

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21

BUREAU STAIRS MILITARY 1913-21

No. W.S. 985

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS.

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 985.....

Witness

Peter O'Loughlin,
Loughavilla,
Ennis,
Co. Clare.

Identity.

Lieut. and Captain, Ennis Company Irish Vol's.,
and I.O. 1st Battalion Mid-Clare.

Subject.

Irish Volunteers, Ennis, Co. Clare,
1913-1921.

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

Nil

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STATEMENT BY PETER O'LOUGHLIN

Loughavilla, Ennis, Co. Clare - formerly an officer of the Ennis Company and of the Battalion Staff - Intelligence Officer - 1st Battalion, Mid Clare Brigade.

I was born in the town of Ennis on 5.8.'96. My father, who was an agricultural carpenter, came from Killamona, about four miles from that town. His people were small farmers and, apart from the fact that he was a member of the Land League and a staunch supporter of Parnell, I am not aware that any other of my predecessors had any connection with earlier national movements.

I left school - Ennis Christian Brothers - when I was thirteen years and went to learn the trade from my father. He was then in delicate health and, having married late in life, was advanced in years.

As a youth and young man I played hurling and, though I never was a star at the game, I became a member of the Ennis Senior team which contested the final of the Clare County Championships in 1917.

The Irish Volunteers were formed in Ennis in November or December 1913 and I joined at the inaugural meeting. I cannot say now who the first officers of the unit were and what was the strength of the company. I am very definite that up to the Rising in Easter 1916 I attended all the parades, drilling exercises and manoeuvres of the company. Though the majority of the members sided with John Redmond when the 'split' took place in October 1914, I remained loyal to the Irish Volunteer Executive headed by the late Professor John MacNeill. I was not among the Irish Volunteers who mobilised in Ennis in Easter 1916.

After the Rising and until the release of the prisoners arrested following the Rising, the Irish Volunteers in the Ennis district lapsed into a state of inactivity though the

organisation itself remained intact. Following the release of the first batch of prisoners late in 1916, drilling was quietly resumed and new members were accepted into the ranks. The release of the leaders in the summer of 1917 and the East Clare by-election in July of that year helped to add considerably to the number of recruits. By the end of 1917 the Ennis Company had nearly 300 members. At the time the conscription threat had finished in 1918 we had over 400 men. Though some of these fell away after the conscription threat there were on an average about 400 Volunteers in Ennis from the beginning of 1919 to the Truce.

During the East Clare by-election in July 1917 I assisted de Valera's campaign by canvassing, collecting money and providing protection for his meetings from attacks by supporters of the Irish Party candidate, Paddy Lynch, who to a good extent were wives of British soldiers then in receipt of separation allowances from the British Government in respect of their husbands serving in the first World War. These ladies and their families were a particularly truculent crowd and got a good deal of support and encouragement from the R.I.C. and the loyalist publicans in the town.

Later on I was one of the Clare Volunteers who were sent to help the Sinn Fein candidates in the by-elections in Kilkenny city and South Armagh and in East Mayo in the General Election of 1918. Our job in these campaigns was principally to protect the Sinn Fein meetings from the Irish Party supporters, particularly the "Separation women".

In South Armagh and East Mayo I was always armed with a revolver, but there was never any occasion to use it; a hurley or an ashplant being good enough to deal with the trouble makers in a few places.

In July 1917 the Irish Volunteers in Ennis again began to drill openly. Such drilling was declared an offence by the

British Government, but the declaration was ignored. A number of the company officers, including Jim Griffy, Jim Madigan, Frank Shinnors, Tom ~~Burke~~^{Brown} and Bill McNamara were arrested and sentenced to terms of imprisonment. Other men stepped in to take their places and, instead of the arrests impeding the drilling, they only helped to make the Volunteers more determined to go on with it, apart from a very small number of exceptions. The Ennis Company drilled openly every Sunday and at least once during the week.

About the end of 1917 under special orders I participated in cattle drives in the Ennis area. Cattle were driven from the lands of Dr. Howard, Drumcliffe, and Tom Crowe, Loughavilla. Both holdings were non-residential and the owners were well-known Imperialists who used the lands entirely for grazing. The cattle were driven through the countryside and I don't know what happened to them afterwards. The cattle drives and the general state of discontent in Co. Clare generally caused the British Government to reinforce their troops there and to declare it a military area in February 1918. The cattle drives ceased to have the official approval of the Headquarters of the Irish Volunteers soon after this, and the members of the organisation were forbidden to take part in them.

