

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21

BURO STAIRÉ MILEATA 1913-21

NO. W.S. 474

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 474

Witness

Commandant Liam Haugh,
Donoughboy,
Kilkee,
Co. Clare.

Identity

Adjutant and O/C. A.S.U.
West Clare Brigade November 1920-July 1921.

Subject

- (a) West Clare 1909-1921;
- (b) Death of Captain Lendrum, R.M., 6/9/1920,
and other military activities, West Clare,
up to 11th July 1921.

Conditions, if any, stipulated by Witness

Nil

File No. S1575

Form B.S.M. 2.

STATEMENT OF COMMANDANT LIAM HAUGH,
DONOUGHBOY, KILKEE, CO. CLARE.

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STATEMENT OF COMMANDANT LIAM HAUGH,

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PART I.

The Sinn Fein movement was first launched in West Clare in the summer of 1909, on which occasion the Dublin headquarters was represented by the late Sean MacDermott.

It may be safely said that 90% of the able-bodied population joined the Redmond volunteers. Leadership of the various units was accepted by the professional and influential classes, and drilling with dummy arms, etc. was intensively carried on.

Redmond's declaration in favour of Britain, consequent on the outbreak of the World War, did not exactly cause a split; the classes who accepted ^{his} leadership accepted Redmond's suggestion, but, on endeavouring to impose their views on the rank and file, were simply deserted en masse. A minimum enlisted into Britain's army, but the Volunteers as such disintegrated.

Up to this (1904-1915) Sinn Fein could be considered a minus quantity, until the district was visited in 1915 by organisers from Dublin. West Clare was then struck out as a battalion area, with Art O'Donnell of Tullycrine in charge as battalion commandant. Organisation and training was most intensive in the Carrigaholt area; the old Fenian tradition being strongest hereabouts. About a dozen rifles were landed here towards the end of 1915, off a cargo boat. They were encased in a coffin and were secreted ^{at night} in the C.C.'s house. Some weeks prior to the rising, a lookout was kept on the Shannon coast; this, on the instructions of G.H.Q. which was represented on the spot by Sean Ó Murthuile and P. Brennan. The possibility of Roger Casement's or other landing from an outside agency in support of the forthcoming rising was presumed.

However, no such landing took place.

Mobilisations took place at three points on Easter Monday - Carrigaholt, Cranny and Kildysart. Only the Carrigaholt Section had any arms worth while. Numbers (combined) amounted to about 100 men. No further action of a hostile nature was undertaken, and the three parties quietly dispersed during the week. About a dozen arrests took place in the area the week following. On the suggestion of the Parish Priest the arms held in the Carrigaholt area were handed up to him. He handed them over to the R.I.C. While moving them from his residence to the local barracks he lost one. This was retrieved and secreted by a local Volunteer.

The Sinn Fein movement again began to gather momentum in the Spring of 1917. The area was now re-organised into a Brigade comprised of five battalions, as follows:-

The 1st Battn.	-	Kildysart, Cranny, Coolmeen.
" 2nd	"	Kilrush, Kilmihil, Kilmurry McMahon.
" 3rd	"	Cooraclare, Monmore, Dunbeg, Bealaha.
" 4th	"	Kilmurry, Brickane, Quilty, Doolough.
" 5th	"	Kilkee, Moyasta, Carrigaholt, Loop Head.

The eastern boundary of the Brigade area followed a line Quilty, Doolough Lake, Kildysart inclusive.

The Carrigaholt area again took the lead in training and organisation. The local company was at target practice in March 1917 with a miniature rifle. A young man named Keane crossed the line of fire and was killed. This was the first casualty in the Brigade area.

At Christmas 1917, an R.I.C. man, cycling from Kilkee to Carrigaholt, was held up in the Kilferagh district and tied to a telegraph pole. The unfortunate man was almost frozen when released towards morning.

On 18th March 1918, the Sinn Fein Cumann held a meeting at the village hall in Carrigaholt. A force of military in Kilrush maintained communication with Carrigaholt by river. In the course of the meeting one of these river patrols

arrived. A party of military in charge of an officer entered the hall and ordered the dispersal of the meeting. The local company officer, Eamon Fennel, who was chairman of the meeting, refused. He ordered the people to stand fast and defied the military. The latter immediately attacked the unarmed meeting with butt and bayonet. Thomas Russell, an Irish teacher and a native of Dingle, was fatally stabbed. Fennel was seriously wounded by a bayonet thrust, and about a dozen others received less serious injuries. A few arrests were made which resulted in jail sentences.

After this occurrence the military arm of Sinn Fein was largely quiescent in this district. The enemy established a military post in Kilkee in July 1918. A local small farmer and fisherman, named Studdert, while standing on a fence in the vicinity of this post was shot dead by a sentry.

In April 1918, an R.I.C. patrol of three men were rushed and deprived of their arms (carbines) at Knockerra Cross - three miles from Kilrush. The arms were dumped in a house only fifty yards off, while the police were still on the spot. Not only were the arms recovered, but nine of the attackers were rounded up - including the brigade commandant, and marched to Kilrush. All suffered jail sentences.

There was an order issued for a combined attack by the three Clare Brigades on the military post at Golf Links Hotel, Lahinch, early in the Spring of 1919. The West Clare contingent had arrived at the rendezvous when the order was countermanded.

About this time an order was issued for combined attacks on all R.I.C. patrols. This was also countermanded on the point of being put into effect.

The centre of activity in West Clare now shifted to the village of Cooraclare. In April 1919, two members of an R.I.C.

patrol were rushed and disarmed outside the village. A boycott on the R.I.C. garrison was strictly enforced, and the post was attacked but not taken. The attackers used the two captured rifles - the rifle recovered at Carrigaholt and some shotguns. This resulted in the establishment of an enemy military post in the neighbourhood.

A local wealthy resident who entertained some members of the enemy garrison now also suffered boycott. He was fired at and wounded and altogether endured a generous sample of the hot hereafter prior to repentance.

In July 1919, both the military and R.I.C. evacuated the village. There were eleven R.I.C. posts in the brigade area up to this. This was the first evacuation and marked the commencement of enemy withdrawal.

The furniture of a married member of the R.I.C. was yet in the village. Feeling that this would be collected within a short time, the local company commander (at present Superintendent Sean Liddy, G.S.) prepared an ambush position. The three rifles at hand were useless, the small amount of ammunition therefor having been fired at the barrack. Main reliance was placed on a large shore-gun and a few shotguns. The ambushers who numbered six, with two scouts, took up their allotted positions, while the R.I.C. van in charge of four armed police was yet in the village.

(OR PUNT GUN)

The shore gun was charged with four times its capacity in black powder, and then almost to the muzzle with shot of all sizes, bits of metal, etc. in defiance of all the laws of ballistics. It was fired from the shoulder by the company lieutenant (Michael Campbell, Dromelihy) at a range of five yards. The explosion knocked Campbell over, stunning him, and merely broke the glass in front of the driver's face, as well as bursting the gun. The remainder of the ambushing party had

scarcely brought fire to bear on the van, when the scouts signalled an R.I.C. cycle patrol bearing down on them from the opposite direction. Instant retreat was necessary. The van escort, aware of their reinforcements, were immediately on the job, and well it was for the ambushing party that the smoke of four charges of black powder rendered visibility obscure for a matter of seconds. All got safely away with the exception of one scout. His position was quite safe and away from the line of retreat, but he became panic-stricken and rushed blindly into a deep part of the Cooraclare River and was drowned.

