

W.S. 754

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21  
BUIRO STAIRRE MILEATA 1913-21  
NO. W.S. 754

ROINN  COSANTA.

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 754.....

Witness

- (i) Michael Geary)
- (ii) Richard Smith)

Main Street,  
Charleville,  
Co. Cork.

Identity.

- (i) Company O/C. (Charleville)
- (ii) Assistant Battalion Adjutant,  
3rd Battalion, Cork No.4 Brigade,  
1917-1921.

Subject.

Activities of Irish Volunteers,  
Charleville Area (Co. Cork),  
1915-1921.

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

Nil

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JOINT STATEMENT

BY

MICHAEL GEARY, MAIN ST., CHARLEVILLE.RICHARD SMITH, MAIN ST., CHARLEVILLE.1915-1916.

The Charleville Company was formed in 1915 and was attached to the Galtee Regiment. This continued until about January or February, 1917, when Charleville Battalion was organised and formed.

At the first meeting of the Company about thirty men were enrolled. This assembly elected the following Officers:-

Captain: Seán O'Dea, B.A.  
1st Lieut. Laurence Hedivan, B.A.,  
2nd Lieut. Thomas Barry, B.A.

The latter Officers were Secondary Teachers at the local Christian Brothers' school. The venue for drill and lectures was the local ball court, and when the Company was somewhat efficient it paraded and went on route marches into the surrounding villages, Counties Cork and Limeřick. Each member acted and helped in recruiting according to instructions received from their officers. A weekly fee was collected and paid into an arms and uniform fund. Volunteers were eventually supplied with green field service hats, turned up at one side.

The Company marched to Ardpatrick for Volunteer Rally on 17th March, 1916, and also on same date the following year.

During the Spring of 1916 the Volunteers were inspected by Mr. Terence MacSwiney (R.I.P.), Cork.

The following are the names and addresses of Company and Company Officers who helped to form the Company :-

Seán O'Dea, M.D., B.A.,	(R.I.P.)	C.B. Schools.
Laurence Hedivan, B.A.	(R.I.P.)	do.
Thomas Barry, B.A.	(R.I.P.)	do.
Michael Motherway,		Ballysally, Charleville.
Denis O'Driscoll,		Present Address, Carrick-on-Suir.
Denis Begley.		Present Address, Dublin.
Michael O'Mahony, (R.I.P.),		originally Bandon.
Eugene McCarthy,		Present Address: Drumcollogher.
John McAuliffe.		Present Address: c/o M. Mocks, Chicago.
James Brislane,		Present Address: New York.
Jerome Lynch, (R.I.P.)		Charleville.
Robert Joyce.		Canada.
John Quinn, (R.I.P.)		
Pat Fitzgerald.		
Joseph Nagle,		Charleville.
Richard Nagle (R.I.P.)		Charleville.
Mick O'Sullivan,		Midleton.
Con McCarthy, (R.I.P.)		Charleville.
John Cronin, (R.I.P.)		Watergrasshill.

During the Spring of 1915 a recruiting force of British officers and an Army Band (Brass and Reed), numbering about forty to fifty men, came to the town and made Madden's Imperial Hotel their headquarters for this campaign. Drink flowed freely and recruits were easily ensnared from outlying districts. Some of the Volunteers got desperate and devised a plan to combat

same. Between Saturday midnight and Sunday morning they tarred anti-recruiting slogans and nasty remarks on the front of the hotel wall where it was seen by the people in the morning going to each of the four Masses; it was well advertised. The R.I.C. arrested the three Company Officers and sent them to Cork for trial, where they were kept for some time. The Volunteers who did the tar stunt were sworn members of the I.R.B., named Michael Motherway and Denis Begley. This plan finished recruiting in Charleville, as the band left after arrests, leaving only a recruiting Sergeant in charge.

When the Company paraded through the town they were watched and duly noted by the local R.I.C.

At Easter, 1916, the Company was very well trained and organised and was mobilised for active service on Easter Tuesday for 10 a.m. - meeting place - Newtownshandrum Cross, about two miles from Charleville. This order, per despatch, was countermanded, although the men whose names appear on page 2 were fully equipped and ready. On the 1916 Roll of Honour book, one of the officers is mentioned as taking part in the Rebellion - Laurence Hedivan, Rathluirc - and James Brislane cycled to Cork with Cathal O'Shannon and some others to take part in Rebellion (Easter Friday), 1916.