Apart from drilling I do not remember very much else of importance occurring throughout the remainder of the year 1918 other than having gone towards the end of that year ~~into~~^{with} a small party of Volunteers under Joe Barrett to the house of a man called Cunningham who was suspected of robbing the mail car outside Ennis. He was not at home and did not show up in the locality afterwards.

Early in 1919 I took part in a few raids on the houses of wellknown Unionists around Ennis for arms. As far as I can remember, we collected about a dozen shotguns and a couple of revolvers. In no case did we meet with any resistance.

It was about this time, too, that I made contact with a British soldier who got me two Lee Enfield service rifles. I was alone in my workshop one morning around 11 o'clock when a young soldier passed the door. The thought struck me that he was in some sort of trouble and I went to the door to look after him. He stopped at the Cornmarket Cross about 20 yards away. He was obviously very nervous and seemed uncertain as to what direction he should take. I strolled over to him and opened up a conversation. We were not long talking when I learned that he had deserted on the previous night from the local Ordnance Survey Barracks. He said he was "fed up" with soldiering and that if he could do so he would return to his home in England. Hinting that the money might be made available if he could get me a rifle, he readily jumped at the proposal and offered to try and get a rifle that night provided I helped him to get over the back wall of the barracks. We agreed on this.

He was hungry and I wanted to conceal him for the rest of the day so I took him to an eating house near the Cross and arranged there to have him provided with food and shelter until nightfall. I also gave him money to go to the pictures that night lest he might be tempted to go out into the streets after dark and come under the observation of the 'Red Caps'.

Some time after 11 o'clock that night I met the soldier as arranged and had with me another reliable Volunteer named Garrett Barry in whom I confided. We got the soldier over the barrack wall without difficulty. He was back in a short time with two rifles which I hid nearby while Barry escorted our benefactor back to the house where he had sheltered during the day. In the meantime I had left there a 'civvy' suit and a pair of boots and fixed up with another Volunteer to meet the soldier at the eating house next morning and take him to the char-a-banc which was leaving Ennis for Limerick. Before parting with the soldier I handed him a £5 note to pay his expenses home.

By a coincidence, on that same night, Bill McNamara, captain of the Ennis company, got two more rifles from other soldiers who also deserted. They, too, got away on the same char-a-banc.

Incidentally it took me a long time to get a refund of the money which I expended in acquiring these two rifles, also for some .303 ammunition which I got later from another soldier, a Scotsman named Donal Campbell. My acquaintance with Donal Campbell began shortly after. He was a devil-may-care type, fond of a drink and a good time. I met him in much the same way as I had met the other soldier except that he came directly into my workshop and straightaway began talking in a frank and friendly manner. I sized him up as a man who would be useful and safe, and when he had done a good deal of talking in condemnation of a soldier's life in this country and of the poor pay which he had, I put the proposition up to him that he could supplement the pay by selling me .303 ammunition which was badly wanted then by the Volunteers, and he said it was a bargain. In a night or so he had delivered the first ammunition - about 50 rounds - and at different intervals afterwards he brought me more, being paid each time. I was in touch with him for about a year after which he was transferred to Ennistymon where, I learned, he again made contact with the local Volunteers and sold them both arms and ammunition. Altogether this man gave me about 1500 rounds of ^{.303} ammunition. He got away out of the country safely and years later wrote to me from Scotland looking for a job in Co. Clare.

I usually delivered this ammunition in quantities of a couple of hundred rounds to the Company Q.M. - Ralph Roughan - whom I used to meet in the Foresters' Club in Ennis. One night as I was going on one of these errands I was held up by a military patrol under the charge of a sergeant. One soldier covered me with his rifle while another searched me. The

soldier conducting the search put his hands on my pockets containing the ammunition and pretended nothing, but on completing the job, shouted: "O.K. Sergeant" and I was let off. The man who conducted the search was my confederate - Donal Campbell.

