

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21  
BURO STAIRÉ MILITÉIRE 1913-21  
No. W.S. 177

ROINN  COSANTA.

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. ....177.....

Witness

Jerry Golden, 49 Croydon Park,  
Fairview, Dublin.

Identity

Member of "B" Coy., 1st Battalion,  
Dublin Brigade 1916.

Subject

Attack on Ashbourne Police Station.

Conditions, if any, stipulated by Witness

Nil.

File No. ....S. 318.....

Form B.S.M. 2.

ORIGINAL Easter Week 1916

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-C  
BUREAU STAIRS MILEATA 1913-21  
No. W.S. 177

Story of the events immediately prior to and  
The fight at Rath Cross Roads  
or  
The Battle of Ashbourne

Ms. 177

In the early afternoon of Thursday (27th April) Easter Week 1916, Commdt Tomás Óg Ó'Flaighlin Brigade whom I had known for some years previous, spoke to me and said, that <sup>as</sup> I was well acquainted with the towns and villages of Ath Co Dublin and adjoining Co Meath, but not known personally by the R.I.C., he would like me to cycle through the towns and villages and note any unusual R.I.C. activity.

I started off on my bike and cycled through The Naull, Balbriggan, Sherris and then across the county <sup>into</sup> Co Meath. In The Naull, Balbriggan and Sherris, the door of the Barracks was partially closed and the iron shutters on the windows were ready to be closed at a moments notice, standing outside <sup>each</sup> the door was a constable or perhaps two armed with revolvers and bayonets. I was not stopped or questioned by them. When I entered the Co Meath I noticed that the Barracks in the following places Dunboyne, Dunshaughlin, Navan and Slane had the doors closed and one or two constables armed with carbines and revolvers were patrolling up and down outside the Barracks all the upstairs windows were iron shuttered and the shutters of the lower windows ready to be closed at a moments notice.

While cycling through Dunshaughlin I took good care not to be seen by the sergeant there as I had had some business dealings with him in the previous autumn and had also met him a few times previous when I ~~was~~ <sup>was</sup> down around Co Meath on a days shooting with some friends, and we sometimes had our lunch in Dunshaughlin.

When I had passed the Barracks at Slane I branched off the Drogheda road and cycled on by Curraha Cross and back by Rath Cross Roads, but before returning to the Commdt I cycled by Fildoon R.I.C. Barracks and saw some loose timber in the front yard the door and upper windows were closed and two constables were in the yard armed with carbines. I made a detour on the Dublin side of the village of Ashbourne and returned to the camp and reported all I had seen to the Commdt. Shortly afterwards the order was given <sup>to strike</sup> the camp and we moved off through Garristown towards the main Dublin Slane road and went into camp for the night in the farmyard of <sup>Reddinstown</sup>.

"House" about 1 1/2 miles from both Garristown and Ashbourne, and after posting outposts and sentries and arranging for relief sentries the remainder after supper tried to get some sleep.

About 7 a.m. on the morning of the 28th (Friday) all sentries were called in and had their breakfasts.

At 9 a.m. <sup>on the 28th</sup> the Fingal Battalion consisted of four officers namely: Command Tom Ashe, Vice Command Frank Lawless, Capt. James V. Lawless and Capt. Dr. Richard Hayes with about 35 of the Swords Irish, Sherries and St. Margaret's Companies men, together with Lieut (afterwards General) Dick Mulcahy and Tom Maxwell and Paddy Grant members of the 2nd Batt. Dublin Brigade and 5 members of "B" Co. 1st Batt. Dublin Brigade namely Paddy Holohan, Peadar Blanchfield his brother Tom, Arthur O'Reilly and myself together with one of the Liverpool Irish known as Willie Walsh with Miss Mollie Adrian of Oldtown of the Cumman na Man.

About 9.15 a.m. the Command ordered 2 sections of 21 men ~~to~~ of which I was one, to get their arms, ammunition and cycles and proceed with him and Lieut Dick Mulcahy who was acting as 2nd in command of the party. We mounted our bikes, turned to our left and proceeded in file towards the main Dublin Slane road. When we were about 5 yards from "Bath Cross Roads" we were ordered to dismount and the Command ordered 11 of the men under the orders of Joe Lawless and Charlie Weston to enter the fields on the north side of the road and proceed under cover of the hedges and ditches until they came to the nearest hedge to the rear of "Fildoon R.F.C. Barracks" which was about 200 yards down on the left hand side of the road to Ashbourne, the Command told them that when they were in position they were to signal him and he with Lieut Mulcahy would then proceed down the road to the front of the Barracks and call on the men to surrender and hand over their arms and ammunition and if they refused he would give the signal to attack the Barracks from front and rear.