Another mobilisation order was issued on Tuesday night for 10 p.m. Wednesday, but this again was cancelled at 9 a.m. Wednesday.

On the 16th or 17th May, 1916, about sixteen or seventeen leading members of the Volunteer Company were arrested. An R.I.C. constable named Prendergast, originally from Kilkenny,

stated he was fired at that evening while walking through the fields at rear of R.I.C. Barracks. He had a bullet hole through his uniform cap. When the cap was inspected by some of his superior officers they were doubtful of the charge. It could only get to that particular part of his cap by his own aid. The Volunteers were questioned individually by a military Captain and County Inspector, R.I.C., and were released by the insistence of the County Inspector.

From time to time during this year, the Volunteers were attacked by ex-soldiers and their wives, especially when on parade through the town. Those attacks were noted by the Volunteers; and the latter eventually put a finish to those outbursts by clearing them off the streets, leaving some sore heads, ribs and hands to nurse for some time.

1917.

ORGANISATION OF THE CHARLEVILLE BATTALION.

The Charleville Battalion was organised early in 1917 and came under Cork No. II Brigade.

The Battalion had then a total of ten Companies, as follows:-

- 'A' Company, (Charleville).
- 'B' Company, (Newtownshandrum).
- 'C' Company, (Milford).
- 'D' Company, (Dromina).
- 'E' Company, (Liscarroll).
- 'F' Company, (Churchtown).

'G' Company, (Ballyhea).  
'H' Company, (Elfin).  
'I' Company, (Lisgriffin) and  
'J' Company, (Buttevant).

The Brigade O.C. at this period was Liam Lynch, and the Vice O.C. - George Power.

In later years, when the Division was formed and Liam Lynch appointed Divisional O.C., Seán Moylan replaced him as Brigade O.C., and, following Seán's arrest, Paddy O'Brien, then Vice O.C. became the Brigade O.C.

#### STRENGTH OF COMPANIES.

Generally, there was a big variation in the strength of the Companies. Buttevant and Milford Companies had only between twelve and twenty. The remaining Companies would vary between thirty and one hundred, although at one stage the Charleville Company had one hundred and twenty on the roll.

The Buttevant Unit was more in the nature of an Intelligence Section, for, in those years, there were huge garrisons between Buttevant and Ballyvonare, and at time in those two military Posts there was a total of 3,000 to 4,000 troops stationed between them. When events became hot, all movements of troops from both these garrisons were very speedily notified to Battalion Headquarters.

#### ARMS.

Up to 1919, there were comparatively few arms, other than

shot-guns, in the Battalion. The Charleville Company had three rifles and about six revolvers of different makes. One of these rifles was bought from a soldier, and the other two were captured from a train by an army deserter (Ned McCarthy).

The other Companies in the battalion had a few revolvers each, in addition to the shot-guns.

During 1919-1920, about twelve rifles were obtained from Ballyvonare Camp through the efforts of Paddy O'Brien and Jim Brislane, our Battalion O.C. Friendly tradesmen made contacts in Camp and some of these rifles were purchased from soldiers and the remainder were slipped out of the Camp by one means or another.

#### OFFICERS.

The reorganisation of the Charleville Company, following 1916 and release of a number from Frongoch at the end of 1916, took place in the Commercial Hall, Charleville, in March, 1917. About seventy-five to eighty men were enrolled. This body elected the following Officers :-

Company Captain:	James Brislane,	now in U.S.A.
1st Lieut.	Robert Joyce,	now in Canada.
2nd Lieut.	Denis Begley,	now in Dublin.

These officers were elected by ballot for twelve months, but when the battalion was formed later in 1917 the following officers were elected :-

Battalion O.C.,	James Brislane,	now in U.S.A.
Vice Battn. O.C.	Denis Driscoll,	now in Carrick-on-Suir.

Battn. Adjutant: Jeremiah Moran, now in Carrick-on-Suir.

In 1918, at the Conscription crisis, when there was a big influx of new members, the strength of the Company increased for a short period up almost to two hundred and fifty. This assembly elected the following :-

Company Captain:	Denis Begley:	(Dublin).
1st Lieut.	John Cronin:	(R.I.P.)
2nd Lieut.	Robert Joyce.	(Canada).