In conjunction with being associated with the Irish Volunteers I also became a member of the Ennis Sinn Fein Club on its formation ~~there~~ on 27th August 1917. I attended some of the meetings which were held and paid subscriptions now and again. Otherwise I had not much to do with this body.

In January 1920, I was selected by the Club as one of the Sinn Fein candidates for the Ennis Urban Council for which there was a contested election. Though our party secured the control of the Council, I was not one of those who were elected, but a few months later, I was co-opted to replace a member who had been disqualified. I continued to remain a member of the Council for a number of years afterwards.

On the establishment of the Sinn Fein Courts I became a "brehon" of the Ennis Parish Court. The other members of the Courts were: John Kennedy, Undertaker (Chairman), James Sullivan, Harness-maker, Michael Keane, Coachbuilder. The Registrar was Patrick Moroney. The sittings, ^{which took place} held about once a month in the local Courthouse, were held for about a year, up to about March 1920, when, owing to opposition from the British forces, the Court was obliged to close. The ^{general} public seemed to be well pleased with the manner in which justice was dispensed; even bitter opponents of Sinn Fein availed of them. The decrees were enforced and order maintained in the Courts by the Volunteers.

A committee representing the Trades Unions, Labour Party, Sinn Fein and the I.R.A. was formed in Ennis in October 1920, for the purpose of enforcing the Belfast Boycott. I was one of the I.R.A. representatives and I think the Chairman was Fr. Chisholm ^(Dore) of the local Franciscan Friary.

To the best of my knowledge, Belfast goods were seized in the town on at least four occasions. Except in one instance, all the seizures were made at the railway station where most of the employees were either Volunteers or sympathisers of the Sinn Fein movement and they "tipped us off" whenever such goods arrived. Most of the goods seized were biscuits which were distributed among our own supporters. Soon after the formation of the Boycott Committee, word was brought to me one morning by Dan McPharland, a Labour member of the Committee, that a traveller from Belfast had a truss of drapery outside Maloney's drapery shop in High St. I collected another member of the Committee named John Ryan, a member of the Ennis Sinn Fein Club and a non-Volunteer. The two of us went to Maloney's and found the traveller in the shop. After explaining who we were and that we intended confiscating the truss, he tried to convince us that by doing so we would be seriously interfering with his livelihood which he was trying to make honestly in his own country. Eventually he defied us and we then seized the truss which we took as far as Carroll's Bridge and tried to throw it into the River Fergus. Ryan did not quite approve of this idea and gave me little assistance and, as the truss was too heavy for one man to lift over the parapet, we left it on the bridge. We decided to go back and warn the traveller to leave the town at once. In the meantime he had gone to Carmody's Hotel where we tracked him and requested him to get out of town forthwith. No sooner had we left the hotel than the traveller 'phoned the R.I.C. Barracks and informed them of our conversation with him. We had gone only a short distance from Carmody's when we were held up by a "Black and Tan" in civvies, who ordered us to go with him to the barracks. On the way it dawned on me that I had some seditious documents in my possession and, as we were passing J.J. Meade's shop, I threw the papers into the hall. - ~~Meade was one of our crowd.~~ Ten yards or so further on

I told the 'Tan' that I did not intend to go to the barracks until I was made aware of what I had done out of the way. We began to argue and two more Tans came on the scene. They tried to force me to the barracks and I resisted. Being strong and athletic at the time I managed to knock them about until I broke free. I ran along the streets until I got as far as D'Arcy's forge - a good distance in the lead. Rushing into the forge, I threw off my coat, blackened my face with soot and began blowing the bellows. The Tans entered but did not recognise me and went off to continue their hunt. That evening and later in the night the British forces made exhaustive searches throughout the town including some of my old haunts. From that time onwards I seldom stayed at home at night and until the Truce in July 1921 I was very careful of my movements.

