

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21

BURO STAIRÉ MILEATA. 1913-21

No. W.S. 396

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 396.....

**Witness**

Captain Sean Sexton,  
Deanscurragh,  
Longford.

**Identity**

Lieutenant Irish Volunteers,  
Co. Longford.  
1918-1921.

**Subject**

National activities, Co. Longford  
and Co. Westmeath 1917-1921.

**Conditions, if any, stipulated by Witness**

Nil

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STATEMENT BY CAPT. SEXTON,

DEANSCURRAGH, LONGFORD.

Previous to conscription the Irish Volunteers were started in Clonbroney. Seán MacEoin, Seán Connolly and Seán Duffy were striving very hard to get the movement going. When the conscription Act was passed in 1917 men flocked to us, to join in huge numbers. We soon had a strength of about two hundred men, but once the crisis was over the numbers dwindled to about twenty-eight or so. After a while we were able to form a section in the northern end of the parish. Some of these were from the neighbouring parish of Columcille and were recruited through the local Gaelic League Class. This was some time in 1918 after the General Election. We had now a Company of roughly about fortyfive.

Seán MacEoin was Company Commander, Seán Connolly 1st Lieutenant and Seán Duffy 2nd Lieutenant. Shortly after this a Battalion was formed in the area and Seán MacEoin was appointed Battalion Commander. As far as I can remember this was the 1st Battalion Longford Brigade and Clonbroney Company was A Company of this Battalion. I cannot remember what other areas the other Companies of the Battalion covered. The officers elected were those that held their ranks at the time of the conscription crisis.

Armaments consisted only a few shot guns and one old '32 rifle which had belonged to the original Irish Volunteers. Parades were held every week at MacEoin's in Kilshrewley. We had an instructor from Dublin named Pat Garrett. He was an ex-British Army man. We got a service rifle from somewhere and he gave us our first instructions on the rifle. About the end of 1918 a British

soldier from the Longford Garrison deserted and brought a couple of rifles with him which we received with open arms so to speak. We had now two or three service rifles and some ammunition - very little. Parades and training continued during 1918 and our numbers were increasing by ones and twos, but very slowly .

We raided Heratys' in Ballinalee and got some shot gun ammunition. This was an arranged affair with Mr. Heraty to cover him up and avoid suspicion of him by the police. When Seán MacEoin was made Battalion O/C - Seán Duffy was appointed Company O/C, Connolly appointed Adjutant of the Battalion and Seamus Conway was then appointed 1st Lieutenant but I cannot remember who was 2nd Lieutenant.

During 1918 the R.I.C. had evacuated a number of small Centres and concentrated in larger ones. The evacuated barracks were all burned by the Volunteers at Easter 1919. The Volunteers now took over the police work of the countryside and made arrests and arranged trials which were carried out by Volunteer Courts. The Volunteers were also responsible for the execution of the findings of such courts, including periods of detention of prisoners which meant a huge amount of duty for all, especially since nearly all Volunteers were either working men or had their own occupations to attend to as well. A general raid for arms was carried out in the later part of 1919. This resulted in the collection of a fair amount of shot guns mostly - and some ammunition. A lot of old obsolete weapons were collected as well. This raiding was general throughout the country.

In April 1920 Smear, Lisryan ~~and~~ <sup>ds</sup> R.I.C. Barracks were vacated by the R.I.C. Several other barracks were vacated soon after this including Ballinalee & Keenagh. On one particular night all these barracks were destroyed by fire. In June 1920 an attack was made on Mostrim R.I.C. Barracks. A Sergeant and eight or nine men were in the barracks at the time. No actual firing took place as when all was in readiness for the attack, the "Lancers" arrived in the vicinity and we had to withdraw. The plan was to get into the adjoining house and bore a hole through the dividing wall and throw in grenades through this into the barracks. I think the grenades were home-made ones. A large number of men were mobilised for this affair and nearly all were armed with shot guns and buck-shot. The remainder of that year was spent in ordinary routine duties. Training was now very strict. Attendances at parades were more numerous. Conferences of Battalion officers were held regularly.