A member of the R.I.C., who was particularly vindictive on this occasion, was afterwards transferred to the Knock Post. It was decided to make an example of him and an ambushing party of seven took up position at Clonderlaw on a known date a month later. A half-dozen shotguns were discharged at him and a second man, both armed, as they passed on bicycles. Both were peppered, but not seriously wounded. They abandoned both bicycles and arms and rushed across country, getting back to Knock by a detour. This netted two more rifles to the Brigade.

The Brigade area was again visited by representatives of G.H.Q. in September 1919.

On this occasion Captain Sean Liddy of the Cooraclare Company was appointed Brigade Commandant. A round-up of all arms in the hands of private individuals was ordered. The Volunteers beat the R.I.C. to this by a short head. Quite a number of shotguns, pistols, etc. (many unreliable and dangerous) were got together, but of ammunition for these there was very little. All, however, did not surrender arms quietly. A resident of Leadmore, named Murphy, shot down one member of a raiding party (Lieut. J. Mulqueen - Kilrush Company). The wounded Volunteer was deserted by his comrades. Murphy tied him to a stairway while the police were being fetched.

Mulqueen recovered from his wounds, but suffered a jail sentence.

A man named Lynch of Killard also fired on an I.R.A. raiding party and retained his gun. Both guns were afterwards handed up to the R.I.C.

The R.I.C. post at Knock and Labasheeda were evacuated in October 1919.

The Sinn Fein Courts now commenced to function. They were eventually successful in completely eclipsing the Petty Sessions Courts and up to 90% of the Quarter Sessions.

In November 1919, it was decided to take action against an aggressive R.I.C. sergeant stationed in Kilmihil. An ambush party of ten took up a position on the Cahercanivan road about a mile from the village. The position chosen, as well as the arms available, entailed the necessity of allowing the patrol to come to close quarters. While the R.I.C. patrol with the sergeant at their head were yet fifty yards off, a jumpy Volunteer fired an accidental shot. The ambushing party were obliged to break cover under fire, and the lieutenant of the local company, Michael Honan of Leitrim (afterwards Captain, National Army) was shot through the right chest.

With the exception of raids for arms and general routine duties on the part of the Volunteers, there was largely a cessation of action on both sides during the next two months. Walking patrols of R.I.C. ceased throughout the whole area after the effort at Cahercanivan. Mullagh and Quilty posts were evacuated by the R.I.C.

The military post at Kilkee had been transferred to the Irish College, Carrigaholt, the previous September. This left six enemy posts evacuated at the end of 1919, and five still in occupation. During this period quite a number of arrests

of Volunteers of all ranks took place. Jail sentences invariably followed refusals to recognise courts, etc. Quite a number had undergone and were yet to undergo hunger-strikes. In only a few cases did imprisonment deter resumption of Volunteer duties immediately on release.

At the commencement of 1920, the R.I.C. were furnished for the first time with fast lorries. Two rather cumbersome vehicles and two G.S. wagons were previously attached to the military posts at Kilrush and Carrigaholt. A military post was established at Kilmihil in January 1920.

It may be here remarked that the main animus of the Volunteers lay against the R.I.C. This held almost to the end in this particular area. In November 1920 and January 1921, some drink-laden Tommies who strayed into country districts around Kilrush were safely returned after being searched for arms.

R.I.C. patrols in country districts, having been now suspended, and the Volunteers not having as yet given consideration to methods of coping with the occasional lightening passage of a police tender, it was decided that if anything effective were to be accomplished with the means at hand, the police must be attacked in the village streets. The R.I.C. attended Mass in Kilmihil in parties of four, the church and barracks being at the opposite ends of the village. They left the church in parties of two, twenty paces apart. On the second Sunday in March 1920, the two police bringing up the rear were shot down when close to the barrack. The attacking party immediately retreated as pre-arranged, a second party taking up position to cover them. The covering party retreated in due time in safety, except one. This was the captain of the local company - John Breen. He delayed some time to cover off the final retreat. Fire was opened

on him by police who emerged suddenly from the barrack. He held them single-handed until his gun was empty and he was turning to follow his party when he was shot through the head. He was immensely popular in the district and a folorn hope, led by the Melican brothers, Glemore, decided to undertake his rescue from the R.I.C. post that evening. This would certainly have been attempted, but he died at four o'clock in the afternoon.

The military were of little assistance to the police on this occasion, their post being about four hundred yards from the village.

One of the two R.I.C. men shot down (the sergeant) died on the spot; the other recovered but was crippled.

Towards the end of this month the adjutant of the 5th Battalion, Michael Fahy of Kilkee shot himself accidentally in the thigh. It was a small calibre bullet and the wound was not serious if given attention. The shot happened to be fired in the open and alarmed the police. Secrecy was therefore necessary and removal urgent. It was almost a week before he arrived in hospital in Limerick. Poisoning had set in in the meantime, and he lingered on for another month when he died. The loss of this officer was to affect the 5th Battalion very seriously afterwards.

At this time two slightly defective rifles and 500 rds. of .303 were received into the area; also some small arms with ammunition, and a box of grenades. On being tested, the first grenade failed to explode, the second was O.K. It being thought well to try a third, it failed to explode also, until those who were carrying out the test were on the point of breaking cover. There was not much faith reposed on those grenades afterwards.

Dunbeg was evacuated by the R.I.C. at the beginning of March 1920.

Another quiet period now intervened. The Volunteer organisation was tightened up, and a police force instituted. The Sinn Fein courts functioned openly; a few resignations took place among the R.I.C.; only a few were inclined to be aggressive. The evacuated barracks in the area were destroyed at Easter; the Inland Revenue Offices were raided and books and documents seized. Even after this the R.I.C. and military remained inactive. Men who had been on the run enjoyed a comparative rest period. Everything promised well. But the Black and Tan force was already being formed in England. The first few of these to appear in the area excited more curiosity than ought else. As a few of the R.I.C. moved out, the Black and Tans moved in. Their hostility increased in proportion to their numbers. Police tenders appeared more often on the roads. Some assaults were committed on wellknown Sinn Fein sympathisers. The Black and Tan Terror had begun. A new situation was to be met by the Volunteers.

PART II.

The decisions handed down by the Sinn Fein Courts were accepted without demur by the mass of the people. There were exceptions carried to various lengths by a few among the old ascendancy. Chief among these was the steward of Kilmore House, Knock - a Mr. Martin. Kilmore House was a residence of "Hickman-Gore" as he was commonly known, an ex-rack-renting landlord of traditional vintage. Mr. Martin was his steward. Being affected by a decision handed down by the local Sinn Fein court, he decided to ignore same, and gave all concerned to understand that any attempt at enforcement would meet with stern measures. Consequently, a party of ten armed Volunteers approached his house. He was in the garden and, on being challenged, opened fire with a revolver. In the ensuing excitement a Volunteer named Hasset was accidentally shot in the right side at close range by the man next him. Martin was shot down

and left for dead. He was removed to the house by servants and, surviving until conveyed to Kilrush, made a truly marvellous recovery in Ennis Infirmary afterwards. He was then bundled up to his Orange home in the north.

In the meantime the unfortunate Hasset was moved out of the battalion area to the Cree district. Removal to hospital was urgent, but all motor drivers in Kilrush refused to chance matters. In spite of his awful wound, Hasset still lived but was visibly sinking when a car at last arrived, owned and driven by Willie Hynes of Kilkee, a Volunteer and garage owner. In the teeth of the twelve-hour curfew law, strictly enforced at the time, and not without being halted and interrogated by a police patrol on the Ennis-Limerick road, Hasset was gotten into St. John's Hospital, Limerick, four days after being wounded. He died the following day.

