On the following day - Thursday the 18th - they, accompanied by Mr. Denim Sparling, Martin Gildea's employer, went to Killaloe again. They arranged for coffins and hearses to follow. Through Mr. Sparling's influence with the higher authorities it was agreed to hand over the bodies that night. The hearses were not allowed to come nearer than the bridge - half a mile away. The police took the coffins and habits to the old store at the back where the bodies lay, put on the habits, placed the remains in the coffins, allowed the relatives to see them and carried them to the archway. While this was being done a black flag was flown from the barracks, and tenders of Black and Tans, carrying black flags, too, cleared the

streets. The District Inspector tried to insist on the police carrying the coffins from the barracks to the hearses, but the relatives refused to accept the remains unless they, themselves, were allowed to carry them. Ultimately he gave way. By the light of a clear harvest moon, reflected peacefully in the clear waters of the lordly Shannon, relatives and neighbours carried the remains to the bridge.

From there, at 9.30 p.m., the four horse-drawn hearses headed the sad cortege as it wended its way through Ballyvanna to the top of O'Gonnolloe Hill and then down the other side, through the winding turns of Raheen, to Scariff's bridge, where Father John Clancy, C.C., was waiting, in soutane and surplice, to guide, in prayer, the last remains of four of the finest characters in his parish to the shelter of the village church, where Our Lord, in the tabernacle - the consolation and inspiration of the Irish - was to keep watch over them until Saturday morning. Dr. George O'Riordan - a stranger, with no local ties and by no means a sentimentalist - standing on the bridge, watching the mourners and hearses climb the hill, murmured with a lot of feeling: "The Hill of Scariff is Clare's and Ireland's Calvary to-night".

The scenes in the Church, as the coffin lids were removed to allow relatives and friends to see the remains, were over-powering. It is doubtful if anguish had ever been depicted more vividly than it was in the faces, limbs and every movement of the four afflicted mothers, as they gazed, in the cold candle light, on the outraged faces and forms of the very applies of their eyes. Seeing their sorrow filled the hardest-hearted onlooker with the same woeful feeling. In the midst of that anguish, sadness and sorrow there was, deep down in

everyone's heart, a sense of pride that young men of their generation were prepared to make the supreme sacrifice for Faith and Fatherland.

If the British Authorities were fearful of facing an inquest it was not so with the officers of the Local Authority, for no sooner had the last of the mourners left the vicinity of the Church than the Coroner, Mr. P. Colloo, with a jury, viewed the bodies. On his direction Dr. Holmes carried out an autopsy. It revealed that there were no less than seventeen bullet wounds in each of the bodies and that the shots were fired from very close range and all from the front. In the case of Alfie Rodgers and Martin Gildea there was clear evidence of singeing of the hair on the temples, and in both the hair was pulled down to cover a gaping wound between the eye and ear. Brud McMahon's wounds were of such a nature as to ensure death, but not to cause it instantaneously. Michael Egan's were similar.

Pat O'Donnell, a volunteer officer, who removed the bodies from the coffins for the autopsy, says, "Alfie's hair was singed at the temples where there was a gaping wound made, I'd say, by one or more .45 bullets fired at point blank range. When I tried to lift Martin Gildea my hand ran through the back of his head. The hair was singed and there was a dreadful wound in his temple as if more than one bullet had been fired into the same spot. All the bodies were riddled and we were all satisfied from the wounds that the first shots were aimed low down and that the weapons, while being fired from, were gradually raised up. All the bullets went right through the bodies. There was an expression of a painful lingering death on Brud's face".

A verdict of wilful murder against members of the crown forces stationed at Killaloe was brought in. As there was a strict censorship the proceedings and the verdict were never published.

On Friday the bodies lay in state in the church while arrangements were made for their burial the following day in the chapel yard. Officers of the crown called on Father Clancy to warn him against the danger of a demonstrative funeral.

On Saturday all business premises in the whole district were closed for the day. All school children, wearing crepe armlets, went to the church for High Mass which was attended by over fifty priests. As the Mass was terminating four lorry loads of crown forces arrived, surrounded the church and compelled the congregation to pass through a cordon for scrutiny by the local police.

The coffins were taken from the church by comrades and placed side by side in the prepared grave.

During the burial one party of crown forces searched the church (Providence only averted a clash between wanted comrades of the dead men and the tans), while the remainder took up provocative positions close to the grave. Their objective was to pick a quarrel and to terrify and frighten the people. Priests, nuns, women and children were sad and subdued - they had to submit to the desecration of their heroes' graves. Even on the face of the most timid, however, the expression was not one of terror but of determination and grim resolve.

The giving to those four young martyrs of a grave in the choicest spot in the chapel yard, under the shadow

of the altar at which they were confirmed as soldiers of Christ, is a worthy commemoration of their own and their generation's fidelity to God and Ireland.

The events are recalled here not to revive or perpetuate strife (God forbid!), but to record the grandeur of the national spirit which survived a Reign of Terror, the guilt and shame of which must be laid, not upon the English people but upon those in power and their hirelings.

Indeed the outlook of the English people, who knew conditions, was well illustrated by the action of Captain Grey of Ballycuggeran House, Killaloe. His loyalty, devotion and service to the Crown were immeasurable. So perturbed was he and the other English residents in and around that little village at Lough Derg's base by the happenings that he conveyed their views, by petition, to the Government feeling that redress would be secured. He was disappointed when he discovered that the Government's attitude was one of approval, and was exactly what was communicated in an answer in the House of Commons by the Chief Secretary to a question by Mr. T.P. O'Connor, that the police and military were entitled to fire on persons who were attempting to escape and who refused to halt when called upon. He was determined on saving the good name of the English people by getting the full facts to as many as he could. Because censorship prevented him having it done in Ireland, he had a pamphlet printed in England and distributed widely, recounting the atrocities. That he left Killaloe so very hurriedly that his wife had to remain behind to dispose of their property, before joining him, was significant.

The local people's sympathy went his way. With

feelings of shame and of disappointment that little colony - natives and settlers - were driven to renounce their old allegiance and become, like their neighbours, advocates of freedom.

Through the energies of Cumann na mBan and the old I.R.A. at home and in the U.S.A. a most becoming memorial to commemorate the struggle and the sacrifices of that time, has been erected at the Rock of Tuamgraney in the centre of a befitting garden of remembrance.

There it stands a monument, as symbolic and as imperishable as the ruins of nearby Innis Caltra and the Mass Rocks on the surrounding hills, telling, like them, of Ireland's sorrow and Ireland's glory - the Calvary of East Clare.

Signed:

Henry O'Hara

Date:

22/1/57

Witness:

Dean Brennan Lieut-Col.

(Investigator).