On the 6th January 1920 Drumlish Barracks (R.I.C.) was attacked. Our Battalion plus men from Drumlish, Killoe, Clonbroney, Granard and Columcille took part in the operation. Other Companies around the area also took part by holding outposts on the roads and keeping communications. This was a strong post and garrisoned by reinforcements withdrawn from the vacated R.I.C. stations. It was also reinforced by some half-dozen or so soldiers. The plan was to lay a mine at the gable end and blow the end wall out of the building. A cart-wheel box loaded with gelignite and fused was thrown through the fanlight over the door. Both the mine and the bomb failed to explode. Fire was opened on the barracks with the few rifles and shot-guns available but after some time the attack was called off

and the only result of our efforts was a lot of broken glass. This barracks was subsequently vacated by the R.I.C.

In June 1920 Ballinamuck R.I.C. Bks. was attacked. This was a very strong point, being built of cut stone and loopholed with two high towers. It had ideal fire positions inside. This was a Brigade job and parties of men from all the units in the Northern part of the Brigade area took part in it. There was a ball-alley close to the barracks, and bombs (home made from cart boxes) and some G.H.Q. type (concussion) were thrown from the ball-alley on to the roof of the Bks. I think paraffin oil was also thrown with the bombs and the roof took fire. Stink bombs were also thrown in to compel the police to vacate. The police did not surrender however, but vacated the barracks and retired to a shed. It was now daylight and so it was dangerous to continue the attack and the attackers had to withdraw and disperse. Seán Connolly was in charge of this attack. The police never re-occupied the place, they withdrew the following day to Longford. There were no casualties on either side as far as I am aware and no arms were captured.

In August 1920 plans were made to capture Ballymahon R.I.C. Bks. This was an ordinary barracks attached to a private dwelling. The garrison consisted of about eighteen R.I.C. men. The plan of attack here was to get on to the roof and remove some of the slates, making a hole through which bombs and petrol would be thrown. This was also a Brigade operation and all the roads leading to Ballymahon were barricaded and held by Volunteers. The Canal Bridge was mined and ready for blowing if enemy reinforcements should arrive by that route. Through the

adjoining house an exit was made on to the roof and from thence to the roof of the adjoining barracks. The slates were removed and through this hole in the roof Michael Gormley and others threw hand grenades and petrol. The roof took fire. While this was taking place, fire was opened on the barracks to hide the noise from the roof and to keep the police engaged. The police eventually surrendered coming out with their "hands up". We succeeded in securing nearly all the ammunition and eighteen or nineteen rifles and a number of hand grenades. The police belts and batons were also taken and the police were then allowed to go free. Again as far as I am aware there <sup>NO AS</sup> were casualties on either side.

My next operation of note was the attack on Arva barracks. I was on outpost duty at Gelsha Cross Roads on this occasion. This covered the approach from Ballinalee, Longford and Granard. We had no engagement here.

On Hallow Eve District Inspector Kelleher was shot in Kierans' Hotel in Granard by men from the Granard area. ~~He was actually shot by the I.R.A.~~  
Kelleher had been bragging that he had complete information about the I.R.A. and was biding his time to make a clean sweep of the lot. Constable Cooney was shot in Granard on All Hallows day. It was expected that they, the enemy, would burn Granard and Ballinalee as a reprisal. Arrangements were made to meet such a situation in both places. I was concerned with the preparations in Ballinalee. "A" Company was mobilised to meet any attack on Ballinalee on Hallow Eve night and on the next night and also on the third night.

Men were posted at the end of the town towards Edgeworthstown and also on the roads leading to Longford and Granard. There was also a party at the end of the town on the road to Ballinamuck. Frank Davis was in charge of this party and located at the end of the village near the river. The fifth party was in the centre of the village at the Cross-Roads. I was with this party. We also had men at Seán Connolly's house on the France Road. We were all armed with service rifles and about one hundred rounds of ammunition. Before this a number of rifles had been secured on a raid on Longford Military Barracks and these with what we had captured from the R.I.C. gave us a fair supply. The night of the 2nd November was a very wet and dark night. It had continued to rain heavily from about 8 p.m. The enemy were expected to come from the Longford side. The plan was to allow them into the village and then to hem them in and attack them. By covering all roads it meant that they would have a party at their head no matter what way they turned. Ballinalee is built like a cross, the four roads meeting in the centre approximately of the village. It was expected that when they came into the village they would turn south towards Edgeworthstown as was their habit on previous visits. I was on the Cross Roads in the centre of the village. As well as raining hard at the time it was also very dark, visibility not being more than twenty yards.