This occurred at the beginning of June. An enemy military post was now established at Kilmore House.

At this time a further quantity of small arms and ammunition arrived in the area. They were smuggled in at Cobh by a returned American with the aid of a young lady who, for her part, deserves mention by name - Martha MacEntee, daughter of a retired R.I.C. sergeant of Kingscourt, Co. Cavan. The first-mentioned individual had emigrated at the age of sixteen and had experienced service in the ranks in various units of the American forces, both land and sea, thereby acquiring all the overbearing characteristics and conceit peculiar to the mediocre Yank. Immediately on arrival, he imposed himself on the 3rd battalion and, without even the formality of being sworn in, proceeded to arrange a plan of campaign which, in the opinion of the brigade and battalion staffs, must end in the decimation of all or any prepared to follow. He was consequently under suspicion for a time as an enemy agent. Not until all schemes were finally countermanded by the officer nominally in

charge of the county was restraint imposed.

A little later, in the course of a particularly lurid exploit, he obligingly left his name and address in the hands of the R.I.C., being consequently the worst-wanted man in the area up to the Truce and, incidentally, dragging his immediate family into the front line. His photograph in the uniform of the American forces ^{afterwards} adorned various issues of the enemy "Hue and Cry". An open wound in the right side - a legacy of the World War - ^{in spite} healed of neglect months after his going 'on the run'; a wounds pension and a job in the New York State Civil Service was incidentally forfeited through inability to return or report for medical examination. Admitted to brigade councils, quarrels thereat were frequent, and though later promoted to the brigade ^{Staff} at a bounce, was yet constrained to listen to the voice of reason in many things. Moving through the area and always openly armed, the part of the fulsome fire-eater was unconsciously played to extremes.

Both military and police evacuated Carrigaholt at the commencement of July, the police remaining in Kilkee - the military returning to Kilrush.

A wealthy resident of the Cree district now saw fit to oppose a decision of the Sinn Fein Court which was not to his liking. He asked for and was given enemy protection. Military rations ran scarce after a week and several succulent fowls mysteriously (?) disappeared from the yard. Longing eyes were next turned on some fat grazing stock. This proved too much for the "protected". A plan was made by the local Volunteer officer to "kidnap" one of the family, after which the protection party were persuaded to withdraw. Sinn Fein Court edicts were no longer questioned.

Towards the end of July 1920, the Brigade Headquarters received a circular from G.H.Q. to the effect that as far as means allowed, flying columns were to be formed in all brigade

areas. It was decided that each company in the brigade would furnish one Volunteer, all to be mobilised at Simon O'Donnell's in Tullycruise for a short training period. This was a new departure necessitated by change of tactics on the enemy's part. The first mobilisation took place the first Sunday in August. The men were lectured on the rudiments of flying column tactics and put through a course of practice with a miniature rifle. This was repeated the following Monday and Tuesday. Some men dispersed to their homes at night; others, who lived a distance, remained in the neighbourhood.

Up to this time, all activities enjoyed immunity from enemy Intelligence. The Volunteers as a whole would not, or could not, conceive the possibility of the enemy inducing anybody to act the spy. The known pro-British element within the area were few and scattered; they were, besides, kept at more than arm's length and were known to be inactive. All the greater, therefore, was the consternation when, on the forenoon of the fourth day, a large force of military and police from Kilrush swooped down on O'Donnell's. About ten of the column who had remained in neighbouring houses overnight easily escaped. The remainder were not due to assemble before four o'clock. There were thus no arrests. The enemy concentrated on a thorough search for arms. Forty-three trams of hay were thrown down. O'Donnell's garden, house and out-offices were tapped, sounded and partly dug up, but the raiding force drew a complete blank. Only the miniature arm and one Lee-Enfield rifle were being used for demonstration purposes; these were removed at night.

The temporary disbandment of the column was now decided upon, and the Volunteer Intelligence concentrated on an effort to discover whence the leakage of information. There was suspicion cast on a number, but the effort failed for that time. It was, however, known that there could be only one person responsible for the organisation of enemy intelligence

the local R.I.C. detective at Kilrush. It was decided that immediate action should be taken towards the disposal of this official. He was seldom or never out of town on duty. The Kilrush Volunteers proved a squeamish lot; it was therefore necessary that a party should enter the town and in daylight at that. With this end in view, a picked party of four took up a concealed position to commandeer a passing car on the Ennis-Kilrush main road on August 10th. A charabanc passed; so did quite a deal of time. At last a car appeared coming from the Kilrush direction. As it came near, it appeared to be a goods van, but it would have to do. It approached slowly and was signalled to stop by waving a revolver. It could now be seen to be completely covered in at front, sides and top. As it crawled slowly past, one of the party went around to the back - to look into the muzzles of half a dozen carbines in the hands of as many R.I.C. A bold move on the part of the Volunteers and the lorry was undoubtedly theirs, the occupants being completely nonplussed at the audacity of the proceeding. But the lorry again quickly moved off; the police opened fire, which the Volunteers were, on their part, too nonplussed to return. Instead, they fled through a small grove near at hand, while the police fled just as ingloriously in the opposite direction. It was an armoured lorry, received in Kilrush a few days previously, and, strange to say, minus rifle vents. This was a new introduction to the area and something which caused all Volunteers furiously to think.

Another miserable fiasco was yet to follow. A hackney car belonging to Marrinan's garage, Kilkee, was secured a few days later. Two company lieutenants entered the town on this occasion, a Brigade officer in charge. The two lieutenants occupied positions on one side of the street close to the detective's home; the Brigade officer was on the opposite side, while the car waited a short distance off, headed towards the country. The enemy official passed by, on the senior officer's

side, shortly after positions had been taken up. He reached his home without a shot being fired. The party quit the town per car immediately. Matters were now stalemate; the column were yet dispersed and were to remain so for some time longer.

On the third Saturday in August a lone Volunteer entered the town on a bicycle, and took post, determined on attack, though the garrison were to be fought afterwards. In due time the marked official approached. So did a brother Volunteer, quite unaware of impending developments, while a number of young ladies halted to converse on the opposite sidewalk, directly in the line of fire; and again did this man pass unharmed. The waiting party was about to excuse himself and follow, when the detective turned into a licensed premises two doors away. He was followed in shortly afterwards, lured to the kitchen and done to death while police and military mingled in the streets outside.

No suspicions were aroused and escape was a matter of moments. The bicycle was left in the care of a resident a mile out in the country, while the party returned to a hill overlooking the town to watch the ensuing hubbub through a pair of pocket glasses. This occurrence could be looked upon as an example of the hysterical fanaticism actuating some of the more extreme elements of Sinn Fein.

Considerable agrarian trouble, which centred around a would-be loyalist - who had assisted Sinn Fein withal - was now rife at Kilballyowen in the Fifth Battalion area. Except as instigators, the few Volunteers in the area were inactive. The Brigade Commander felt that a demonstration in force was necessary and entered the area in two cars with a party of ten. Having made some arrests and arranged a temporary cessation of the trouble, the party returned towards Cooraclare via Dunbeg on the following morning. The cars took different routes from the latter point. This happened to be the Sunday morning

following the Kilrush shooting, and two lorries of police were demonstrating wildly through the country. One of the Volunteer cars which took a route through Cree and Ballinagun halted for water and some slight repairs at the latter place and was caught between the two lorries. Three of the five Volunteers therein were armed. Two of them disposed of their guns unobserved. The police wrecked the car and beat the driver, "Sprig" Marrinan of Kilkee, but did not arrest him. The three Volunteers were also mercilessly beaten, especially the man who was caught armed - Captain Patrick Barke of Cooraclare. This man was Brigade Q.M. He was sentenced to two years' imprisonment and died shortly after release owing to ill-treatment while in jail. His loss to the Brigade was deeply felt, being foremost in all activities up to his arrest.