In January, 1919, when the Company was paraded for the election of officers, only 85 members attended and elected the following :-

Company Captain:	John Cronin,	(R.I.P.)
1st Lieut.	Thos. Fogarty.	(R.I.P.)
2nd Lieut.	Henry Dennehy,	(London).

The same Company Officers for 1919 were re-elected for 1920. The Company Captain - John Cronin - had to go "on the run" following the attack on Kilmallock R.I.C. Barracks, and Thomas Coughlan (R.I.P.) was apparently in his place in August, 1920. The latter went "on the run" in September, 1920, and was temporarily replaced by the Battalion Adjutant (Michael Sheehy).

A short time later Battalion Headquarters appointed the following :-

Company Captain:	Michael Geary.
1st Lieut.	John Higgins (Limerick).
2nd Lieut.	Wm. Delea. (U.S.A.)



These officers continued in this capacity up to the Truce, 1921.

DRILLS, PARADES, ETC., 1917-1919.

During the years 1917 to 1919 the drills, parades, route marches, etc., continued regularly, and every effort was made to improve the organisation of the Unit, but other than the normal routine there were very few matters of note for these years. There were occasional arrests for Volunteer activity from time to time, similar to happenings in the remainder of the country.

The local Company played an active part in 1918, for a lot of the General Election work for the Sinn Féin candidate had to be carried out against very determined opposition from the so called "Nationalists" and the ex-soldier element. The latter crowd caused a lot of friction, especially those women in receipt of the "Separation" allowance. However, our Company more than held its own against all of them.

1920.

In February, 1920, representatives of all Companies in the Battalion attacked Freemount R.I.C. Barracks, and the R.I.C. surrendered. In conjunction with this attack, as it was anticipated that military from Buttevant would be rushed to the aid of the R.I.C., it was decided, as the main objective, to lay an ambush for them in the vicinity of Gurteenroe, Liscarroll. Trees were half cut and ready for dropping, but a strong storm blew up that night and knocked the half-cut trees right across the road; consequently, the military could not use the road and, therefore, the proposed ambush unfortunately proved abortive. Paddy O'Brien was in charge of the operation and his intention

was to capture enough rifles on this occasion so as to enable a fair distribution to all Companies in the battalion.

The following members from Charleville were in Gurteenroe ready to participate in this ambush:-

Jim Brislane.

Tom Culhane.

Michael Sheehy.

Con McCarthy.

Dick Smith.

Tom Coughlan.

and possibly some others.

FEBRUARY, 1920.

About this month, 1920, the R.I.C. did not make any appearance on town duty at night and robberies were rife around the town and district. On the initiation of the local Company a Town Vigilance Committee was formed and although nominally the Volunteers were not directly concerned, nevertheless, the Company Officers exercised control over them, and it was their nominees who formed the bulk of the Vigilants. There were many encounters with would-be robbers before and after midnight, and, after a short time, the bulk of the robberies ceased, and comparative peace was gradually restored.

It was later in the year (May, 1920) that the military established a garrison in Charleville.

MARCH, 1920.

The battalion staff and some of the Company Officers

attended a Brigade Convention at Dromahane school-house, presided over by Liam Lynch. Liam was "on the run" at this time.

It is not remembered whether any specially important matters were discussed at this Convention, other than the usual routine reports and the position as regards organisation, strengths, arms, etc., in the different battalion areas.

APRIL-MAY, 1920.

Liscarroll R.I.C. Barracks, which had been evacuated, was demolished. On this night the Charleville Company and some of the other Companies had blocked the roads in their respective areas and had sniping parties (shot-guns) in readiness to harass any enemy movements in the vicinity.

Similar preparations were made for the attack on Ballylanders R.I.C. Barracks, also, in this month.

In May, 1920, Jack Cronin and Con McCarthy (since dead) of the Charleville Company took part in the attack on the Kilmallock R.I.C. Barracks. Paddy O'Brien, then Vice Battalion O.C., and three others, cycled from Liscarroll to Kilmallock for this attack. On the morning following this attack they passed through Charleville about 8 a.m. with their revolvers at the ready.

JUNE, 1920.