At about 2 a.m. I saw the lights of a lorry approaching from the Granard direction. When first I saw the lights they were about three hundred yards away - having passed through the outpost on the Granard road. When they came to the Cross roads in the village they wheeled to the right towards Ballinamuck, the opposite to what we expected.

The first lorry pulled up at Heratys' at the end of the village, followed by nine other lorries. The last lorry halted for a couple of seconds on the Granard road and then continued after the others coming to a standstill only a short distance from our position. Seán MacEoin was with me behind the wall opposite the Granard road. Seán took us out on the street. As we got on to the street we heard a cockney voice shout, "Get the petrol tins ready". Seán shouted at them to surrender to the I.R.A. The end lorry was then about fifty yards away. One of them shouted back "Never to you, you ..... He then ordered us to fire on them, which we did. We took cover behind a large pile of gravel which was on the side of the street. Our party consisted of Seán MacEoin, Jimmie MacEoin, Seamus Conway, Tommy Early and myself. Early for some reason took fright and ran away. When we opened fire they replied. There were "Lancers" amongst their party who had Hotchkiss guns and the 'Tans' had Lewis guns. They opened up with these on us. Our men who were posted on the Ballinamuck road did not come into action at all, as the 'Tans' got too close up on them before they could do so. They had to crawl along the river which they were able to cross at Kilshrewley, from which they proceeded to MacEoin's house and protected it. The men on the Granard road or other roads did not come into action either. We sensed a movement amongst the enemy, as if they were trying to surround us. Two of us went down the Longford road and turned into a laneway to the right, which placed us on the enemy flank and fired a few shots at them which made them pull back from that direction. We then returned to our original position. Previous to this Seamus Conway threw a bomb towards the enemy. I afterwards found out from the Lancers



themselves that they were just advancing to attack us with the bayonet, but the bomb stopped them, wounding three, one of whom I think died afterwards. After some more firing the enemy got into their lorries and made off in the direction of Ballinamuck. They went astray in this area which is a mass of bye roads and some of them did not get into Longford until the following evening. At the time that the enemy fled, our ammunition was almost exhausted. My hand was scorched from the rifle, I had been firing so rapidly.

Seamus MacEoin and I now proceeded to Kilshrewley to MacEoin's home, where we found that his cottage and the forge had been broken into but they did not set fire to it. We went on to their other house half a mile further on and on our way down we contacted Frank Davis and his party, who had been originally on the Ballinamuck end of the village. MacEoin's house was all-right.

We returned to Ballinalee, Davis and his party preceding us. When we got to Ballinalee we found the boys collecting loot of all descriptions, including bottles of whiskey and every kind of goods that the enemy had left behind them. I think that some ammunition was also picked up. This was portion of the stuff the enemy had collected in Granard when they looted and burned that town. I would like to emphasise that the darkness was intense during the fight. It was raining very hard and visibility was only about ten yards or so. This led to the confusion on both sides and kept our parties on the other roads from joining us as they could not know what was happening. Our party was so small that we could not spare a runner to contact them and if we had slackened our fire they would have come in on us. As the other parties did not know

and could not see in what way the fighting was developing, there was the danger that if they came into the village, they would come under our fire, or be caught in Cross-fire.

Ballinalee was occupied by "A" Coy for close on a fortnight after that, in case they would come back to burn the village. This was both night and day. They did not come back. The morning following the fight there was a large amount of blood on the street where the enemy had been. We had no casualties. On the outskirts of the village Michael Reynolds with the Killoe Company manned the road from Longford to Ballinalee <sup>at a point *AB*</sup> ~~two~~ two miles on the Longford side of Ballinalee. We took over the Post Office and had a field telephone connected to the wires at Dohertys' cross-roads (Reynolds position). The wires to Longford had been cut but runners from that town were in continual contact with Reynolds' position keeping him informed of the position in Longford. The Killoe men were mostly armed with shot guns. The Tans ceased coming from Longford to Granard through Ballinalee although this was the direct road. Each day they took other routes, usually via Edgeworthstown. About six weeks afterwards we went up to ambush them on the Edgeworthstown road at Ardgullion Bog.