The others were released within the week, although one of them happened to be the man whose position in Kilrush the previous day was rather compromising. Luckily he was not recognised.

Captain Mick Honan (already mentioned on page 6) and much wanted for the Kilmihil shooting, had come cycling round the nearest bend as all were piling on to the lorries. He promptly emptied five rounds rapid into friend and foe alike. This rated the prisoners an extra thrashing upon reaching Kilrush while paraded in the room where the detective shot the previous day was laid out.

It was now considered opportune to call the column together again. Mobilisation took place thereafter without interference.

I may here remark that Tullycrine hill commanded an extensive view over almost one quarter of the entire Brigade area. A few scouts with glasses might detect an enemy approach miles off. Here was also luckily placed the residence of Simon O'Donnell. There was no stauncher supporter of Sinn Fein than

this man and his family. His wife was an aunt of one of the executed 1916 leaders, and his son, Art, was the first commandant of the West Clare Brigade.

The whole Brigade staff, with quite a number of the personnel of battalion and company staffs, were now on the run while dwellings in isolated districts commenced to receive a patronage which rather enlivened the hitherto placid lives of their owners. There was not a single instance in which food and shelter was refused to the wanted men.

Kilmore House was yet garrisoned by the enemy. The first move was made against the enemy communications which were maintained by a single lorry on the Kilrush-Knock road. This lorry passed at fairly frequent intervals. Elaborate precautions were taken to ensure success in this - the opening venture of the new column. A position was chosen at Burrane on August 27th. After what appeared an interminable wait, a mere G.S. wagon, drawn by two horses and loaded with supplies, drove into the ambush position from the Kilrush direction. The only escort was two unarmed Tommies on the front seat. Such small fry should have been allowed to pass and larger fish awaited. Before any restraining action could be taken, almost the entire column descended with a whoop on the petrified Tommies. The seizure of the supplies and horses and the destruction of the wagon occupied little time, the escort being allowed to return to Kilrush unharmed. The horses were moved into the 4th Battalion area and held there for some time. Owing to their whinnying propensities at the sound of lorries, they were later disposed of to an outsider. Although nothing more than a minor incident, this capture resulted in the evacuation of Kilmore House shortly afterwards.

Enemy posts in the area now numbered four:-

Kilrush (police, military and coastguards).
 Kilkee (police and coastguards)
 Kilmihil (police and military)
 Kildysart (police).

The coastguard station at Quilty should be mentioned, but, up to a few weeks of the Truce, this post remained unnoticed. The number of coastguards in each station was at a minimum. They could be considered strictly neutral and fraternised with the people.

Kilrush was enemy headquarters.

Communication between Kilrush and Kilmihil was maintained by a single lorry. This ran a few times a week, but always on Mondays via the Knockerra-Milmurphy-macmahon road. The next move was made against this line. The column which had temporarily disbanded was called up again on September 4th. It may be remarked that column personnel changed from time to time, a rather doubtful arrangement. The few rifles remained the nucleus around which gathered a varied assortment of revolvers and shotguns. Altogether about twenty men mobilised on this occasion. The spot selected was at Kilmurphy-macmahon (Drumdegis), a poor position, but the best available. The lorry usually passed by from Kilmihil at 2 p.m. The column had not mobilised until 9 a.m., on the spot. Scouts were not effectively posted. Positions were allotted and, with the most perfect self-assurance, born of the easy success at Burrane, each man started to improve his post as best he could. Finally, it was decided that the road, which was narrow at the point, should be entrenched. Preparations were scarcely half complete when, about 11 a.m., the lorry suddenly appeared over a rise three hundred yards away. A momentary pause occurred, when someone involuntarily shouted "Run, lads".

The line of retreat was at an angle 135 degrees away from the lorry; about fifteen men were jammed together in a small gateway as the Tommies came into action. Severe casualties must have occurred at this point but for the presence of mind of two Volunteer officers who were on the opposite side of the road from the main party. Those were Lieut. Hasset of the

Cooraclare Company (at present Captain P. Hasset, Army Air Corps and Captain Willie Shanahan (afterwards killed). They opened rapid fire on the military and distracted their attention from the side on which the main rout was taking place. They now also retreated, but could be considered as having done so honorably. In the meantime, the main body fled wildly through the country. Some flung away their arms and did not halt for miles. One, however, did not fly. Captain M. Chambers of B/Coy. 3rd Battn. was posted on the roadside a short distance off and knew nothing of the retreat until the lorry drove up and halted on the road beside him. It was then too late to move. He lay on his rifle inside a bank four feet high at the road, and two feet high inside, expecting discovery at any moment. A whin bush, which he had placed on the fence top to shield his position was knocked on him by a Tommy who mounted the fence directly overhead to survey the field. He was obliged to remain in this nerve-wracking position for over an hour, while the enemy carried out searches locally, and closed the road. They drove off, leaving him undiscovered.

With the exception of one prisoner, there was no casualty. The prisoner was Staff Captain Wm. Shannon, who was down on a mission from G.H.Q. His home was within a half-mile of the scene. He was sentenced to a year's imprisonment.

Before the repercussions incidental to this discreditable episode could be fully gauged, an event occurred which marked the commencement of the "terror" in real earnest. A Captain Lendrum, an ex-British army officer and a native of Co. Tyrone, was at this time acting R.M. He attended all Petty Sessions Courts on due dates, but his duties were severely nil; police summons had become things of the past. He sometimes travelled on police tenders, but usually went about in his own car unaccompanied. The car was a Ford two-seater and looked good in the eyes of some Volunteer officers. The tacit consent of

the Brigade Commander was given for its seizure when opportunity favoured - with the understanding that its owner was not to be injured. Now this was to be ^{achieved} ~~circumvented~~ in the event of his offering resistance was not made clear. On a few occasions parties who lay in wait were disappointed. It became known that he was to travel from Kilkee to Miltown-Malbay on September 6th. Two Volunteers lay in wait at a level crossing at Caherfeenick, two miles north of Dunbeg. The railway gates had been closed across the road and an officer who was supposed to be present had not yet arrived when Captain Lendrum drove up. According to the account afterwards given, he whipped out an automatic when challenged. Before he had a chance to use it he was fired on and mortally wounded. The Volunteer officer concerned now came up. The car was taken a mile further on and the wounded man was taken to an outhouse in a field nearby, where he died that evening. In the meantime, the car was secreted eight miles further on. The body was weighted down and sunk off low-water mark the same night.

The Rireen ambush, in which several of the enemy were killed and wounded, took place eleven miles further on, on the same road and date. The double event occasioned an immense concentration of police and military in all West Clare. Savage reprisals were carried out in Lahinch and Miltown-Malbay, and were carried on in lesser form all along the coast road to Kilkee. Over twenty miles of countryside smoked and smouldered for days afterwards; dwellings and business premises in the above-mentioned towns, and almost the entire hay and corn harvest thence to Kilkee.

The police were now clamant for the return of Captain Lendrum's body. The Parish Priest of Kilkee, acting as a intermediary, approached the Volunteers with an enemy ultimatum. Unless the remains were delivered up by 12 noon on September 11th, the villages of Mullagh, Dunbeg and Cooraclare would be burnt out. The Brigade decided to call this bluff. Ambush

parties were posted in the threatened villages on the night of September 11th and again on the night of September 12th. The roads in the vicinity were blocked and snipers posted in the event of a daylight descent. But the enemy remained in barracks and the threat was not carried out.