During this month the Company took an active part in canvassing and protection duties for the local elections. In

consequence of the strong opposition from the ex-soldier and other elements, including the Labour crowd, it was considered necessary to bring in detachments from all the outside companies of the battalion for Polling Day. Many scuffles ensued throughout the day; however, all the noisy elements were kept under proper control by the Volunteer patrols.

Our Battalion O.C., (Jim Brislane), who was a candidate for the County Council, headed the Poll in this Election, which was a tribute not alone to his personal popularity but also to the excellent preparatory work carried out by the Volunteer Units.

JUNE 18TH, 1920.

On June 18th Jim Brislane (O.C.) and a party of the Charleville Volunteers boarded the mail train about one and a half miles outside the town, where the train was stopped and a total of seven mail bags, property of military and R.I.C., were taken. These were handed over at the spot to Paddy O'Brien, who had a motor ready to remove them. Previous to this raid the communications to Milford had been cut. The mails were taken to Dromina Company area for censoring. It is not known if any important information resulted from this censoring.

JUNE, 1920.

During the month, and for some time previously, an armed robber gang, stated to total to about twenty-two, was operating in and around Kilmallock and was causing great worry and anxiety to the East Limerick Brigade area.

The O.C. of the local battalion (Kilmallock) was desirous,

for a number of reasons, to get strange Volunteers to help 'round up' this gang, and, as a result of a request for assistance, Tom Coughlan, (then Company O.C.) and eleven others of the Charleville Company proceeded to Kilmallock and during the swoop on that night captured eighteen of the gang, including the leader. They were conveyed to a mountainy area, near Mount Russell, in a Cleeves Creamery lorry. All of them went on hunger-strike. Two of the principal members of the gang were deported and the remainder were released after three or four days. However, by all reports, this action successfully finished the gang and no further trouble was experienced from them.

AUGUST, 1920.

(I) In August, 1920, an ambush was prepared between Charleville and Milford. Paddy O'Brien was in charge. A feint attack was made on Milford R.I.C., so as to draw out the military from Charleville. When Milford barracks was fired on the military did turn out but, on arriving adjacent to the ambush position, they spotted a Volunteer crossing a field with a cross-cut and, perhaps, some other movements. However, they got suspicious and the military officer in charge gave an order to the troops to dismount from the lorries and proceed on foot. This move necessitated the withdrawal of the Volunteers, for the party was not strong enough, or in the proper positions to successfully engage the dismounted troops. Had the troops been caught on the lorries the story would be completely different.

(II) A big round-up for shot-guns was made during this month on all farmers and other persons hostile to the Volunteers, and a good number of them were collected in all Company areas.

Friendly farmers had previously handed up their guns.

During this month, also, a widespread collection (house to house) was made for an Arms Fund. In Charleville and the immediate district nearly up to £120 was subscribed.

SEPTEMBER, 1920.

Con McCarthy and a few others from Charleville participated in the successful attack on Mallow Barracks. Paddy O'Brien and others from the Battalion area also took part.

Some short time after the attack on Mallow Barracks, Jim Brislane and some others attacked an enemy provision party of mule-drawn transport near Lisgriffin, a few miles from Buttevant, and wounded one of the enemy. Nothing captured. Following this attack the military carried out extensive raids and broke into a number of houses and beat up any young men they caught. In one case a young junior railway clerk, who was in his 'digs', was caught, and the military poured some acid down the lad's throat which put him in awful agony. Were it not for very prompt medical aid the boy would have died. He was removed that night to the Mercy Hospital, Cork, where he was detained for over two months.

OCTOBER, 1920.

The Churchtown R.I.C. barracks was fired on during this month, but the attack was not pushed home. The Volunteers withdrew. This firing was in the nature of a morale breaker so as to keep the enemy's nerves on edge. They never knew what to expect when firing was opened.

NOVEMBER, 1920.

On the morning of the 2nd November, 1920, the Doonagh (Milford) R.I.C. barracks was evacuated, and the word of this evacuation was conveyed to Paddy O'Brien, Liscarroll. Paddy decided to demolish the barracks that night, and, accompanied by some members of the Charleville Company, and some from a few of the other Companies, proceeded to Doonagh. The barracks was located about twenty yards in from the roadway. When Paddy approached towards the door it was suddenly opened and a Tan fired at Paddy shooting him in the face. This was an unexpected development and naturally came as a big surprise to the remainder of the Volunteer party who had been certain that the barracks was completely empty. Almost immediately after the shot had been fired a few of the Volunteers, who had been placed in the rear of the barracks, saw two persons rushing out of the back door of the barracks, and, although the light was poor, they presumed they were enemy and fired, wounding one of them. (This was only found out later). The two Tans got away, however, and made their way back to Drumcollogher, which was only approximately a mile across country.