We had twenty-five or twenty-six men for this affair and laid a mine in the road. Seán MacEoin was again in charge here. We lay in that ambush position for about forty eight hours and then we received a message that the 'Tans had arrived in Ballinalee and taken over Farrell's house and fortified it, and set it up as a barracks. Farrells' was a grocery and drapery and general shop.

We took up our mine at nine or ten p.m. and proceeded to Kierans of Drumeal. We billeted around there in houses that night. The following night we attacked Farrells' in Ballinalee.

We blew the end or gable wall out of the house with a mine. This mine was made of concrete and iron and charged with gelignite and electrically detonated. Seán Duffy carried the mine and laid on the window sill of the barracks, walking to the window sill in his bare feet. On the explosion fire was opened on the barracks on three sides which was kept up until daylight. The enemy sent up Verey lights for assistance. It was also tried to burn the premises by throwing petrol and paraffin in jam jars, into it. Verey lights were then fired into it to ignite the petrol and paraffin. It took fire several times but each time they were able to extinguish it. At daylight we had to withdraw and proceeded to Kierans of Drumeal.

For this attack all roads leading to the village were covered by parties from other companies of the Battalion. No attempt was made to come to the assistance of the 'Tans. I might add that all telegraph and telephone communications had been destroyed before this. Some of our Boys including myself, retired home for a rest after this. The 'Tans left Farrells' that day and took over the National Schools which they fortified and made into a barracks. This building was outside the village, a couple of hundred yards on the Granard road. It had a garrison of about thirty or thirty-five. They kept lorry patrols on all the roads, particularly on the Granard road. The night they occupied their new <sup>BARRACKS</sup> ~~branch~~ MacEoin took a few men with him into the

village. He found none of the 'Tans in the village. They then fired a few shots at the new barracks and retired. He was trying to entice them out.

Prior to these incidents at Ballinalee, ambushes were planned for Clonfin and Ballyrehan. The Ballyrehan one was first planned by Seán Connolly and was on a party of military who had gone to Granard from Longford the previous night, and were to be attacked on their return the following day. Shortly after daylight in the morning they returned and when about a quarter of a mile from our ambush position they left the main road and proceeded via Clonbroney and France to Seán Connolly's house which they raided for him, while he was on the ambush position. A few weeks afterwards the same thing happened again, they turning off short of our ambush position. It was then planned to ambush them at a point further towards Granard. This time they came only to Browns' cross-roads half a mile further on the Granard side, and went to Clonbroney via that road and so fooled us again.

The night the 'Tans arrived in Ballinalee and took over Farrells', they set fire to Heratys' and after the attack on Farrells' they burned James Hannigans', Brackens', Ellen Hannigans', and Earlys'; They also burned down Connollys' house and haggard as well as shooting his cattle. They also burned MacEoin's cottage. Seán continued to worry them by sniping and attacking them nearly every night. They were so demoralised by this, that on one night, a comparatively bright one, a donkey walked into the barbed wire. The 'Tans opened up with everything they had including hand grenades. This was kept up for over an hour. The 'Tans could be heard shouting and cheering inside the barracks.

The people around Ballinalee were very worried by all the fighting, raiding and shooting that was taking place around that area and felt that they were having to bear more than a fair share of the trouble. The 'Tans usually raided MacEoin's house and other houses several times per day. It was then decided to draw them away if possible from the Ballinalee area for a while, so we went across to Terlicken in south Longford. We had an ambush there with the assistance of the South Longford fellows including the Brigade O/C and Quartermaster. The ambush took place at Terlicken and was on two lorry load of 'Tans.

Mines were set on the road, but they failed to go off. We opened fire on them when the Mines failed. They stopped and jumped from the lorries and manned the sides of the road. We occupied two houses covering the position. We fought them for about an hour and then retired to <sup>11500</sup> Maglassick House. A few of the 'Tans were wounded. We had no casualties. This was a big miss for us as we afterwards found out that there was a high officer from the Castle with the 'Tans at the time and that he was carrying £1,900 with him. This was money, payment for the 'Tans. Apparently they did not get paid regularly at the time. Some of the Cumann na mBan were at <sup>Self</sup> Maglassick house - the two Hussey girls - who made a meal for us. After having our meal we came back to Ligan, where we got further refreshments from the Ballesty family.