While we were waiting for the men to get into position, we saw 3 R.I.C. men cycling round a curve in the road from Rathath, the Command ordered us to take them prisoner and disarm them; four or five of us rushed across the road and called on them to halt, the two constables jumped from their bikes, threw their arms and ammunition pouches on the side of the road raised their hands over their heads and shouted "we surrender" but the Sergeant whom I knew personally (Sergt Brady of Dunshaughlin) fell against the ditch and tried to draw his revolver and shoot me crying out at the same time "Goden I'll get you before I die" I was armed with a Martini Rifle with a long French Bayonet loosely attached and when I raised the rifle to fire and wound him, the cartridge jammed in the breech, so I made a lunge at him with the bayonet but he avoided my thrust and when I withdrew the rifle the bayonet remained stuck in the ground and the Sergt had grasped the muzzle of my rifle and pulled me down on top of him, I dropped the rifle and caught him by the throat and tried to strangle him, he had just drawn his revolver from his holster when Bartle Weston came to my assistance and struck him on the head with the butt of his rifle, the Sergt dropped his revolver and shouted out "don't kill me"; he was then taken prisoner and disarmed. During this little excitement one of the constables had apparently, while the others were looking on, made his escape but as he was unarmed we thought no more about him for he was not seen afterwards. We then marched the Sergt and the other constable over to the Command. The Command then ordered Paddy Dolchan to take the Sergt down to the Barracks ~~and call~~ with a white flag and order all the occupants in the building to surrender and hand over their arms when the two of them arrived in front of the Barracks we heard them shouting to the men in the barracks to surrender, but

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apparently without success as P. Dolohan reported to the Commdt that the men inside had refused to surrender or hand over their arms and ammunition. Sergt Brady then suggested to the Commdt that he be allowed to go down to the Barracks and he would prevail on the occupants to surrender; the Commdt and Lieut Mulcahy considered this for some moments and apparently agreed to the suggestion as the Sergt was handed a stick with a handkerchief tied to it and proceeded towards the barracks on the right hand side of the road but before he reached the barracks he jumped through a gap in the ditch and disappeared under cover of the hedges and was seen no more. These incidents had occupied nearly an hour, so the Commdt ordered us to advance down the road <sup>on</sup> both sides and get into position for attack. I was handed two home made bombs and given instructions in how to use them. Lieut Mulcahy was with me and when we got to the wall of the front yard of the barracks I lit the fuse of one of the bombs and then under cover of the Lieut's fire and the fire of the other 9 men I threw the bomb against one of the lower windows which were covered with steel shutters it fell down to the ground and went off with a great roar. I looked through an opening in the wall and ~~it~~ saw that it had only made a hole about 4 inches deep in the ground but apparently all the glass in the front windows were broken as we all heard the crash of breaking glass. I told Lieut Mulcahy the result and he ordered me to light and throw the second bomb. I did so and the one fell into the hole the other one had made and after the explosion both of us saw a crack in the wall about an inch wide and about 6 or 7 feet high from the ground meanwhile the men in front and here were keeping up a rapid fire on the barracks and after about five minutes we heard the men inside shouting and roaring that they would all be killed we then saw a muzzle of a rifle come through one of the loopholes in the iron shutter of one of the upstairs windows with

a white handkerchief tied to it and a loud voice cried out "we surrender if you promise not to take our lives"

The Commandt shouted back to <sup>come</sup> ~~out~~ with their hands raised and he would disarm each man as he came out through the front but on the first sign of treachery he would order his ~~own~~ men to again open fire and would show no mercy

While we were waiting for the Police to come out we all heard the sound of motor horns and on looking round we saw coming over the brow of the hill from the same direction a lot of motor cars all filled with R.I.C. men

The Commandt ordered us who were on the front of the barracks to get to the Cross Roads and try and stop the R.I.C. from reaching it and surrounding us we rushed up and three of us Mich Fleming Dick Dunger and myself lay down in a gully on left hand side of the road to Slane and about 7 yards on the Ashbourne side of the Cross Roads. Mich McAllister

Barth Weston Bennie McAllister threw themselves along the bank on the right hand side of the road the remainder of the men took up their positions about 6 or 7 feet behind us three and we all opened a rapid fire on the advancing motor cars with the result they were stopped about 60 yards on the Slane side of the Cross Roads, meanwhile the Commandt had sent word to the

men at the rear of the barracks to retire and take up position of attack on the Police left flank; The Commandt remained with us while Lieut. Mulcahy I believe joined the men who were in the rear of the barracks; a message was also sent up to our camp for every

one to come down and enter the fields and try and get to the Police rear and right flank. We had been firing at the Police for about 30 minutes before the other section had got into position

and it was during this time that I think the first casualty to the enemy took place; we were about 2 minutes firing at the motor cars

when we <sup>saw</sup> one of the Police step out of the front one and attempt to cross the road to a cutting in the bank which would