During the evacuation earlier that day, a few of the local Volunteers had seen the garrison all clearing out and the doors being secured, etc., but obviously this was only a trap as those two Tans from Drumcollogher had sneaked in the backway without being observed and had waited for the attacking party which arrived as they had rightly anticipated. This was only one of Paddy O'Brien's hairbreath escapes.

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On Brigade instructions, dumps had to be made in all Company areas. Two dumps were made in the Charleville Company. These were made in double ditches running alongside a stream.

The boxes were 6' x 2' x 2' and 1½ inch timber. These boxes were lined with felt and treated with pitch and tar and the boxes were placed in a cement lined trench in the ditch. It took sixteen of the Company a whole night to make those dumps. The boxes were made by three members of the Company - Bob Connell, Mick Motherway and Mick Kingston.

NOVEMBER 23RD, 1920.

Shortly prior to the anniversary date of the Manchester Martyrs (Allen, Larkin and O'Brien) enemy notices appeared in the daily press forbidding any public parades for this anniversary.

The Battalion Vice O.C., (Denis Driscoll) (the Battalion O.C. was away in Cork) decided he would disobey the warning and that he would hold a parade in commemoration on that night.

The parade was duly held with the Fianna boys and the Volunteers. The Fianna headed the parade, each of the boys carrying a miniature croppy pike; the Volunteers under Denis Driscoll followed next, some of the Volunteers carrying torch-lights.

It appears the military of the local garrison (The Black Watch) were warned apparently by the R.I.C. that a parade might be attempted and were standing-to in the local garrison. The local Head Constable (Brennan) had been in touch with the military



but to give him his due it subsequently transpired that he ensured the military, if called out, would not have their rifles loaded. Brennan was a very nervous type and did not want any trouble if it could be avoided - he was almost due to retire on pension.

As the parade was passing through the town, about sixty or seventy of the Black Watch made their appearance and attacked the Fianna and the Volunteers with the butts of their rifles. The Fianna boys were instructed beforehand to clear off if trouble arose, and they did so. A large number of the Volunteers made an effort to resist the troops initially, but as they had no weapons they all became scattered after a short while. However, it was only then the real commotion started: the Volunteers, in batches, took up positions along the many laneways and passages in the town and armed themselves with stones and bottles and availed of any openings to attack the enemy patrols - military and police - on town duty.

This commotion lasted for three or four hours, and during the night some of the Volunteers seized an opportunity to break every window in the local barracks. Great excitement prevailed in the town for several days afterwards and it was anticipated that many arrests would follow: however, whatever the reason, no arrests resulted.

DECEMBER, 1920.

During this month two ambushes were prepared for the R.I.C. in Churchtown village, but both proved abortive.

Later in this month two enemy soldiers were captured and disarmed at Coolin, Charleville, and two rifles obtained. These soldiers were out on their own and possibly may have been on a scouting expedition.

On the night of December 20th, the night mail - Cork to Dublin - was held up at Charleville and several mail bags removed. This job was carried out by the Battalion Flying Column, assisted by some of the local Company.

The raid was carried out during Curfew hours, and at the tail-end of the operation some Tans, who had observed movements of individuals, fired a number of shots and calling on lads to halt, but the boys got away and no casualties inflicted.

The mail was taken to Dromina for censoring and it is understood that amongst the letters captured were a number from soldiers stationed in Cork City writing to friends in England, describing the terrifying conditions then existing in Cork City and that the troops were having a very bad time of it. These letters were sent to Volunteer Headquarters in Cork.

About late September, or early October, the battalion A.S.U. or Flying Column was formed. Prior to this there were seven or eight of the battalion "on the run". This number then was augmented by a few men from each of the Companies and the following members served with the Column on one occasion or another between then and the Truce:- Ned Ryan (Leader), Tom Culhane, Cornelius McCarthy, Ned McCarthy, Denis Motherway, Michael Regan, P.J. O'Brien, Paddy Russell, James Leo, Tom Coughlan, Jack Lynch, Patrick Sheehy, Jack Regan, P.J. O'Reilly,

Michael O'Donnell, Patrick Coughlan, Denis Hayes, John O'Brien, Jim Brislane, Maurice O'Brien, Patrick O'Connor, Daniel O'Brien, Jim Winters, Richard Flynn, Patrick Hickey and Charles O'Connor.