When proceeding to Terlicken originally, we stayed at Ballestys' and Skellys' in Brayney's house. There were no 'Tans around there, so we moved on to Terlicken. From Ballestys' we came back to Langans' at Lizard, where we billeted for the night.

The following night we left and proceeded to Ballinamore near Clonfin in North Longford. Every night there was sniping at Ballinalee and Granard to keep the enemy worried. From the time of the big fight in Ballinalee the North Longford column might be said to have been in existence as it was these men who formed the nucleus of the column. The strength of the column was from eighteen to twenty-one men all armed with rifles of service pattern, with about 150 rounds per man and some bombs. We also had nine or ten good revolvers. Seán MacEoin was in charge. However it was not until after the Clonfin Ambush that the column was full strength at all times.

On the 2nd February 1921 we had an ambush at Clonfin. The 'Tans had begun to go via Ballinalee from Longford to Granard and it was decided to ambush them. There was usually two lorry load comprising about twenty-two or so 'Tans. Concrete mines were laid on the road and we took up positions about fifty yards on some high ground covering the road. There was a house on one side and a good ditch on the other which we occupied. The roads leading to the position in Flank and Rear were covered, - a couple of men to hold up reinforcements coming upon us from the rear and flanks.

At about two-thirty in the afternoon, two lorry load of Auxiliaries - something new to us, came from the Granard direction. The explosion of the mine blew the front wheels and engine out of the first lorry and the second lorry came to a halt about fifteen or twenty yards at the rear. As soon as the debris from the explosion had fallen we opened fire on them. The enemy were thrown out of the first

lorry and the occupants of the second took cover immediately on the sides of the road. The fight went on for about an hour. They provided good targets. When they opened with their Lewis Gun the gunner was immediately knocked out and the second man who attempted to get it into action, was also shot. They never got using the gun after that. MacEoin called on them to surrender several times and eventually one of them shouted that they would surrender. We ceased firing and then they all stood up and put their 'hands up'. We closed in on them and searched them. From this victory we secured about twenty-two or twenty-three rifles, one Lewis gun with a practically complete supply of ammunition, a supply of mills hand grenades and nearly all of them had two revolvers and ammunition. About three of the Auxies were killed outright and some more were wounded.

One of them congratulated MacEoin and advised him to leave immediately as reinforcements would be coming shortly. We bound the wounds of the wounded men as best we could and left them, one lorry- the good one - to take them back, the other one we destroyed. Just as we were leaving the reinforcements arrived. We were very heavily loaded as we had all the captured material as well as our own equipment and we had to man haul it all. The reinforcements consisted of 'Tans from Ballinalee and 'Tans from Longford. We crossed the Clonfin Bog and allowed them to follow us for about half a mile and then we turned and attacked them. They retreated quickly, although they were much superior in numbers. The column then proceeded to Aughakilmore. Seán MacEoin took Mick Murray, Pat Finnegan and myself and went back to the ambush area and searched the place to see if anything had been left behind. We searched

the area including where the enemy had been but found nothing. Pat Finnegan had left his rifle behind him when we retired on the arrival of enemy reinforcements. His name was on the rifle and the following day Finnegan's house was burned.

We rested at Aughakilmore that night and the following day at about eleven a.m. we found we were surrounded by 'Tans and Auxies. We could not attack them that day as they had hostages standing in the lorries. They also had two armoured cars. They searched the houses along the roads. When<sup>RE</sup> the roads had been trenched they made the local people fill them in and had bombs placed in them. That day they went down to Aughnacliffe and burned Tom Reilly's public-house. Reilly was the O/C of the Colmcille Company. The column left that night and marched to Crott & Smear townland about two miles below Aughnacliffe. The enemy had retired from the area after burning Tom Reilly's house. We stayed at Aughnacliffe until the following night when MacEoin took some of the men with him to Ballinamore. We had no casualties in the fight at Corofin, except one man slightly wounded. MacEoin took some of the men with him to Ballinamore and Clonfin and billeted there. Others of us went to Ballinamuck.

Some days afterwards a message was received in Longford to the effect that a train load of arms and ammunition with a heavy escort was proceeding from Dublin to Sligo and was to be ambushed at Clonwhelan, Westmeath. It was late when the message was received and by the time we had portion of the column collected at Coolarty cross-roads, we found out we would be too late getting to Clonwhelan. Some of the first men who had arrived at Coolarty had gone on to Clonwhelan but we did not set out to get there at all. A few days afterwards Seán MacEoin was arrested in Mullingar.