Captain Lendrum's brother now arrived on the scene and requested the return of the remains. His request was granted. Exhumation, if it could be called so, accordingly took place. The body was placed in a rudely constructed coffin and placed, labelled, on the railroad track near Cragganock railway station at night. It was picked up by the crew of the down train the following morning and conveyed to Kilkee.

The terror engendered among the people by this affair was indescribable. In addition to the threatened villages being almost entirely evacuated by their inhabitants, few people in the third battalion area remained in their homes.

Of many ludicrous incidents inspired by panic, one may be given: A couple who lived about two miles from Dunbeg village had been blessed with over a dozen children in less than that number of years of married life. While sitting at their fire-side in a state of tension, a neighbour's dog barked. The mother roused the children and, scarcely taking time to dress, bolted out the back door leading three in each hand. The oldest child followed, leading two more. The father had in the meantime spread a heavy bed-quilt on the kitchen floor and bundled the four youngest but one into it. This he swung on to his back and bolted also. Crossing a dry gripe, one of the children, whose cries he failed to hear, fell out. Another party, stampeding on a cross direction, found the wailing youngster and took it along. When restored to its parents on the morrow it had not yet been missed.

The sinister activity of a secret agent again became

manifest. Four days after the remains were handed over, the enemy raided the home of the carpenter who constructed the coffin. Luckily, he was from home. Though a married man with a young family to maintain, he was obliged to go 'on the run'.

A successor to Captain Lendrum was appointed in due course but he remained strictly within the confines of Kilrush.

A sudden torpor now descended on brigade activities. No more did lorries move singly or on schedule. The Kilrush and Kilkee garrisons were reinforced and machine guns were mounted on lorries for the first time. The new conditions were beyond the scope of the brigade, at least in daylight attack. The last conclusion could scarcely be gainsaid - four-fifths of the area being uniformly level and open. The exception to this is a strip of country from a mile to one and a half miles in width along the northern bank of the Shannon from Kilrush to Labasheeda. The enemy did not use these roads since the evacuation of Kilmore.

The special idea governing brigade operations heretofore was the capture of arms. Latterly this had failed - miserably. A Martini rifle sent from Dublin had increased the number at hand to eight. Of these four were defective but could be used.

A brigade council was held in Cooraclare in the middle of this month (September). It would be useless to deny that the Millemurymacmahon debacle had ~~not~~ affected the morale of the brigade adversely. The incident was severely left out of discussion.

Instructions had been received for the seizure of the rate books, and men were appointed for the purpose. At this council the brigade staff also undertook the appointments of temporary rate collectors. While on this subject, it must be remarked that thousands of pounds passed through Volunteers' hands during the following months, every penny of which found

its way to the Co. Council coffers - then administered by Sinn Fein.

A crude land-mine had been constructed by the Commandant of the 4th Battalion. Kilmihil being yet held by the enemy, communications were maintained by two lorries at variable intervals. It was decided that one more effort should be made on this line. After a daylight reconnaissance, in company with officers of the 1st Battalion, a date was set. Though carried out in all circumspection, this reconnaissance was reported to the enemy at Kilrush. Temporary postponement was advised and adopted. To the amazement of the brigade, several lorries from Kilrush and Ennis converged on the position on the date set. This was the last straw. It was now plainly evident that the enemy had established an effective intelligence. Further proof of this was to follow immediately.

Sinn Fein courts were no longer held openly. All possible secrecy was maintained in connection with one now to be held in the Clohanes district. It had scarcely begun the first day's proceedings when five lorries swooped down on it. Scouts gave timely warning and all papers were removed by the brigade police officer (Captain Willie Shanahan) and staff. Some civilian litigants, failing to appreciate any danger, remained near the building. Enraged at drawing a blank, the Black and Tans opened fire on those civilians. Michael Crotty, a businessman of Kilrush, was seriously wounded. Others escaped with slighter injuries.

Daylight attacks, with the exception of sniping, were now out of the question. A new type of lorry, almost entirely silent on all gears, and movement on parallel roads largely countered this. Kilmihil was evacuated by the enemy towards the end of October. This removed a distinctively troublesome thorn from the side of the Volunteers. Almost the whole area

now provided elbow room. The nearest post in a north-east direction was Ennis, with Miltown-Malbay to the north. Kilkee, Kilrush and Kildysart were now held, and the enemy remained in those to the last. All transport and military were concentrated in Kilrush. The R.I.C. in Kildysart sat fast - communications being maintained from Ennis. The Kilkee police were spasmodically active in the town and towards Loop Head.

Activities now switched entirely over to night operations. It would be tedious to relate the scores of occasions on which positions were taken up, especially in the vicinity of Kilrush. There is a particular spot, about a mile from the town and directly on the road to the home of the brigade adjutant, who was particularly sought. This is known locally as "Higgins Hill" and it took the grass some years to recover fully there afterwards. Not on a single occasion did the Brigade Intelligence in Kilrush furnish advance information. While lorries seldom moved out, they invariably carried back prisoners, and while they could be easily intercepted on the return journey, the fact of their having prisoners on board rather complicated matters. They always got back to Kilrush without a shot being fired.

The West Clare railway was rarely used for enemy transport. When used - the enemy moved in force with machine-guns mounted. The track being strictly ground-level, attack was not considered feasible, the brigade having no explosives.

During all this time the tension among the people was increasing. There were a few wanted men who dared not surrender and slept with revolvers under the pillow. Their presence in a household, even when guarded, inflicted undue strain. Those slept in outhouses and hay-barns during the first half of November. Existence under such conditions meant real hardship, even with the aid of whiskey which, somehow, under the circumstances, lost half its intoxicating qualities.

Consequently, three dugouts were constructed and made fairly comfortable. All were in the 3rd Battalion area. Those were occupied during the winter and into the following spring, and added considerably to the amenities of the wanted men.

Little of note now happened until the great attempted round-up in the middle of November. A number of Volunteers were arrested in their homes. The only outstanding incident in connection therewith occurred at the home of the commandant of the 3rd Battalion. This officer's home was raided at 1.30 a.m. The brigade commandant, who had relaxed vigilance, and also the brigade quartermaster were staying there. Both slept in an attic room. Before the door was opened, in answer to a peremptory burst of knocking, the quartermaster who, contrary to all pre-conceived ideas on the subject, was a man of diminutive size, had seized the wrong breeches and descended to the kitchen. He then took refuge in the same bed as an invalid member of the family. With a neckerchief tied over his head, he successfully emulated an old lady with the toothache and escaped detection when the room was searched with flashlights.

In the meantime, the brigade commander had succeeded in getting partly into the smaller man's breeches, and was only at the head of the staircase leading to the kitchen when the police entered. The battalion O/C., being at home, was immediately put under arrest. The brigade O/C., on being interrogated, successfully posed as a hired man. He was recognised by one of the raiding party, a Constable O'Neill, who had been previously stationed in Cooraclare. Instead of playing Judas, the Constable bore him out in his statement. The raiding party then went off, leaving behind them two much-wanted men. Constable O'Neill was transferred out of Kilrush shortly afterwards and lost sight of.

The arrested officer was Dan Sheedy of Coolanumerra, Cooraclare. Hitherto he was the unappreciated "brains" of the brigade. From an administrative viewpoint he was the heaviest loss the brigade suffered in either killed or captured.

