

W. S. 978

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21
BURO STAIRE MILEATA 1913-21
No. W.S. 978

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS.

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 978.....

Witness

Leo O'Callaghan,
Quartern town,
Mallow,
Co. Cork.

Identity.

Member of Irish Volunteers, Mallow,
Co. Cork, 1918 - ;
Second Lieut. same Coy. later;
Member of Brigade and Batt'n. Columns later.

Subject.

National activities, Mallow, Co. Cork,
1918-1924.

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

Nil

File No. S. 2298.....

Form B.S.M. 2

ORIGINAL

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STATEMENT BY LEO O'CALLAGHAN

QUARTERTOWN, MALLOW.

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21
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I was born in Mallow on 10th February 1898. My father, who died when I was twelve years of age, was a painting contractor.

I joined the Irish Volunteers in Mallow early in 1918 prior to the conscription crisis. At that time the strength of the Mallow Company was about 50/60. The officers of the company at that time were:-

Captain	Jack Cunningham
1st Lt.	Ned Waters
2nd Lt.	Bryan Kelly

The company was in Mallow Battalion of Cork Brigade; the other units of the battalion were Ahadillane, Analeentha, Burnfort, Dromahane, Lombardstown, Twopothouse and Ballyclough. The strength of these units averaged 20 to 60. The officers were elected. The members of the battalion staff were, I think, Dan Hegarty, Owen Harold, Liam Jones and Paddy McCarthy, but I am not certain of the relative positions held.

When I joined the company, regular parades were held about twice weekly in the fields in the neighbourhood of the town. The usual foot drill and arms drill with wooden guns was carried on. In the Spring of 1918 when conscription was mooted there was a large influx of new Volunteers. At this period the strength of the company must have been close on 150. However, when the conscription scare passed practically all the new recruits left the Volunteers.

The usual drilling and parades continued until 1919. On January 6th 1919, Cork Brigade, which at the time consisted of 20 battalions (I think), was divided into three brigades. The seven battalions - Fermoy, Mallow, Kanturk, Charleville, Newmarket, Castletownroche and Millstreet - formed Cork II

Brigade. The officers of this brigade were:-

O/C.	Liam Lynch	Fermoy
V.O/C.	Dan Hegarty	Mallow
Adjutant	Tom Barry	Glanworth
Q.M.	George Power	Fermoy

Early in June 1919, I drove the Brigade O/C. (Liam Lynch) and Vice O/C. (Dan Hegarty) to Kanturk. I was employed at this time by W.J. Thompson, garage owner, Mallow., The car was hired by Dan Hegarty to take himself and Liam Lynch to a meeting in Newmarket. However, when we got to Kanturk we were held up by a party of British military and R.I.C. who refused to allow us to proceed beyond Kanturk. The enemy activity on this occasion was intended to prevent the holding of a Feis and Aeriocht under Gaelic League auspices at Kanturk. As far as I can remember, the Feis and Aeriocht were held in one of the adjoining parishes. I think it was Kilbrin - on the same day.

There was no departure from the usual drilling activities until early September 1919.

WESLEYAN RAID, FERMOY.

On 4th September 1919, I was informed by Jack Cunningham, Company O/C. Mallow, and Owen Harold who, I think, was battalion vice O/C. Mallow Battalion, that there was a job to be carried out on the following Sunday (they did not say where) which would require the use of a motor car. They were to hire a car from my employer (W.J. Thompson) and to ask that I should be allocated to drive same. They did as arranged but on Saturday (6th September 1919) I was informed by my employer that I was to proceed with a different party on Sunday (7th September 1919) while a fellow employee (Chris. Browne) was delegated to meet Owen Harold's party.

When I had finished work that evening I reported to Jack Cunningham and Owen Harold that Browne was to drive their party next day. They immediately informed me that this would not suit

so I agreed to inform Browne that I was taking on his job while he could do the job selected for me. He reluctantly agreed and on Sunday morning (7th September 1919) I proceeded to Fair St. Mallow, with the Buick car IF.1342 which I usually drove. I picked up Bryan Kelly, Ned Waters, Owen Harold and Dan Hegarty about 8.45 a.m. We proceeded by Ballyvinter, crossing main Mallow-Mitchelstown road at Anakisha to Castle-townroche on the main road between Mallow and Fermoy. We then travelled the main road to Fermoy through Ballyhooley arriving in Fermoy about 10 a.m. We drove to the rear of the Fermoy Hospital where we found a number of men (including Liam Lynch) assembled. I was then told of the proposed attack.

I was instructed to take my car into Patrick St. where the Wesleyan Church was and to ensure that when the attack took place my car was behind the enemy party, i.e., between them and their return route to their barracks. With Dan Hegarty, Owen Harold, Ned Waters, Bryan Kelly and Liam Lynch in my car, I proceeded to a point near the Gas Works which was east of the Wesleyan Church on the opposite side of the road. I faced the car in the direction of Fermoy (west) and when the party of military appeared in Patrick St. about 11 a.m. and had nearly reached the Wesleyan Church I drove slowly towards them. Just as they reached the Church I had passed the rear of the party and I immediately swung my car across the road to cut off their retreat.