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give him cover to fire on us, he was just in the middle of the road when I saw Mick Mc Allister step out on the footpath raise his rifle and fire at the man who staggered into the cutting and fell against the side of it with his rifle pointed down the road at us who were at the cross roads and only about 60 yards from us, thinking he was about to fire at us, Mick Fleming, Dick Augier and myself had shots at him but we saw no replying shot and concluded he was either severely wounded or dead. When the other section opened fire on the Police we got a chance to cool our rifles and recharge our magazines; after some time some of the Police who had crept down the grass margin under cover of the motor cars opened fire on us, but after about six rounds being fired by us we heard no more shooting from this party.

The fight had now lasted about an hour and the men from the camp had arrived at the point of the road where they were about to enter the fields to get to the rear of the Police when Tommy Rafferty of Tush stood up on the ditch to see if the Police had entered any of the fields, he was apparently seen by the Police on the road about 150 yards away and was shot dead by them, his body was carried by his comrades into the farm cottage on the opposite side of the road; this was our first casualty. The party of men then entered the fields and under cover of the hedges and ditches advanced through the fields until they had got in the rear of the Police some of them crossed the road and got into the fields on the Police right flank and advanced down the road fields towards the part of the road where the motor cars were halted it was while they were <sup>or</sup> advancing that our second casualty occurred. It appears they had about come level with some of the motors when John Brinigan of Swords looked through a gap in the ditch to locate any Police, he was seen by D. J. Smith <sup>Via Tomp</sup> who fired at and shot him through the head with a revolver <sup>Frank</sup> Lawless who was immediately behind John fired on Mr. D. J. with

a Howth Mauser rifle at a distance of about 6 yards and shot him through the head. The hour was now about 4 p.m. and we who were down at the Cross Roads heard a shout "Charge" we looked up the road and saw Lieut Mulcahy lead a party of about 20 men all with fixed bayonets charge down the road on the Police were while our men on both sides of the road opened a rapid fire into the body body of the Policemen who were grouped under cover from us of the halted cars. When the Police saw this party charge down on them with fixed bayonets they threw their rifles out on the road and raced into a Labourers Cottage on their side of the road. Those who could not get into the Cottage then came out into the road with their hands raised over their heads and shouting "we surrender". As there was no more firing from the Police the Command ordered all his men to cease firing. We then went with him to meet the Party of Police and take their surrender and disarm them, the Police party had a Head Constable in charge and he told Command that he was the only Senior Officer left as the D.I. was dead and the County Inspector seriously wounded. Some of the wounded Police were crying out for help and the Command detailed some of us to attend the wounded while others were detailed to collect all arms ammunition and equipment, while we were collecting the arms we counted 18 motor cars some of them large ones which would hold seven or eight men easily, there were 10 Police dead including D.I. Smith and about 14 seriously wounded, including County Inspector Grey who died the next day, and four of the Rank and file of the Police died before their wounds could be dressed; we also noticed that the Police were from every Barracks in the County Meath, they were all armed with 5 shot magazine carbines of Lee Enfield pattern, bayonets, revolvers and 250 rounds of 303 ammunition and 50 rounds of either 45 or 38 revolver ammunition together with their truncheons and handcuffs, they were a sorry looking lot not the customary P.D.C. mans complex



While we were collecting the arms and ammunition we saw a body of Police coming <sup>from the Police Barracks</sup> up the road with one of their number carrying a white flag; they were in charge of a D.I. and when they arrived at the cross roads the D.I. advanced to Commdt Ashe and told he was handing over all the arms and ammunition of the men under him and he handed his revolver to the Commdt, when the Commdt broke it he found it contained six soft nosed cartridges with the tops cut away the D.I. also handed over 2 pouches of similar ammunition and when the Commdt asked him was this the ammunition he would have used ~~us on us~~ he replied that it the ammunition issued to him on the previous day; he was also asked if why he did not attempt to attack us in the rear and he answered "I had given the order to surrender and would not go back on my word."

This party consisted of the D.I. 2 Head Constables 4 Sergeants 2 Acting Sergeants and 12 Constables and when we had collected all their arms and ammunition the Commdt ordered all the Police to place their dead and wounded comrades in the cars and for the remainder to also get into the cars and return to whatever town in the County they had started from in the morning.

There was no correct count made of the Police but all of us were agreed that there were at least 6 men in each car which would make 108 a D.I. and 21 men in the Barracks and the Sergeant and two Constables from Dunscaughlin making a total of approximately 132 while our force did not exceed 50 all told.