Heretofore the enemy had the open use of the roads. It was now decided that all roads should be entrenched at selected spots throughout the whole area. The Kilrush police in five lorries made a sudden descent on the Monmore district a few days after the first trenches had been cut. They rounded up some of the local people to close same. In the course of this, a local Volunteer named John Lynch bolted out of his home, carrying his arms - a single-barrel shotgun and four cartridges. Almost the whole enemy force opened fire on him at four hundred yards. He escaped unscathed. The trench, with some others in the neighbourhood, remained closed for two weeks.

Owing to the roads being entrenched, as well as the twelve hour curfew law then in force, motor traffic had almost entirely disappeared for some weeks past. A private touring car, with five male passengers, halted at Monmore Chapel Cross to inquire the way to Dunbeg on the late afternoon of December 31st. The uniforms of Black and Tans were detected under civilian overcoats and caps. Since those disguised police were strangers, it was presumed they would return by the same road. An ambush party of six Volunteers were hastily got together. Positions were scarcely taken up on the roadside when a car moving slowly and without lights appeared from the Dunbeg direction. At the first shot a woman's scream was heard and firing ceased. It was a hackney-car from Kilkee, driven by Willie Hynes, mentioned elsewhere in these pages. He was conveying a Dairying Instructress and her paraphernalia to a newly-opened station. The car was disabled, the petrol tank being shot through, but, providentially, neither of the occupants was injured. The police car had gone on to Kilkee from Dunbeg.

Towards the end of this month, the first enemy intelligence agent was executed in the area. To him was traced the betrayal of the second Burrane effort, also that of the Sinn Fein Court at Clohanes in September. Being closely related to some Volunteer officers, the execution was unofficial.

The captain of the Dunbeg Company, Michael MacNamara, and the brigade police officer, Captain Willie Shanahan, were much sought after owing to the shooting of Captain Lendrum. They had slept unguarded at an isolated house in the Dunbeg district for some nights previous to December 12th. At 2 a.m. on the morning of the 13th, the house was surrounded. The enemy had been led thereto by a secret agent. Both were captured and conveyed to Kilrush. They were being conveyed to Ennis on the 19th. When the lorries reached a lonely part of the road at Darragh, MacNamara was ordered out and told he could go home. He had gone back only twenty yards when he was shot down. Shanahan was conveyed to Ennis. He requested to be taken to a lavatory a few hours after being put in a cell. An N.C.O., while conveying him thereto, shot him through the head. This N.C.O. was killed in Ennis after the Truce.

In the meantime, the breaking up of the enemy road communications had gone on apace. Only one train per day now ran on the West Clare railway. This carried the mails which seldom escaped the I.R.A. censor. Telephone or telegraph communication had been non-existent for months. The Kilrush military post had had wireless communication with Ennis. Lorries moved out rarely, but in ever increasing force. A few Black and Tans in Kilkee had made themselves obnoxious during this period, especially one named Reilly. A selected man was sent into the area to shoot him. The Kilkee Volunteers objected to this procedure as reflecting on their own capacity. They requested the loan of four rifles for a week, but held them for three weeks and effected nothing. The brigade O/C.

decided to do nothing further about it. Prior to this, the column had entered the town twice at night and taken up positions. Both efforts proved abortive.

Communications had been maintained between this town and Kilrush by heavily armed lorries. The brigade did not think it feasible to attack owing to lack of favourable position.

The year 1921 opened with a very unfortunate incident. Two wanted men were asleep in a house on the roadside about two miles north of Cooraclare - on January 10th. A few local people unaware of their presence, partly filled in a trench to allow passage for a farm cart. Their host roused both men and objected strongly to the trench being interfered with, as it prevented any sudden descent from the Kilrush direction. One of the men discharged a few shots in the general direction of the working party, just to frighten them off. One of the bullets lodged in the body of a young man named Folsey and he died the same day. Thomas Shannon, a farmer who lived in the Moyasta district, was acting Sinn Fein magistrate. His door was knocked on at midnight during the first week of March. On opening same, he was shot dead. This was done by the Kilkee Black and Tans.

A Brigade conference was held in the 4th Battalion area on February 14th. It was decided that the roads should once and for all be made impassable to the enemy; also that the West Clare railway - latterly overmuch used - should be torn up. The first part of the programme was rather over thoroughly effected by eight echelon trenches in each company area. The latter part developed into a sort of see-saw game between the Volunteers at night time and the railway repair gang in the day time. The echelon trenches provided means of passage to donkey or horse-drawn vehicles. The lorries were largely immobilised. A now excellent opportunity for sniping was neatly countered by the enemy who introduced the carrying of

hostages for the first time. The hostages were invariably prominent supporters of Sinn Fein. They also formed working parties when trenches were to be filled in and altogether had a rather unpleasant time.

All filled-in trenches were re-opened immediately, but the enemy evolved a nasty habit of leaving grenade traps behind. The partly repaired trenches were then left untouched and new ones opened. On one occasion the enemy dumped a commandeered wheelbarrow, bottom up, into a semi-repaired trench. It lay there a week, an object of the most profound suspicion to its owner and the countryside at large. Eventually, several lengths of rope were knotted together and one end was gingerly tied to the wheel while the dwellings in the vicinity were evacuated. Half the local population tugged at the other end. There was nothing under it.

In May of this year, an enemy aeroplane, carrying dispatches to Dublin, made a forced landing in Co. Limerick. It was captured by the local Volunteers. The following extract from an Intelligence report captured therein was forwarded to the Brigade:-

"Willie Haugh and twenty others are in a dugout in the Shragh district since October. They are armed with rifles".

This was true, in part at least, and was a further indication of efficiency on the part of enemy intelligence.

During the first three months of this year, the brigade commander was very closely hunted. On more than one occasion he literally went out the back door as the enemy entered by the front.

Towards the middle of April the Brigade O/C. was called away for a consultation with the County Commander. The latter was also O/C. East Clare Active Service Unit. On April 18th the Brigade Adjutant, who was also O/C. West Clare Column,

received a dispatch to the effect that both units were to converge on Kildysart R.I.C. barracks on the night of April 19th, and to march at once. Starting from Monmore the West Clare column reached Coolmeen Cross at 3 a.m. on the morning of the 19th. Here a further dispatch was received with instructions to return to Tullycrine and await further orders. The East Clare Unit invested Kildysart barracks on the night of the 21st. Resort was had to various ruses to draw the garrison or part of it into the open, but the garrison sat tight and nothing was effected. The East Clare unit then resumed its march to Tullycrine and a junction (naively speaking) was effected on the 22nd. Plans were then drawn up for an attack on the Kilrush posts, and the united column resumed the march at 4 p.m. the same afternoon. The total column mustered thirty-one rifles. The men marched in twos in open order and were protected by scouts at vantage points ahead and in both flanks. The country people lined the road on both sides and the setting sun outlined a tableau both impressive and imposing.

Seventeen men were told off to surround the military post which was in a disused and isolated portion of the workhouse buildings. This post was 150 yards north of the town. Of this detail of seventeen, the main party of nine were posted inside a fence $4\frac{1}{2}$ feet high, at the workhouse cross, on the direct road from the workhouse to the town and midway between both. The remaining eight were posted in two parties of four to prevent or resist exit over the boundary wall. A party of four was sent to attack the coastguard station a mile south-west of the town. A bombing party of four was posted directly across the road from the R.I.C. barracks. Those were instructed to throw a bomb at and open fire on any returning patrol as a signal to the remaining party of six stationed at a large gateway less than 100 yards from the barrack door and flanking same. The position of

the bombing party was risky, as they were directly under machine-gun fire from the barrack and had no covered retreat. Though cloudy, the night was fairly bright, the moon approaching the first quarter, and high. No patrol seeming to be out, the bombing party quit their post after three-quarters of an hour and took up another position close to the convent wall, and still in view of the barrack. A soldier happened along and, on being challenged, surrendered quietly. The officer commanding the military next came along. He was in mufti, but carried a haversack. He emptied his revolver at the bombing party and escaped. During this fracas the soldier escaped also but was shot through the shoulder in doing so.