In March 1921 portion of the column went to Clonwhelan and put up in Dick White's house for the night and I think the next night. We were going to ambush a party of 'Tans who always met the night train from Dublin at Streete station. Seamus Conway was in charge of this operation. We took up position beside the railway station but no patrol turned up. After a few days we returned to Ballinamore. We spent several nights lying in position at Esker (Terences Cross) Sorans' cross-roads, Vances' cross roads and Kilshrewley Mills watching for patrols that were in the habit of passing that way. We never got contact with them. An another time around this period we spent a week at Ohill awaiting a patrol that usually travelled from Longford to Ballinalee via Drumlish. They never turned up either.

Around this time also we moved portion of the column into the Arva area with the intention of attacking Arva barracks. The 'Tans had established a barracks here. In this we were assisted by some Volunteers from Colmcille and others. Some of the column armed with revolvers went into the town first with the intention of shooting what 'Tans they could find on the streets. <sup>was</sup> I hoped by this that the 'Tans would come out of the barracks to the assistance of their comrades and we would be able to rush the barracks. We were in a good position to do this at the time. Our town patrols reported to us that there were no 'Tans to be found on the streets so we attacked the barracks with rifle fire and bombs. I think that some of the barracks roof was blown off. The fight lasted for some considerable time and eventually we withdrew. We had no casualties and I do not know if the 'Tans had any. That night we returned to Columcille.

Our next encounter was an attack on a lorry of 'Tans at Killeen's gate Lisameen outside Ballinalee and an attack on the 'Tans barracks at Ballinalee that night. Portion of the column was lying at Lisameen to ambush a cycle patrol of 'Tans. Instead of the cycle patrol a lorry load of 'Tans arrived. They pulled up in the ambush position. At this time we were out of position, being in the process of having a meal. We had to crawl to get back to our positions but we succeeded in doing so and we gave them "Hell" for a while. They jumped into the lorry again and got away. There must have been some of them hit as they provided a good target at about 300 yards range. We had no casualties. Seamus Conway was in charge of this affair.

The Auxies had left Ballinalee and the 'Tans were reinforced and had taken over Reynolds as a barracks. The Auxies had occupied this previously. The 'Tans had now vacated the schools. We took position fair opposite Reynolds, at about 250 yards range. This was about nine or ten p.m. We opened fire on the barracks which we kept up for a long time. They replied with rifle and Lewis gun fire. Eventually we withdrew and returned to Ballinamore. We had no casualties. I do not know if any of the 'Tans were killed or wounded.

In April 1921 a cycle patrol of 'Tans had gone from Granard to Longford, and we decided to ambush them on their return <sup>AT</sup> to Ballybrien, between Killeen School and Ballybrien Hill. Only portion of the column were in this encounter. We took up position along the banks covering the road for about 200 yards. This was a straight piece of road. Seamus Conway was in charge and there were nine other members of the column under him. The party of 'Tans, about sixteen

or eighteen strong returned at about 3 p.m. or later. There was a cut in the road - it had been trenched - and as the leading 'Tans were crossing this (dismounted) we opened fire. They took cover hurriedly. They were in charge of Head Constable Flanagan. We fought them for about an hour, when reinforcements arrived from Granard and we had to withdraw. They followed us for about a mile across country. We had to fight a withdrawal action. When it began to get dark they broke off the fight. We had no casualties but we heard that some of 'Tans were shot, at least there were three wounded and one Sergeant lost his leg as a result.

After that we waited for a week at Gelsha Cross-roads to ambush patrols. There were seven or eight of the column present. No patrols turned up. We then moved portion of the column to near Streete, where we thought we thought we could ambush 'Tans on the main Longford-Mullingar road above Rathowen. We stayed there all day, but no patrols came that way. We were strangers in that country and not known to the people, so we returned again to Ballinamore area and billeted in an old vacated house, being fed by the local people. We were almost continually around and in Ballinalee sniping the 'Tans and watching for night patrols, but no serious engagement took place.