JANUARY, 1921.

(I) On the 20/1/1921 an armed party, under Paddy O'Brien, lay in ambush on the main Charleville-Buttevant road at Shinanagh for the purpose of attacking a Colonel Hope and small party of enemy troops (M.G. Corps) accompanying the Colonel. This party had been seen going to Limerick earlier and it was anticipated they would be returning later; hence the ambush. The Volunteer party consisted mostly of members of the Flying Column augmented by selected Volunteers from Charleville.

A small trench had been cut across the road, but, when the car came within some distance from the trench, one of our ambush party fired a shot before he should have, with the result that the driver of the car increased his speed and succeeded in jumping the car over the trench, but severely damaged the car in the process. The enemy party immediately dismounted and returned the fire and they eventually succeeded in making their escape, except that Colonel Hope was wounded in the action. The car was captured and destroyed and it is said that some very important dispatches were also got, the details of those are not known.

Two nights later, Dick Smith, John J. Cronin, Harry Dennehy and a few others were arrested and detained in Charleville barracks for two nights, during which they received some unmerciful hammerings, first from the military and later from the Tans. Some of the prisoners were beaten unconscious in an effort to

obtain information as to who had attacked Colonel Hope's party. After the two days in Charleville, they were brought to Buttevant barracks and detained there for three days and then they were marched to Ballyvonare Camp. After seven or eight days in the Camp they were tried by a Military Court, presided over by Major Compton Smith. As there was no evidence of participation in the ambush they were convicted, on secret evidence, of being actively associated with the Volunteers and were sentenced to 'six months' hard labour and conveyed to Cork Jail.

(2) During this month the M.G. Corps, stationed in Charleville, were sent to Ballyvonare and replaced by another contingent. Two of the M.G. Sergeants, who had made themselves rather notorious during their time in Charleville, were being eagerly sought. These Sergeants were named Slack and Toohey - the latter was an Irishman and was easily the worst of the two. Resulting from information, Mick Geary and a few lay in wait for them, about  $1\frac{1}{2}$  miles from Charleville. Slack and Toohey were on their way back from Charleville and both were armed. Slack preceded Toohey by from 50 to 100 yards. Slack was captured and disarmed, but Toohey got away. Had Toohey been caught it was intended to shoot him.

(3) Buttevant Barracks, where some thousands of troops were stationed, was heavily fired on by the Battalion Column and some other Volunteers. Firing was continued for about fifteen minutes and the Volunteers then withdrew. This was in the nature of a reminder that the Volunteers were still active.

FEBRUARY, 1921:

Shots were fired at the two military posts in Charleville.

(One of these Posts was in the town and the other just outside the town in a residence owned by Lord Kenmare). This was a feint attack in an effort to draw out some of the garrison of Ballyvonare. The Battalion flying column, augmented by members of the Charleville Company, lay in ambush at Madigan's Bridge, Ballyhea, about two miles from Charleville, but, although they waited in readiness for several hours, the military made no appearance.

Some days prior to the occupation of the second military Post (Lord Kenmare's residence), the local O.C. (Mick Geary) had obtained information that the military were about to occupy the place. He immediately got the available Volunteers together and placed hay, straw and timber, etc., in the building and got it ready for burning. He also sent some of the Volunteers to a local petrol stores, to break open the stores and get some petrol. This was done and the building set on fire, but, before this, one of the Volunteers on the petrol job (Ned Cronin) was observed by two soldiers crossing a field and was called on to halt, and was arrested. He was carrying two tins of petrol but he dropped those in the field. The military and Tans, observing the fire, came on the scene and fired on the Volunteer party carrying out the burning, but all got clear away without any casualty. The building was partially damaged but not sufficient to prevent the occupation of it.

. . . .

During February an attack was carried out by the Unit Column on Churchtown R.I.C. barracks and one R.I.C. man was killed. Some of the Brigade Column and some members of the Unit Column

lay in wait on the Churchtown-Buttevant road on the expectation that reinforcements from Buttevant would be rushed out: none turned up, however.