Immediately I turned the car a whistle was blown by Liam Lynch and the party in my car, together with a number of others who had been standing round in the vicinity, dashed at the military party and disarmed them. While the struggle for the rifles was going on I turned my car in the direction of Lismore (east). During the scrap I heard one shot being fired - this was apparently the shot which killed Private Jones.

The whole engagement was over in a few minutes and most of the captured rifles were put into my car which also picked up the party I had taken from Mallow that morning and, in addition, Liam Lynch, Peter O'Callaghan, William Ahern and Pat Leahy. The other car, driven by Jack Mulvey, Rathcormack, had adopted similar tactics to that employed by me and he picked up the balance of the rifles and a number of the participants in the engagement. The remainder of the Volunteers engaged apparently returned to their own areas on foot or by cycle.

I then drove my party in the direction of Lismore on the Fermoy-Tallow Road. We were followed by the other car driven by Jack Mulvey. When we passed Carrigabrick about $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles from Fermoy, two large trees which had been sawn through earlier that morning and held in position by ropes were allowed to fall across the road. This road block delayed the military in their pursuit and forced them to detour.

When we reached Kilmagner, about five miles from Fermoy, we halted. It was then discovered that Liam Lynch was wounded and his wound - a slight one in the shoulder - was dressed by Wm. Ahern, who was a chemist. At this stage the rifles were removed from the cars and we proceeded in the direction of Ballynoe, leaving Peter O'Callaghan and Pat Leahy at Kilmagner. We eventually reached the Middleton-Youghal road and then proceeded towards Youghal. The party now comprised Liam Lynch, Wm. Ahern, Ned Waters, Bryan Kelly, Owen Harold and Leo O'Callaghan (witness).

About two miles from Youghal Liam Lynch and Wm. Ahern left the car and proceeded up the hill across the fields to the house of some friend of Liam Lynch's. With the remainder of the party I drove to the Greenpark Hotel, Youghal, where

we had something to eat. Just as we had finished our meal somebody entered the dining room and we heard them say that the military were looking for a grey car. We left without undue delay and set out for Cork. We reached Cork without incident and after a short delay there we returned direct to Mallow which we reached about 6.30 p.m.

There was a lot of military activity in the Mallow area following this incident and Ned Waters, Owen Harold and Bryan Kelly were on the run. I, however, continued in my job until I was arrested about a fortnight afterwards. At the same time the grey Buick car was seized and taken to Fermoy Military Barracks. I was charged with the murder of Private Jones, the soldier killed in the affray at the Wesleyan Church. The others charged with me were Tom Griffin, Pat Leahy, Peter O'Callaghan, John Joe Hogan (all from Ballynoe), Mick Fitzgerald (Clondulane), and Dan Hegarty (Mallow). We were brought before the R.M. (Resident Magistrate) at Fermoy and remanded in custody for eight days. Regularly for the period from September 1919 to June 4th 1920, we were remanded each week and on the latter date we were all released except Mick Fitzgerald, Dan Hegarty and John Joe Hogan.

Immediately I came outside the Courthouse in Cork I was met by my old employer (Wm. J. Thompson) to whom the grey Buick car had been returned. He told me that I was to go back to Mallow with him - driving him in the Buick - and that I was to return to my job. I was about to bid goodbye to my fellow ex-prisoners when some strangers (to me) who were there and had overheard the remark of Mr. Thompson butted into the conversation. They informed me that they were taking charge of our party and that I was not to go back to Mallow with my late employer. They took the ex-prisoners

(Tom Griffih, Peter O'Callaghan, Pat Leahy and Leo O'Callaghan (witness) to Turner's Hotel where we all had some refreshments. I was then informed by them that there were "G" men (detectives - members of "G" Division, Dublin Metropolitan Police) in Cork with instructions to shoot us on sight and I was advised to leave the train at Mallow on the opposite side to the platform and also not to sleep at home. I carried out these instructions and from June 4th 1920 to the Truce I was on the run and on full time active service with the brigade and battalion columns from their formation.

About this time a series of raids for arms were carried out in the area. Approximately 20 shotguns and 200 rounds of ammunition for same were seized. A typewriter which was required by the battalion staff was also seized about this time. These operations were carried out by members of the Mallow Company - Jack Cunningham, Tadhg Byrne, Bryan Kelly, Ned Waters Leo O'Callaghan (witness) and others.

Early in July 1920, information was received from Volunteer Jack Barrett, employed on railway at Mallow, that a large consignment of military stores was at Mallow Station awaiting transfer to Tralee. The stores comprised two wagons of petrol in two-gallon tins. Arrangements were made by O/C. Mallow Company to seize this consignment. Witness, together with Tadhg Byrne, Jack Cunningham, Jackie Bolster, Richard Willis, Joe Morgan, Pat Sullivan, Jeremiah Daly, Congo Moloney and a bout a dozen other members of the company were engaged in this raid. The petrol was removed to a disused pumphouse belonging to Mallow Creamery on the banks of the Blackwater. A few nights later it was removed by boat across the river to a dump at Mallow Pike by Jackie Bolster, John Murphy and Tom McAuliffe. At this time I was 2nd Lieut. Mallow Company.