The last day of April we moved to the Arva area with the intention of attacking a patrol that used to come out out to Moyne cross-roads. Reddington the Brigade O/C and our Lewis gun were participating. We billeted in the townland of Fyhora. While in Reilly's house, on the morning after we moved in about 12 a.m., two 'Tans approached the house. We shot both of them as they came

into the yard and captured their rifles and revolvers. The column then moved to the Crott mountain, where we were looked after very highly by the local people. We were waiting there for the 'Tans to come out to look for their comrades and were prepared to ambush them, but they did not come out. We pulled out of there that night and the following morning the 'Tans came out and collected their dead comrades. They burned the house we had been in. After this the members of the column split up and went back to their own areas.

After the ambush at Clonfin we sniped patrols and the 'tan barracks in Granard. Shortly after this ambush too, Frank Davis, Hugh Hourican and myself with the assistance of a few other Volunteers, burned the schoolhouse in Drumlish. We had information at the time that the 'Tans were going to occupy it the following day.

Our next engagement and the last was an ambush of a walking patrol of about 12 'Tans at Streete. Portion of the column were reorganised for this in charge of Seamus Conway. We got into the Streete area in the evening at about 6 or 7 p.m. and at the same time the patrol arrived. We were about to cross the road when we heard a mouth organ playing; we listened, and on looking up the road saw the patrol approaching. We let them pass and then crossed the road to the other side and then proceeded at the back of the hedge in the same direction as the patrol. Conway and a few others had gone on before this to the other end of the village and we had to wait until they were in position. We got into the Protestant Graveyard and this gave us a good commanding position on the patrol. Conway and his party were in position by this time and on his blast of a whistle which was the prearranged signal, we opened fire on the 'Tans. Four or five of them fell and were dragged

under cover by their comrades. The remainder got into houses and we had to break off the engagement as there would be a serious <sup>Noted</sup> danger of shooting a number of the inhabitants by <sup>^</sup>doing so. After this we returned to the Ballinamore area.

Just prior to this incident at Streete the Military, 'Tans, Auxies and R.I.C. carried out a huge round up. They came in thousands and surrounded all the area of our operations in North Longford. We were hemmed in, inside this area. The whole column were around the Aughnacliffe area at this time. When night came we made towards Lough Gowna in the County Cavan. We sneaked through the enemy picquet lines between the Sentries. The Sentries were about 200 yards apart. There were cattle and goats on the road at the time and this assisted us in getting through the picquets, as they gave us cover and their movements distracted the Sentries' attention. We crossed Lough Gowna in boats into the county Cavan and the following day from our position we could see the enemy searching the area we had left. They gave the area a thorough combing, searching every ditch and bog-hole and house and outoffice in the area. That night we got word that the enemy had left the area and we returned again. They arrested a few fellows in the area but they none of the column.

Nothing further happened until the Truce and we were all mighty glad when that came to be able to get home for a rest and a decent meal.

Signed; Sean Sexton Capt.

Date; 10-6-50

Witness; Mauden Comdt.

Date; 10-6-50

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3. 4. 50

The attached Photo of Repurposed  
of "Rose" cottage Ballinacree  
is referred to in Capt G. Sexton's  
Statement. It was from the  
Garden at the rear end and  
subsequently from in front of the  
Cottage that Sean McKernan  
delivered his attack on eleven horses  
of Black Tans and Lancers on  
the 3<sup>rd</sup> Nov 1920. There was  
a large heap of gravel on the road  
in front of the cottage at the time

Extract from "The Longford Leader."



### **Of Historic Interest**

Rose Cottage, standing in the centre of Ballinalce was built in 1831 by a Lieut.-Col. Wray Palisier, a county Waterford man, who at that time, and for some years later owned, as landlord twenty-one townlands in County Longford. Reference is made in Lewis's Topographical Dictionary of Ireland, published in 1832, to the house having been recently built. Where the present cottage stands formed part of the Franciscan Monastery which was dissolved in the reign of Henry VIII. The foundation of the Monastery Chapel can be traced in a disused burial ground at the north-west here. The ruined part remains of the Monastery Hospice within eighty yards of the cottage on opposite side of road going north. The layout of the residence was clearly influenced by a style common around Soissons in mid-France, where many houses of this type are to be found. The walls vary from two feet to two and a half feet thick. The roof is laid on a principal roof in round oak laid from gables to cross-walls. The property was purchased by the Reynolds family in 1865, and is now in their possession.