. . . .

On receipt of information from a Volunteer member, employed at Charleville railway station, that boycotted goods from Belfast had arrived for firms in Charleville and Drumcollogher the Company O.C. (Mick Geary), and a small number of Volunteers seized those goods and destroyed them. This happened on three occasions. Some of the goods destroyed included machinery and a large consignment of seed potatoes. The latter were removed by lorry and taken about a mile outside the town when the bags were cut and the potatoes scattered along the roadway. Some poor persons collected them later. These raids finished the boycotted goods.

MARCH, 1921.

During the month of February the R.I.C. garrison left their former barracks in the town and went into occupation of part of Lord Kenmare's estate with the Military on the outskirts of the town. It was the practice each morning, about 9 a.m., to send a patrol of six to eight R.I.C. and Tans to collect the mail from the Post Office. The patrol sometimes cycled and at other times went on foot. Paddy O'Brien decided to attack this patrol, and on the morning of March 1st had taken up position in the town to carry out the attack. Paddy and five members of the Column were there, and Mick Geary and a few others of the local Company were on scouting duty. On that morning the patrol

of six came by a different street and got to the Post Office alright. After they collected the mail five of the patrol returned by the same route, therefore did not pass where Paddy and the lads were waiting for them. One of the patrol - a Constable Quinn - who had stopped at a shop for a drink and to purchase a daily paper returned by the normal route - not the one the others had taken. Some of the lads fired at Quinn and missed him, and just about this critical time a number of school children on their way to school made their appearance on the same street and Paddy had to give the order to stop firing.

On that night the Tans came into the town mad looking for blood. They went to the home of Seán O'Brien, who was a well-known Gaelic Leaguer and Irish Irelander - he had never served with the Volunteers. The Tans knocked at his door and Seán, without opening the door, enquired what they wanted, and the Tans' reply was to fire several volleys through the door and also threw some grenades through the fan-light. Poor Seán died almost immediately. Seán was Chairman of the U.D.C., and also President of the Gaelic League Branch. He had been raided several times before, and, following the shooting of Constable Quinn in the morning, had been advised by Mick Geary and some others to clear out of town until the excitement subsided. However, Seán's wife was an extremely nervous type and he did not like to leave her on her own. It was an extremely brutal murder for his body was ripped asunder. The principal instigators of this murder were Constables Spain and Spellman.

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Members of the local Company seized some stationery and

other stores for the R.I.C. at the railway station and destroyed them.

. . . . .

An armed party of the Charleville Company seized the local mails between the railway station and the town (Post Office) and conveyed them to Battalion Headquarters at Dromina.

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During the month, also, the local Company destroyed three bridges between Charleville and Buttevant, and also destroyed the local British Legion Club, as it was rumoured it was to be taken over as a garrison post. The Company O.C. and about a dozen of the Company carried out this job with petrol which they seized from a local stores. Only the walls of the building remained standing - the roof and interior were burned to bits.

APRIL, 1921.

On April 16th, 1921, information was sent to the Company O.C. (Mick Geary) from a Volunteer employee on the railway who was utilised on intelligence duties, stating that the two Tans who had murdered Seán O'Brien had travelled to Buttevant. Mick Geary contacted immediately some reliable members of the Company and decided to capture or shoot those Tans on their return by the evening train at 6.20 p.m.

That evening Mick and his men lay in wait near the Station. The Tans arrived off the train, but, just as they did, two Crossley tenders of troops arrived at the station for some supplies. Some of the troops in the tenders apparently spotted



a few of our men in the fields close by and must have thought they were being ambushed. They opened fire immediately, with the result that Mick Geary and his men had to make a hurried withdrawal across the fields. During this withdrawal a number of cattle were killed, in respect of which Mr. Thomas McAuliffe, Charleville, was later paid compensation.

Were it not that the military arrived at the station at the critical moment, the two Tans - Spain and Spellman - would have received their just deserts.

. . . .

During this month, the Charleville Company and members of some of the other Companies assisted in the destruction of bridges between Buttevant, Charleville and Ballyvonare. An armed party of enemy arrived across the fields from Ballyvonare surprising one of our parties near Ballyhea, and arrested a Volunteer Brassil from Ballyhea and wounded a Volunteer Dillon. Dillon was shot in the hip and was laid up for a long period.