About this time also several raids were carried out on the mail train from Mallow to Dublin. At least three of these raids were carried out at Twopothouse - Mallow and Twopothouse companies co-operating in the jobs. The mails on these occasions were removed by witness, driving a Buick car the property of Dave Walsh, Goold's Cross, Mallow - to the brigade headquarters at Denis Curtin's, Ballysimon, Dromahane. The mails were then censored by the brigade staff and afterwards returned to Dromahane Post Office.

The brigade column was formed in early September 1920. It was undergoing a course of training in the Mourneabbey area under Liam Lynch and Ernie O'Malley when it was decided to endeavour to capture Mallow military barracks which, at the time, was occupied by a party of the 17th Lancers numbering about 50. This operation was carried out on September 28th, 1920.

Capture of Mallow Barracks.

On the day prior to this raid I was instructed by my company captain (Jack Cunningham) to get into the Town Hall that night with two others (Jerh. Daly and Jack Barrett) and to hide there until the place had been locked up by the caretaker.

At dawn on the morning of 28th September I was to send my companions - one to the Mountain road, and the other to the Old Cork Road. These men were to pick up the column, which was coming in from Mourneabbey, and lead them to the rear of the Town Hall where I was waiting to open the fire escape door. The column arrived about 4.30 a.m. and entered the Town Hall where they remained until they moved out to attack on the barracks about 9 a.m. There were about 20 men in the column under Liam Lynch and Ernie O'Malley. At this stage Liam Lynch instructed me to arrange to get the Buick car which we had used in the raid on the mails referred to in a previous paragraph. He also informed ^{me} that the raid was timed for 9 a.m. and that, as I was a local, he would hold me responsible for

for ensuring that any stuff captured in the raid was taken by a safe route to be dumped. There were also two other cars used in the raid - driven by Paddy Healy and Sean Healy (both Millstreet Battalion). The latter cars were Model T Fords.

About 8 a.m. I called to Dave Walsh's, Goolds Cross, Mallow, where I met Owen Harold, Vice O/C. Mallow Battalion. He already had the door of the garage open and the car was ready to be moved out. I took the car to Longfield's Bridge and by "The Navigation" road (this is portion of the main Mallow-Killarney road) to Mallow which I reached about 8.55 a.m. I then waited at Shortcastle within about 100 yards of the military barracks for the signal to move in. This signal was one long blast on a whistle. When the signal was given I drove to the barracks and turned my car at the main gate. The car was loaded with rifles, boxes and slings of ammunition, machine guns, bandoliers, lances and other stores as were the other cars (two) driven by Sean and Paddy Healy (the latter was a resigned R.I.C. man). This operation occupied roughly ten minutes.

Immediately the cars were loaded I drove off followed by the other cars. I was accompanied by Paddy McCarthy (O/C. Mallow Battalion). We proceeded out the Navigation Road to Longfield's Bridge where we crossed the Blackwater and further on to Mallow-Killarney railway line. After crossing the latter at a level crossing on the Dromahane road we instructed the gate-keeper, who had opened the railway gates to let us through to lock the gates and lose the key. The "loss" of the key enabled the gate-keeper to delay the military force which reached the gate sometime later in pursuit.

We continued through Dromahane to Glassabue where we dumped the captured material in a disused house on the side of the road. When my car was unloaded I proceeded immediately

(On the instructions of Paddy McCarthy) to Ahadillane Creamery where I contacted Jerry Hanlon (an officer in Ahadillane Coy.) He was a clerk in Warehouse Department of the Creamery. I explained the position to him and he immediately collected about 10 to 12 men who were all Volunteers, and who had taken milk supplies to the creamery, and I took the whole party in the Buick car to the old disused house at Glassabue - this house was about quarter mile from creamery. The captured stuff was removed by this party to Shea's Hall where it was dumped. Paddy McCarthy stayed with this party.

I then drove the car to Beenalough (Sexton's) where I placed it in a shed and, with the assistance of the owner, covered it with straw. I then returned across the country to Mick Kenny's, Lackaneen, where I had some food. Next day I removed the car to Dromahane and at the same time sending word to the owner to collect same immediately. This was done.

Shortly after this I joined the Mallow Battalion Column and underwent a course of training for a period of about two weeks. The column was billeted in the Lombardstown area at Murphy's, McCarthy's and O'Riordan's. The members of the column were: Jack Cunningham, O/C., Dick Willis, Jackie Bolster, Tadhg McCarthy, Joe Morgan, Jerh. Daly (Mallow), Tadhg Mullane (Mourneabbey), Denis Mulcahy, Ned Murphy (Lombardstown), Batt Walsh (Beeing), Tom Callaghan, Wm. Roche, Con Buckley, Con McCarthy and witness (Leo O'Callaghan).

The training was in the use of arms, scouting and the use of cover with instructions regarding outpost duty. There was no actual musketry practice as ammunition was too scarce. The training was carried out at Dan McCarthy's, Creggane, Lombardstown.

About the third week in November 1920, some members of the column including witness moved from Lombardstown to Kilcorney

where we remained for a night. We then proceeded to Rathduane in Millstreet Battalion area where members of the other battalion columns were mobilised. The Brigade O/C. Liam Lynch was in charge and we were informed that we were proceeding to Millstreet that night to attack the "Tans" in the streets. The confessions of all members of the columns were heard by Fr. Breen, C.C., Millstreet. The hearing of these confessions took place at Murphy's, Rathduane. The column proceeded to the outskirts of Millstreet which was reached about 9 p.m. It was then divided into a number of sections which were allocated to various positions - some inside the wall of the market place, who were in a position to cover approximately half the length of the Main St. (eastern end), and others in various laneways opening on to the other portion of the latter street (western end). All parties were led to their positions by scouts from the local company.