When the Police had left we put all the spare rifles and ammunition in our transport cars and returned to our camp at Baldwinstown where we had a good dinner and a long rest after an action occupying over 6 hours, and so ended "The Battle of Ashbourne".

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Jerry Golden

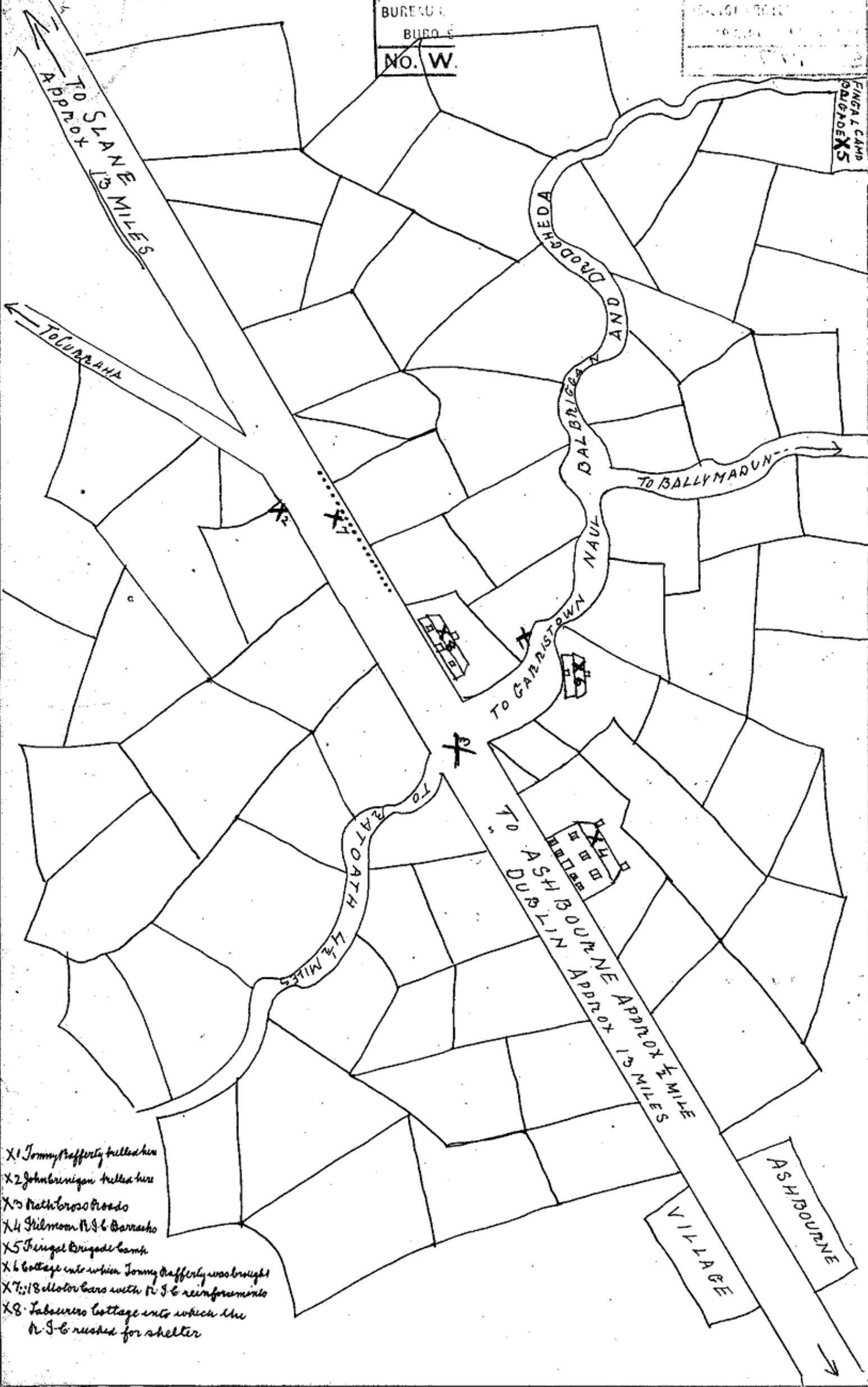
11th Jan'y 1949.

8 Annexed is a rough sketch of the grounds with the points referred to marked thereon J.G.

BUREAU  
BURO  
NO. W.

1921  
1921

FINAL CAMP  
GARDENS



- X1 Tommy Rafferty killed here
- X2 John Brinigan killed here
- X3 Rath Cross Roads
- X4 Pilmour R.I.C. Barracks
- X5 Fenian Brigade camp
- X6 Cottage into which Tommy Rafferty was brought
- X7: 18 Belloler Cars with R.I.C. reinforcements
- X8: Taberner's Cottage into which the R.I.C. rushed for shelter