MAY, 1921.

A lot of trenching and road-blocking was carried out during May by the Company and, in addition, some sniping of the local Posts. Our aim was to try and confine the troops as much as possible, so as to relieve pressure on the active service units and to try and obstruct large scale enemy raid throughout the country districts.

A novel system of signalling was introduced throughout the battalion area about this time. A detail of three or four men

took up duty every night from 10 p.m. to dawn on high ground, about two miles outside the town, and were equipped with a very long pole and to one end of which a lot of rags steeped in paraffin was attached. The party also had a bugle. Any movements of the enemy, such as, parties proceeding on raids or rounds-up, were notified to the signallers, who sounded the bugle and lit up the long torch. This signal was then relayed by the outlying companies, who had similar parties on the watch.

It is known that one enemy column, which moved out from Charleville, got suspicious when they observed this signal and returned to barracks.

JUNE, 1921.

The trenching and blocking of roads also continued during this month, and some of the bridges which had been repaired by the enemy were again demolished.

The Company participated, too, in the commandeering of motor cars throughout the area.

Two British soldiers, in uniform, were captured on the Newmarket road just outside Charleville - they had a map of the district in their possession. At their trial they admitted they were on intelligence duties. They were executed and died very bravely. Their one request was, if they were to be shot, to have the job done quickly.

Sometime about May, 1921, two locals named Patrick J. Sheehan and a John O'Sullivan (nicknamed Slag") came under grave suspicion of giving information to the enemy and were acting as

spies, and had been used by the enemy as "stool-pigeons" by being placed in with I.R.A. prisoners in Tipperary town and Kildorney. The first information we obtained concerning them was from a Johnny White (since dead) who was catching a pony one night in a field at the rear of the R.I.C. barracks and saw Sheehan and Sullivan getting out very furtively over the barrack wall. The following day a Corporal Pepper, who was one of the garrison intelligence staff and who was practically always dressed in 'civvies', warned White to keep his mouth shut regarding Sheehan and Sullivan coming from the barracks. Subsequently when the R.I.C. shifted quarters to another part of the town, a Volunteer named Joe Nagle, who had a harness shop near the barracks, saw the two boys coming from the barracks. On another occasion Mick Geary and a Johnny Higgins saw them coming from the barracks. Confirmation was also obtained about them being used as "stool-pigeons" and, in fact, information was obtained from one of our lads working on the railway that Sheehan actually travelled from Charleville to Tipperary on an enemy rail warrant. Furthermore, in one of our raids on the mails a money order (I forget the amount) was caught addressed to a Mrs. Murphy in town and we were satisfied that this was for Sheehan as he was a frequent visitor to her house.

It was decided in early June to arrest both of them, and about mid June Sullivan was arrested. Following Sullivan's arrest Sheehan did not stir out for at least a fortnight and then one day he took a chance of delivering a load of coal a few miles from the town when he was arrested. On arrest he collapsed completely and had to be bodily lifted over a hedge into a field. In the meantime while Sullivan was under arrest

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he admitted giving information to the enemy. Sheehan was a brainy and dangerous individual but Sullivan was almost an illiterate.

They were both tried by Courtmartial at which the Battalion O.C. (Jim Brislane) presided, and the Brigade O.C. (Liam Lynch) who happened to be in our area at the time was present at the trial. Mick Geary and Tom Lyons of Buttevant gave evidence at the trial and both the accused were sentenced to death, which sentence was duly carried out on June 29th, 1921. They were attended by a priest immediately prior to the execution.

Following Sullivan's arrest Sheehan had decided to clear off to England and had his ticket actually purchased, which ticket was later used by a brother of his.

JULY, 1921.

Some days prior to the Truce all car batteries were removed from garages in the area, and during the same week all telephones were disconnected and seized.

RANKS HELD AT THE TRUCE.

Michael Geary - Company O.C.

Richard Smith - Asst. Battalion Adjutant.

SIGNATURE: \_\_\_\_\_

*Michael Geary*

(Michael Geary)

SIGNATURE: \_\_\_\_\_

*Richard Smith*

(Richard Smith)

WITNESSED BY:

DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

*28/11/52*

*Thomas Halpin*  
\_\_\_\_\_  
(Thomas Halpin)

LIEUT.-COLONEL.