With Paddy McCarthy and Sean Cronin, the witness (Leo O'Callaghan) went with their scout to a position in a laneway in the centre of the western section. The scout withdrew to the rear while we took up our position behind a projection on the left side of the lane facing the Main St. We were about ten yards from the Main street. We were only a short time in position - about 5 minutes - and were endeavouring to get into firing positions when a shot rang out and Paddy McCarthy dropped on top of me. (I would like to state in this connection that Paddy McCarthy was a cisteóg (left handed) and as a result had to expose his body when endeavouring to shoot from the only suitable cover available in the laneway. Paddy McCarthy was removed to the rear by Sean Cronin and the scout (Hickey, I think, was the name) while I was instructed by Sean Cronin to cover off their retreat. As they withdrew I moved back to the end of the laneway and we then removed Paddy McCarthy to a field at the outskirts of the town where the

other members of the column assembled in a short time. During our withdrawal I heard several shots and a few blasts of machine-gun fire. I understand that a couple of Tans were killed and a few wounded.

As far as I can recollect, Liam Lynch then instructed some sections of the assembled column to return to their own areas. With other members of the Mallow Column I returned via Kilcorney to Laharn Cross in Lombardstown area. Some days later about mid-December, instructions were received from Brigade H.Q. to send Dick Willis and Leo O'Callaghan (witness) with the Hotchkiss gun captured at Mallow to the Castletownroche battalion area. They were then at Kilcorney and proceeded with Jim Neill and Jerh Donovan of Brigade column via Laharn Cross, Mourneabbey, Burnfo~~st~~st, Beanskeha, Killay~~fullen~~^{fullen} (where Blackwater was crossed) to Quirke's (Glanworth) where the battalion column under Tom Barry were billeted.

With the column we moved to Knockadea (Donovan's) where we met Donnchadh Hannigan and Sean Forde with the East Limerick Column. The ^{joint} ~~first~~ columns moved into position at Glenacurrane on the Mitchelstown-Tipperary road on the morning of December 17th, 1920, about 8 a.m. The site of the ambush position is about three miles from Mitchelstown. The day was very cold. About 11 a.m. a convoy - two lorries and a touring car - passed through the position in the direction of Mitchelstown. We noticed that there were prisoners (I.R.A.) in the lorries presumably on the way to Kilworth Camp. We waited in the position for the return of the convoy. The scouts reported the approach of the enemy about 4 p.m. and the road was obstructed at the western end of the position by pushing a pony trap into the roadway on a bend of the road. As the three vehicles which formed the convoy were close together, fire was opened on the touring car which was leading the convoy, and it crashed into

the obstruction, the driver being killed. The columns immediately opened fire on the enemy party - all of which was inside the ambush position. The military, who had not been wounded by the opening blasts, continued to reply to our fire. I was feeding the Hotchkiss for Dick Willis and noticed that one of the enemy was apparently behind the roadside fence directly underneath our position. I told Dick Willis that I would have a look to see where he (the enemy) was and, just as I was about to take a peep over the edge of our position, Dick Willis pulled me back. At that moment the barrel of the Hotchkiss was struck by a revolver bullet. Following this incident, Willis succeeded in training the gun on the sniper's position and let him have a burst of fire - this ended the trouble from this position.

Shortly afterwards the enemy appeared in the centre of the road with their hands up. About 18 rifles, some ammunition and Mills bombs were captured. A number of bags of mails were also captured and, when examined later, a large number of the letters, addressed to members of the Lincolnshire Regiment at Tipperary, each contained a threepenny piece and a packet of Woodbines. Also in the mails captured was a parcel containing an officer's breeches which was tried on by every member of the joint columns, but would fit only witness. As a result, he was able to cut a dash for some time. This parcel was addressed to Lieut. Riggs. The enemy casualties were, I think, two killed and four wounded. We had no casualties.

The joint columns in this engagement numbered about forty. They were under the command of O/C. East Limerick Brigade (Donnchadh Hannigan). The Hotchkiss gun (crew - Dick Willis and witness) were placed about midway in the position where they could enfilade the road to the east. The columns were, as far as I know, armed about 30 with rifles and 10 with

shotguns. They were positioned on high ground overlooking the road and were distributed over a distance of about 200 yards. There was a small party of about four or five snipers on the high ground across the stream on the opposite side of the road.

In connection with Glenacurrane engagement I recollect that some time about 2 p.m. on the evening in question a Protestant clergyman drove into the ambush position from the east (Mitchelstown) in a pony and trap. He was held up by members of the column. The pony was untackled from the trap and removed to a field at the rere of the position. The clergyman was also taken away under guard and detained until the engagement was finished when he was released.

When the engagement was finished the machine gun crew (Willis and witness) with their gun were taken by O/C. East Limerick and Sean Forde in a motor car in the direction of Kilfinane.