In the meantime, the party of six stationed at the gateway entered the town. They came on two R.I.C. in the market square. They fired on them and wounded one. The R.I.C. retreated, but were followed up and again fired on. One was killed, the other forced a doorway by throwing his weight against it and escaped through a back window. Some Black and Tans scattered here and there through the town now took refuge in various funk-holes and remained there until daylight.

The party stationed at the workhouse cross had, in the meantime, undergone a two-hour wait. The officer in charge of this party fully realised that this was an unwonted opportunity of securing some sorely-needed rifles for the West Clare Column. Should the military emerge, they were to be allowed within 15 to 20 yards. A high wall bounding the approach on both sides implied a frontal fight. Nine rifles opening rapid fire at such short range must effect casualties and, in the circumstances, compel instant retreat in half-seasoned soldiers. Secrecy as to the position was essential; therefore all comers, even the enemy military commander previously mentioned had been allowed to pass unchallenged. Strict orders were issued that all fire was to be withheld until the party commander

fired the first shot. The secrecy order served a timely pretext to save the enemy commander's life. The latter had a short time previously saved the life of the father of the officer in charge of this I.R.A. unit when the Black and Tans raided in masks to shoot him.

The sky having now cleared, and the moon being at a favourable angle, the military were at last plainly seen to be moving out. But this, and what proved to be a final opportunity was to be completely frustrated by that bane of the best laid plan of mouse, man or monster - the jumpy volunteer. Scarcely had a dozen of the enemy emerged and commenced moving down the road, when two of the party opened fire; the remainder followed suit immediately. The Tommies immediately turned tail and went back in the gate, dragging one of their number, shot through the stomach. All nine rifles now opened on the post itself. The crash of glass and splintered slating mingled with the hum and lightning of ricocheting bullets. Two Verey lights were sent up; one fell short, the other fell directly on the attacking party. Wild firing from rifles and machine guns opened from all posts and, in the midst of confusion, the retreat signal sounded.

Long after the column departed, the town was still being raked. The enemy remained strictly indoors until clear daylight. The Q.C. military then led a dashing bayonet charge through empty streets.

The party sent to attack the coastguard station retreated after a half-hour's brisk sniping. They caught up with the main body a half hour after the latter had cleared the town. The two parties of four men each surrounding the military post on the north and west sides did not come into action. The enemy announced their casualties as one killed, two wounded. Volunteer casualties - nil.

The column retreated via Cooraclare to Cree, where the day of the 22nd was spent. It retreated that night to Cahermurphy and on the following night to Lissycasey via the Sorrel Island road. The men were considerably fatigued and had scarcely retired to billets on the morning of the 24th when a general alarm announced the approach of the enemy from the Ennis direction. The column immediately re-mobilised at a pre-arranged rendezvous. The enemy - a dozen lorries with an armoured car - were diverted by a blockade and proceeded via Kildysart instead.

The column parted that evening at Clancy's Cross in Lissycasey; one to return to East Clare via Rineanna across the Fergus estuary; the other to West Clare.

At 4 p.m. on April 26th, a mixed force of the enemy in twelve lorries drove up to the brigade adjutant's home in Monmore. Though only the female members of the family and some younger children were present, they were dauntlessly received. Sentries were posted and the work of destruction commenced. Permission to remove anything whatsoever was curtly refused. All articles commending themselves for the use or comfort of the enemy was piled on to the lorries. The sight of a particularly fine bundle of linen being removed to the lorries proved too much for the owner, and a struggle took place which resulted in some being retrieved. A mine was laid underneath the wall in the kitchen fireplace. All unwanted articles were also piled therein. The dwellinghouse together with the out-offices were now plentifully sprinkled with petrol. The latter were also mined. But an unusual incident was to delay matters somewhat further. A pet thrush was released from its cage and thrown outside. This was reminiscent of its daily bath, but seeing none at hand, returned to its cage, now on top of the kitchen pile. When again removed, a Tommy held it in his hand.

A sow with a progeny of fourteen took matters philosophically and, on being evicted from her sty, suckled her brood in the yard.

The explosion shook the countryside and brought the sow to her feet with a ferocious snort. The descending avalanche of stones and rubble completed her rout and she took to the fields in wild stampede.

Probably for moral effect the mines seem to have been overcharged and a number of the wreckers had narrow escapes. One Tommy was rendered unconscious by a splinter of stone and did not recover consciousness until removed to Kilrush. This soldier died of his injuries within the week, also another who had pitched, head first, from a lorry following the demolition of the brigade O/C's house at an earlier hour on same date. Portions of the buildings were blown hundreds of yards away and the fire which followed consummated a very thorough reprisal.

A valuable gold watch, chain and signet had been secreted in a small stove in an inner room at the back of the kitchen fireplace. Marvellous to say, those were recovered completely intact after the ruins had cooled off.

Similar scenes had been enacted at the brigade commandant's home in Danganelly on the same date. Although a number of unoccupied houses and out-offices, with hay, corn, etc. had been burned from time to time, those were the only occupied dwellings destroyed in the area.

The brigade adjutant returned to view the wreckage a week later and then proceeded to the nearest dugout to spend the night. Alas! The moral effect had materialised. The dugout had been destroyed by local residents in frenzied panic; two others a distance off had been denuded of their furnishings and left bare. The demolition squad was led by the company lieutenant, no less! But the weather was now warm and the bracken was dry.

The terror was now at its height. Ten-foot planks, bolted laterally, gave the enemy lorries a fresh lease of mobility. Their descent on the countryside was marked by indiscriminate shooting, especially when they failed to collect a working party. Wild stampedes marked their approach. To many, indeed, the sight or sound of a lorry became synonymous with Gabriel's final trumpet.. But trenches were now open to double and treble their original width and the lorries were gradually penned up in Kilrush until the enemy finally gave up this particular phase of the struggle towards the middle of June.

After the truce, and even for months after, the roads had been repaired, beasts of burden fondly insisted on a zig-zag course when they came to the site of the ancient trenches. Nor was all this without its due reaction on the people. The wanted man was in many cases furtively received. The usual procedure was the immediate setting of the tea-table, regardless of protests, while some member of the family watched from the roadway. When tea was finished, holy water was immediately produced, and excuse for further delay there was none. Even the "watch-dog's honest bark" was no more a sedative to frayed nerves, and scores of over-conscientious animals paid forfeit with their lives. Their genus must fade from the countryside, or a continuation of the terror must eventually evolve a barkless breed. Nor was the passing moment without its effect on the wild life of the countryside. The strain was not conducive to sporting proclivities, the cartridges had become rare and precious. Hares and rabbits scarcely moved aside; the snipe fed openly on the edge of the bog-trenches, and even that wariest of birds - the wild goose - fed without its accustomed sentry in broad daylight, and scarcely deigned a glance at the passing man fifty yards off.