Within a day or two the joint columns took up position in the Kilfinane area (I do not know the name of the place) in anticipation of engaging a cycle patrol of military which travelled the road regularly. While in the position, about 3 p.m., a priest from Kilfinane passed through the ambush position in a horse and trap. He drove a short distance along the road and then returned on foot. He spoke to Donnchadh Hannigan and Sean Forde informing them that the enemy knew of our whereabouts. When the priest left we withdrew from the position and, with Willis, I returned to Mallow Battalion area a day or two before Christmas. We left the Hotchkiss gun at Burke's, Glanworth.

On January 31st, 1921, some members of the Mallow Column decided to attack a party of Black and Tans which usually came to the railway station (Mallow) each night to take their post

to the night mail train. This train usually left Mallow about 9.30 p.m. each night while the party of Black and Tans arrived at the station between 9.15 p.m. and 9.25 p.m. Four members of the column - Jerh. Daly, Jack Moloney ("Congo"), Denis Mulcahy and Jack Cunningham O/C. - took up a position behind a wall facing the road to the station entrance. Ned Murphy and witness took up a position on the road leading to the Goods Yard at the opposite end of the railway in order to cover off any approach from that direction. About 9.15 p.m. a party of three was seen to approach and the ambush party opened fire; there was no reply from the enemy. The Black and Tans and R.I.C. who were in the barracks, less than 250 yards away, immediately rushed to the railway station and began shooting and firing Verey lights. The ambush party and Column O/C. (Jack Cunningham) immediately withdrew towards our position in the Goods Yard and the whole party then retired in the direction of Ballyclough. When we had withdrawn, strong parties of Tans and R.I.C. shot up the railway station premises. A number of railway employees (three) were shot dead, while a bout eight or ten were wounded.

We remained in Ballyclough area for some days at the houses of Tom Connors and Barry, Crougta. During our stay there instructions were issued for a general seizure of local mails. I seized the mails for Ballyclough about 7 a.m. one morning while Joe Morgan did likewise on the main Mallow-Killarney road where he took the mails intended for Lombardstown area. All mails were taken to Tim Connor's house at Crougta where they were censored. They were later returned to Ballyclough Post Office.

About the 8th February 1921, the whole column under the O/C. Jack Cunningham, assembled at Gleannidine in Ahadillane area. Those present were: Ned Waters, "Congo" Moloney, Batt Walsh,

Joe Morgan, Tadhg McCarthy, Jerh. Daly, Ned Murphy, Tadhg Mullane, Denis Mulcahy, Tom Callaghan, Leo O'Callaghan (witness), Wm. Roche, Dan McCarthy, Con Buckley and Jack Cunningham, O/C. All were armed with rifles and about fifty rounds of ammunition each; some also carried revolvers. The Column moved to Gleannavigue in the Mourneabbey district where they were for a few days at Jack Sullivan's and Connell's. Information was received on February 14th, 1921 that three lorries of troops had passed in convoy on the glen road by Beanaskeha to Cork. This is on the main Killavullen-Cork road. The column took up position on this road at Beanaskeha about three miles from Killavullen and awaited the return of the convoy, but it had not arrived by the time darkness set in. The column were just about to withdraw from the position when a dispatch rider arrived with orders from the Battalion O/C. (Tadhg Byrne) to Column O/C. (Jack Cunningham) to report with column to Mourneabbey before dawn on the next day (15th February 1921).

The column moved into Mourneabbey area that night and took up a position on western side of the Mallow-Cork road about six miles from Mallow. The column were on the opposite side of the road to Leary's Rock where the Burnfoot Company, under Tadhg Looney, were in position overlooking the site of the ambush (Leary's Rock). Some members of this unit were deputed to block the road by pushing a cart into the path of the first car in the expected enemy convoy. The ambush was laid in order to attack a car or cars in which General Cummings, O/C. British Forces stationed at Buttevant, and his escort were expected to travel. As the column were moving into position through the roadway to Corry's farmhouse, Mooneparson, Mourneabbey, it was noticed that there were lights in the house. It was about 5 a.m. at this time. The column O/C. (Jack Cunningham) went to investigate the position

and found that Joe Corry (the farmer) was preparing to go to a fair at Donoughmore. He (O/C.) informed Corry that he would not be permitted to go to the fair and, although Corry at first protested, he finally agreed to carry out the instructions of the Column O/C., viz: to remain within the farmyard until he received further instructions from him. As far as I know, Corry did not leave his house while the column were in the vicinity on that day. It was rumoured in later years that Corry disclosed information about the ambush but I am certain that this is not correct.

There was no change in the position till about 11 a.m. when from my position I saw a party of about thirty enemy soldiers moving in extended order along the main road within a few yards of Burnfoot Cross. This party were coming from Cork direction and were moving towards Leary's Rock which was about 300 yards further along the road. I immediately passed word to the Column O/C. (Jack Cunningham) who was about midway in our position which extended for a distance of about 200 yards to the north of where I was. I should have mentioned that we were behind a stone faced fence on rising ground and about 150 yards from the actual site on the road at which we proposed to attack the convoy and parallel with same.

Just after I had passed the news of the enemy position to the O/C., firing broke out in the fields across the road to the rear of the party from the Burnfoot Company under Tadhg Looney who were in position on Leary's Rock. The Column O/C. (Jack Cunningham) then gave orders to withdraw in the direction of Mooneparson Cross. With the O/C., Ned Murphy and Jerh. Daly witness remained in their positions until the remainder had moved off a little distance. Just as our party were about to move away I noticed Danny McDonnell (I.O. Mallow Company) crossing the Clydagh river which ran along below the high

ground on which we were in position. We waited until he reached us and then moved off in the same direction as the remainder of the column.

We crossed the boreen which ran from Corry's farmyard to the fields at the rere of same. When doing so we moved in single file through a gap in^{the} the field on the other side. Ned Murphy was the first to cross and as he was crossing a shot was fired. He was followed by Jerh. Daly with similar results. The Column O/C. (Jack Cunningham) then suggested that we should delay for a second or two and then make a dash for the other side of the boreen. We did and Jack Cunningham went first and a shot was fired. I followed quickly after Jack Cunningham and we were all safely across. Incidentally, Jerh. Daly was struck on the back of the right hand by splinters of stones from the gap. We continued to withdraw under cover of the fences in a westerly direction. When we had gone about 200 yards we were apparently spotted by an enemy machine gun post set up between Mooneparson Cross and Analeentha. This party immediately opened fire and trimmed the top of the hedge behind which we were proceeding in a deep dyke under cover. We crossed the road between Mooneparson Cross and Mourneabbey Creamery and continued in the direction of Nursetown.

When we reached Denis Horgan's house in that district we found that the remainder of the column had already reached safety as they were enjoying some well-earned and welcome refreshments. While at Horgan's we were looking at a large party of military travelling by lorry towards Dromahane on the main Dromahane-Beeing road which was across a glen from where we were. When we had taken some food, the whole column moved that day to Laharn Cross where we were billeted at Jim Byrne's, Paddy Murphy's, Dan Healy's, Riordan's and Corbett's.

McDonnell's attention had been drawn to the intense military activity in Mallow that morning by Siobhan Creedon, a member of Cumann na mBan employed in Mallow Post Office, and he had come to Mourneabbey to inform the column O/C. but he had been held up for a short time on the way by scouts from the local companies - hence his failure to reach us earlier.

We learned later that the men of the Burnfoot^R Company under Tadhg Looney were fired on by numerous parties of military. This party was actually encircled by a large column of troops which had come from Ballincollig and Cork and it was only with considerable difficulty that any of them managed to escape. Four members of this party were killed; some were wounded and several were taken prisoner. Two of the prisoners - Sonny Mulcahy and Pat Ronayne - were tried by drumhead courtmartial and sentenced to death for being found in possession of arms. They were executed in the Detention Barracks, Cork.

As this was obviously a case in which there was a leakage of information, Liam Lynch (Brigade O/C.) held an investigation into the happenings some days later. At the time there was no proof as to how the information concerning this ambush reached the enemy but, following the incidents in the round-up at Nadd early in the following month, it became the general opinion amongst the column that the information was passed on by Shiels.

Shiels was an ex-British soldier who joined the Kanturk Battalion some time in 1920. He worked as a farm labourer in the Kanturk locality. Something of a braggart, he was very fond of drink and, generally, was not popular with the unit. While he participated in the training activities of the battalion column he was always absent, on some pretext, when an engagement was due.

In January (or early February) of 1921, a brigade meeting was held at Gortmore (near Lombardstown) and the assembled battalion commanders were then informed of the plans for the Mourneabbey ambush. The Kanturk Battalion Commander was present, but his unit were not ordered to participate in the ambush, but to hold themselves in readiness. On his return from the brigade conference, the Kanturk Battalion Commander discussed some of these matters in Bride's of Nadd, with some of the members of his unit. Shiels was present then.

In March of 1921, Shiels was with the Kanturk Battalion Column at the brigade headquarters at Nadd. He went into Kanturk to draw his British army pension. The I.O. of the Kanturk Battalion (Michael Moore) noted that Shiels was drinking in the Kanturk publichouses, and then became aware of the fact that Shiels had called at the Kanturk R.I.C. Bks. Moore sent a dispatch with all haste to Nadd. The dispatch never arrived. Next morning there was a huge dawn concentration of British military on Nadd and convoys of troops from Kanturk, Ballincollig, Fermoy, Buttevant and Tralee encircled the mountain. General Liam Lynch and his staff got through the one gap in the khaki ring, but Volunteers Kiely, Herlihy and ~~T~~omey of the Kanturk Battalion were surprised asleep in Herlihy's house with ~~Captain~~ Joe Morgan, Lieut. Ned Waters and Volunteer John Moloney of the Mallow Battalion.

As they were being lined up in their stockinged feet to be executed at the rere of the cottage, Morgan and Moloney made a daring break for liberty. Both were wounded, but succeeded in escaping into the mist. Both are still alive. The others were shot where they stood.

Shiels was at Nadd that morning with the British. He was in Black and Tan uniform and was recognised and saluted by Tom Bride of Nadd, the proprietor of the pub there. He disappeared and was never traced. Hundreds of photographs

of him were circulated by the I.R.A. to England and America but he was not found. He is believed dead.

The description of my part in the Nadd engagement will be described at a later stage.