Some references must also be made to that dreadful visitation best known among the people as the "Republican Itch"

This was scabies in its most virulent form. The grizzled veteran, and the coy maid were alike victimised, and the invariable prelude to retiring for the night was, in the vulgar parlance, "an hour's scratching" The writer often stripped in the cool air and wallowed a la the genus porcus in a pool of peat water which gave delightful, if temporary, relief. Chemists did a rushing trade in sulphur ointments, etc. The disease came to a head in from three to six months in boils either in the neck or posterior, after which it gradually faded off, though not entirely eradicated for years afterwards.

The principal duties of the little column during this period was the protection of demolition parties, with the now tiresome night watches in ambush positions in the neighbourhood of Kilrush. Ruses many and varied to draw the enemy at night became, towards the Truce, a sort of amusement. The grating of picks and shovels through road metal, etc. could be plainly heard for miles around in the calm of night; but the enemy merely sat tight in secret outposts in the fringe of the town, and the greater the evidence of activity without, the tighter they sat within.

The following will serve as an indication of the fox and geese game now being played:- Ten R.I.C. of the Kilkee garrison went by rail to Ennis the first week of June to give evidence at the Quarter Sessions in some cases of malicious injuries. It became known they were to return the following day. With Captain Chambers in charge of the column, an ambush position was taken up beside the railroad track between Moyasta and Kilkee to give them a welcome home volley. The train passed by empty. As the ambush party were evacuating the position, nine lorries with an armoured Lancia negotiated the tideway, a mile east, (the bridge being down) and safely escorted the ten R.I.C. back to their post.

On the second Saturday in June the column commander got

information at 11 a.m. that nine R.I.C. of the Kilkee garrison had cycled to Kilrush an hour before. This was a long-sought gift. The column made a rushed march of three miles and took up position at Moyasta School. An hour later a non-stop train passed around the Moyasta Loop, 400 yards away, serenely conveying the R.I.C. back to their post. Information of this was inadvertently conveyed to the enemy. There was no further direct communication between Kilrush and Kilkee.

Towards the 1st of June an incontinent slip on the part of an N.C.O. of the Kilrush garrison led to a line of investigation, which resulted in the tracking down of a second enemy agent. To this individual was traced the betrayal of Captains Shanahan and MacNamara, the secret service document captured in the Limerick aeroplane, the many almost too timely raids on houses sheltering the brigade O/C. etc. The execution of this agent finally nullified enemy intelligence in the whole area. Irony of ironies, he was a brother of the scout mentioned as drowned on page 5.

The Kilkee Volunteers now itched for activity. With the resources at hand, the police were fired on. They afterwards stayed closely to barracks of nights. The Volunteers next broke the windows of all houses having any dealings with the R.I.C. A certain business house, all too partial to the Tans through business rivalry, was bombed, but the bomb failed to explode. The police turned out the following day and broke whatever windows remained. The town remained windowless until after the Truce.

Strange to say, almost three months passed before the enemy took any action on the information regarding wanted men contained in the intelligence extract mentioned in page 28. The situation of the dugout mentioned therein was in the largest bog in the area, comprising all Shragh and parts of Monmore, Derryard, Tullabrack and Tulleher. This area had

constituted the strategic headquarters of the column during the previous winter; from this point both Kilrush and Kilkee could be equally menaced, Kildysart being largely left to Mid-Clare. An enemy must be wary entering such a place during the winter, it being largely a morass; but the bogs had now dried and the enemy were to pay a tribute to the prowess of the wanted men, which was somewhat beyond the deserving.

From Killaloe, Corofin and Ennis a mixed force of the enemy reached Kilrush on foot on May 28th. Reinforced by part of the West Clare garrison, there was a force of over three hundred all ranks. A special train steamed out of Kilrush, and half this force was dropped a half mile north of Monmore Lake. The remainder left the train at the Shragh siding and, connecting up with the first party, swept the bog in an east and south direction. This manoeuvre would have missed the main dugout altogether, which had been on the other side of the track and near the north end of Monmore Lake. Of two lesser directly in their path, they discovered one. All had, however, been evacuated, and the one discovered was occupied in all innocence by a stray donkey which had walked in. The enemy drew a blank, having rushed the bog at the speed of a prairie fire, and appeared quite relieved when the completion of the search brought them safely out on the Kilrush-Cooraclare main road, whence they returned to Kilrush.

The column commander and brigade officers were on this occasion attending a meeting at Scrofuil School for an address by two G.H.Q. officers - Simon Donnelly and James Hogan.

The ^{enemy} marched to Kilmihil on the 29th and encamped there complete with hostages until the following day. On the evening of their arrival at Kilmihil a party of them surprised a wanted man - Michael Killoughery of Clonakilla. He pluckily opened fire on them and, in spite of a wrenched ankle, escaped capture. The enemy were heavily fired on at Darragh by Frank Barrett's

column while moving east the following day.

In the first week of June two Tans of the Kildysart garrison ventured to Ennis on bicycles. They were in plain clothes but were recognised. They were ambushed on the return journey by a few mid-Clare Volunteers and one killed. The other threw away his machine and ran across country. He was followed by a lone Volunteer who, when within range, vainly snapped the trigger on a defective shotgun cartridge. The chase was given up on the outskirts of Kildysart, the Black and Tan escaping.

The coastguards' food supplies at Seafield (Quilty) were seized on June 15th and this body, which comprised only five men, were withdrawn the following week.

The West Clare column did not at any time go west of Kilkee. A "Free" (?) Republic on the best Central American lines functioned here from the end of 1920. Nor could it be considered a very healthy area for outside Volunteers. The inhabitants revelled in an orgy of disputes, principally agrarian, viz: "Halloran's bog" in Kilferagh, a right of way to a quarry in Lisheencrony, Barton's demesne in Rahona, and Willie Studdert's land in Kilballyowen. One Volunteer named Shea had shot another named Blake dead in February 1920 over a disputed farm. The adjutant of the 5th Battalion, contrary to regulations, had taken sides in the "Halloran's bog" dispute. He was promptly betrayed to the enemy and was interned after being given a sound thrashing. Two Volunteers who had been sent to Kilballyowen on protection duty from the 3rd Battalion in August 1920, had been also betrayed to the enemy. And, although Sinn Fein activity had first originated in Carrigaholt and had had its first casualties there, two Black and Tans in uniform cycled safely there and back from Kilkee on June 19th. The latter to the unutterable chagrin of the brigade.

There was even one case of open spying, where an alleged "Volunteer", considering that a trench had been opened too near his residence, blithely mounted his saddle-horse and reported the matter directly to the R.I.C. at Kilkee.

The fact of the Kilkee garrison having so far entirely escaped, leant heavily on at least one member of the brigade staff. This town had been more or less isolated from Kilrush by the destruction of Moyasta bridge. A plan was drawn up for a daylight descent on June 26th; this with the full co-operation of the Kilkee Company. This was countermanded at the last moment by the brigade O/C., the 3rd Battalion and company staffs acquiescing. A violent quarrel ensued and some wanted men decided to move into some more active areas. In the meantime the Truce intervened. Some .303 ammunition had been picked up in the streets of Kilrush and was sent to the column commander. On the night of July 2nd a round of this burst one of the precious rifles. It was what afterwards became known as "Z" ammunition, specially manufactured and dropped by the enemy for this purpose.

In conclusion, it may be said that from the middle of June onwards the enemy held the towns of Kilrush, Kilkee and Kildysart. The Volunteers held the remainder of the area. The enemy contented themselves with holding up any country people who ventured into the towns on market days, and woe to anyone who indiscreetly owned to the name of a wanted man; the latter was thrashed by proxy.

Wanted men again moved about quite freely; stalemate had set in and continued until the Truce on July 11th.

Signed: Wm Haugh Coult

Date: 10 January 1877.

Witness: J. J. Coult

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