About this time instructions were issued to trench all roads in the battalion area. With three other members of the column (Jack Cunningham, Joe Morgan and Ned Waters) I proceeded to the Ballyclough area where arrangements were made with members of the local and Twopothouse companies to open a trench at Boherash Cross about five miles from Mallow on the main Mallow-Buttevant road. All members of the two companies to the number of about sixty were engaged on this operation, as the trench had to be dug from ditch to ditch (30ft.) to a depth of 4ft. and a width of 10ft. The actual digging party were under the control of the Column O/C. (Jack Cunningham). With six members of the Ballyclough Company armed with shotguns I took up a position about two miles from Buttevant at Kilcluisha (Coughlan's). We barricaded the road with a hay-rake and two carts taken from Coughlan's farmyard and then took up our position inside the roadside fence. Our position was approximately about quarter mile on the Buttevant side of the position selected for the trench. Another barricade was erected and similarly manned about an equal distance on the Mallow side (Twopothouse Cross). The party at this barricade consisted of Joe Morgan, Ned Waters and about five members of Twopothouse Company.

When the road had been trenched, orders to withdraw were received from O/C. Jack Cunningham. We removed the barricades and withdrew to our billets at Ballyclough with the Ballyclough Company. Next morning it was common news in the district that a lorry of Tans had run into the trench in the early morning and that at least one was killed and two or three injured. We heard that immediately they struck the trench they put up

their hands, but when they found there was no ambush party there they proceeded to Lucey's farmhouse close to the road and set fire to the house and outoffices, burning some of the farmer's cattle including a prize bull.

Within a few days the column was again assembled and we proceeded into the Kanturk battalion area where we underwent a course of training with the local column. The main features of this training referred to the best use of cover, outpost and guard duty and scouting. We did not have any musketry practice. The training was carried out under the supervision of the two column leaders (Jack Cunningham, Mallow, and Denis Murphy, Kanturk).

The Brigade H.Q. was at Paddy McCarthy's house at Nadd at this time, the Brigade O/C., Liam Lynch, with George Power and Mossie Walsh being billeted there. The presence of Brigade H.Q. necessitated rounds of guard duty for the column members as well as for the local Volunteers. The usual procedure was to place equal numbers of column men and local Volunteers on duty at the same post. Usually a Volunteer and a member of the column would be on duty together. From nightfall to 12 midnight two local Volunteers and two column men would alternate in pairs on duty at Nadd Cross. Similar procedure would be followed by the guards on duty between 12 midnight and 8 a.m. In addition, scouts were posted day and night at various vantage points in the area.

A few days before March 10th, 1921, I was on guard duty at Nadd Cross with one of the local Volunteers. Shiels of the Kanturk column was one of the other pair on duty. When we were going off duty about 8 a.m. the following morning Shiels remarked to me that the area would be an ideal place for an ambush. I just said: "What would bring an ambush party here; they'd never find this place". Shiels replied: "You'd never know". The remark struck me as strange at the time, but the ^{full}

significance of it did not strike me until the morning of 10th March 1921, when the round up was in progress. It was then I realised that Shiels had not been with the column since the evening of the day on which he passed the remarks.

About midnight on 9th March 1921, I was relieved of guard duty by a party which included Tadhg McCarthy of my own column (Mallow). I then returned to my billet at Twohig's house and went to bed. I was awakened about 8.30 a.m. by *Jack Callaghan* shouting into the kitchen: "Mrs. Twohig, is there anybody in the house? If so, tell them to clear out". I immediately jumped out of bed, dragged on my clothes, seized my equipment and dashed out of the house. I also had ^{Equipment} ~~ammunition~~ belonging to Jack Hummerston (Kanturk Column) who had gone home to see his mother who was ill). I dumped this in the hayshed. It was misty and foggy on the mountainside and visibility was bad. I then moved in the direction of the "Barrack" (Herlihy's) which was about a couple of hundred yards away. When I reached the house I found the door open. I went into the kitchen and the only sign of life in the place was Herlihy's dog sitting down by the fire. I immediately rushed out and round the corner to the western end of the house. Here I found the body of Herlihy who was dead; proceeding in the same direction I came to a stream about 40 yards away and here I found the body of Ned Waters. His head was partly in the stream and he was dead.

I next proceeded in the direction of Riordan's house about 100 yards away. I continued on till I reached Kenny's, Nadd, where I found Jack Moloney (Congo) lying in bed badly wounded. There were some members of the Kanturk column in the house. We decided to move 'Congo' further away, so Mr. Kenny tackled up his horse and cart. We put 'Congo' into the cart filled with straw and covered with a feather tick. I got in beside him and stayed in the car with him till we reached Cahill's

of Kilmacraigne where we put him to bed. Liam Lynch arrived in a short time and dressed 'Congo's' wound. He then sent for Dr. Ryan, Glantane, who arrived later and dressed the wound. 'Congo' was removed to hospital in Cork two days later. He was dressed up as an old woman in a hooded cloak.

Leaving 'Congo' and the others at Cahill's, Kilmacraigne, I returned to Twohig's to collect the equipment belonging to Hummerston (Kanturk Column) which I had dumped when alerted. I then moved to Laharn Cross in Lombardstown area where I picked up other members of the column. We were later contacted by Tadhg McCarthy with whom we returned to Kilcorney where we remained for some days. After about a week our column was instructed by the Brigade O/C. to return to our home area. We returned to Lombardstown area about the last week in March 1921.

The Brigade H.Q. was in the Mallow Battalion area at this time, principally at Myles McCarthy's, Creggane, and the column, as well as the members of the local companies, were continually engaged on trenching roads, demolishing bridges and cutting communications for the next couple of months. In addition, Mallow military barracks was sniped on numerous occasions by members of the column. During this period also the houses of the following loyalists in the area were destroyed

Major ^{RE}Puttyman, Newman, Dromore, Mallow.
Major Coote, Mallow.

The next major engagement in which I was involved was at Rathcoole on June 16th, 1921. On the previous day about noon I was at Paddy Waters' house at Glashbue, when I received word to report to Laharn Cross in Lombardstown area as soon as possible. I arrived at Laharn Cross that evening and met the other members of the column, viz: Tadhg McCarthy, Paddy Buckley, Ned Murphy, Joe Morgan, Batt Walshe, Con Buckley, Tadhg Mullane, Jerh. Daly, Sean Breen, Jack Cunningham O/C. We travelled on foot through Kilcorney to Con Meaney's, Blackrock, where we billeted for the night.

Before dawn on 16th June 1921, we moved into Rathcoole Wood where we met the members of the battalion columns from Newmarket, Millstreet, Kanturk and Charleville. Paddy O'Brien was in charge of operations, while Sean Healy, Millstreet, was in charge of the mine-laying. There were over 100 column men present of whom about eighty had rifles. The remainder, as well as several members of the local companies who were on duty, had shotguns. One Hotchkiss gun which had been captured in the armoured car used in the attempted release of prisoners at Mountjoy was handed to me to operate. This gun had only arrived the evening before at Lombardstown and was brought to Rathcoole in a dismantled state. I assembled the gun in a haybarn at the rear of the ambush position.

Six mines were laid in the road between Rathcoole and Drishane Cross and extended over a distance of about three-quarters of a mile. The ambush party were divided into six sections - one to cover each mine. There were also covering parties on each flank as well as a small party on the opposite side of the road. The main body was on the south side of the road.

With Sean Breen and Batt Walsh I was posted with the Hotchkiss gun to the party covering the eastern mine (nearest Banteer). Sean Breen and Batt Walsh were to act as covering party for gun crew in the event of a hasty retreat being found necessary. I do not recollect who my assistant on the gun crew was. We took up our positions about 3 p.m. after we had seen the enemy party travel in the direction of Banteer a short time previously. The party of 'Auxies' travelled in four lorries. It must have been near 5 p.m. when the convoy was seen approaching the ambush position. My instructions from the O/C. in charge of the operation were to open fire on the last lorry just as it crossed a bridge which was directly below our position and about 70/80 yards distant. Immediately beyond the bridge was the first mine on the eastern flank. When

the last lorry crossed the bridge I opened fire as did all the riflemen in my section. The gun only fired two clips of ammunition when it seized up. I then tried single shots, but in vain. Sean Healy then arrived to inquire as to the position and Paddy O'Brien then sent word that I was to withdraw with the Hotchkiss. I then withdrew in the direction of Blackrock, Kilcorney, where I handed over the gun to Sean Healy.

When the other members of the battalion column arrived at Kilcorney a short time later we all withdrew to the Laharn Cross area where we billeted. In a day or two most members of the column returned to their own company areas.

The site of the ambush at Rathcoole is on the Banteer-Millstreet road about $2\frac{1}{2}$ miles east of Millstreet. The engagement lasted about 45 minutes.

Between the date of Rathcoole ambush and the Truce some members of the battalion column sniped military and Black and Tan posts at Mallow on a number of occasions.

Early in July 1921, an ex-British sergeant-major named McPherson, who was resident in Mallow for some years, was arrested as a spy. As far as I know, suspicion was aroused in his case as a result of some letter captured in a raid on the local mails. He was taken to Dromahane and to Leary's, Gleannidine, where he was detained for a couple of days. He was then taken back to Pandy's Cross, Dromahane, where he was tried by brigade officers at Pat O'Connor's house. He was removed later the same night to a spot about one mile from Mallow on the Mountain road where he was executed by members of the column.

My rank at the Truce was 2nd Lieutenant, Mallow Company.

Following the Truce, I was attached to Transport Section at Brigade H.Q. While there I was engaged in driving the Brigade O/C. and other officers on their various tours of duty. I remember driving Sean McKeon and Sean Moylan on a tour of the ambush positions in North Cork.

When the military barracks at Mallow was taken over in January 1922, it became Divisional H.Q., 1st Southern Division, and I took up duty there as staff driver to the Divisional O/C., Liam Lynch. I carried on in this capacity until August 1922, when I rejoined the Mallow Battalion column which was operating against Free State forces in the North Cork area. From August 1922 to April 1923, when I was arrested, I took part in various engagements throughout the brigade area. I was arrested early in April 1923, and was a prisoner in Tintown No. 2 Camp until I was released after hunger-strike in March 1924 (I think).

Signed: Leo O'Callaghan

Date: 12th July 1954

(Leo O'Callaghan)

Witness: Phil O'Donnell

(Phil O'Donnell)

12th July 1954.

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