Early in February 1921 - I was then O/C. of the Ennis Company - I received orders to seize the rate books from the Co. Council collector living in Ennis, Michael McMahon. Next morning I called at his office where the clerk, Patrick Carroll, a Sinn Feiner, told me that his boss had already made arrangements to hand over the rate books and the undeposited rate moneys to the I.R.A. I took no further action but decided to await developments. On the following day I received a message from Mr. T.V. Honan, an official of the Sinn Fein Club, to call to see him, and when I did so I was handed the rate books and a cheque for £1013.3.4. payable to myself. I cashed the cheque in the Provincial Bank, getting the amount as far as possible in £20 notes. I ^{put} sewed the notes into ^{the} insoles ^{of my boots} and four or five days later cycled to Spencilhill, 4 miles from Ennis, and delivered the contents of my boots to Jack Hassett, who had been deputed to receive the undeposited ^{rate} moneys on behalf of the Co. Council, then also under our control. I also arranged in the meantime to transfer the rate books to him.

From February 1921, until well after the Truce, the rates in the Ennis district were collected by the I.R.A. and in my capacity as O/C. of the Ennis Company during part of this time, it was my responsibility to see that the rates were paid and that the rate moneys were sent to the Trustees appointed by the Co. Council for that purpose. I think it right to mention that so far as the Ennis ^{urban} area was concerned every penny of the rates collected by the Volunteers was afterwards found to be properly accounted for.

Though I was appointed Battalion I.O. for the 1st Battalion Mid Clare Brigade, in April 1921, I remained more closely associated with the active service side of the battalion and my new rank was more or less a nominal one. Previous to that, however, I did have some contact with intelligence work, chiefly through one of the best all-round Volunteers we had in Ennis - James Cosgrove - a sorter in the Ennis Post Office. He did most useful work at considerable risk to himself right through the struggle up to well into 1921, when he had to go 'on the run'.

While engaged on sorting duties he had a special pigeon hole for suspicious mail and when there was anything big in that line he notified me or whoever happened to be O/C. of the company and arrangements then made to raid the office. I remember about half a dozen such raids. Of course the raiders generally wore masks and carried revolvers. Cosgrove also was usually in charge of the mails as they were conveyed to and from the railway station. In February 1921, as he was coming with 26 bags of mail in a horse float from the station, the float was held up by myself in charge of three other members of the Ennis Company - ^{Frank} George Butler, Jim Quinn and Tom Clohessy. We diverted the float to St. Flannan's College and there transferred the mail to a waiting ^{pony} and trap which was driven to Gortroe ^{more} about a mile outside the town and there handed over

to the charge of Frank Cullinane, O/C. of the Inch Company. Next day, with six or seven other Volunteers, I went out to Inch and censored all this mail. The letters addressed to the general public were placed back in the mail bags and left at the local post office, while all correspondence for the enemy forces was handed over to our own Intelligence people for further examination.

The only member of the enemy forces whom I personally knew to be friendly and to have given information to the I.R.A. was a Sergeant Barrett, a native of Listowel, Co. Kerry, who was stationed in Ennis for a long time. He gave, among other matters, news of intended raids by the enemy.

The first military activity in which I was engaged was an unofficial job which was planned and carried out entirely by members of the Ennis Company ^{on 16.1.1918.} It was an attempt to disarm the police in a hut at Inch, 3½ miles from Ennis, where four R.I.C. men were protecting a family named Mungovan who had become unpopular over land trouble. Usually two of the police would be in the hut, while the other two would be out around Mungovan's lands. They were armed with carbines and .45 revolvers. The plan was that two of the attacking party - Jim Madigan and Bill McNamara - who were in charge, would knock at the front door and tell the police that a neighbouring house was on fire. When the door was opened the party would rush in and overpower and disarm the police. As soon as this was accomplished another party would hold up the police at Mungovan's. Turlough Considine, Joe Carrick and myself were detailed for the latter job. I had a rifle and about a dozen rounds of ammunition. Altogether I think there were about 20 men in our party, half of whom were armed with rifles, revolvers and shotguns and all wore masks.

When the police answered the knock at the front door it was 11 o'clock at night. The door, which was on the lock, was opened a few inches. Our men tried to force it in but

failed, as it was secured on the inside by a strong chain. This obstacle was not foreseen and so much surprised the men outside that the policeman had time to slam back the door and relock it. He then shouted to his comrades that the building was being raided. The second policeman opened fire and after an exchange of a couple of shots the attackers withdrew. No attempt was made to proceed with the disarming of the other two policemen on Mongovan's farm as we assumed they would be alerted by the shooting.

The entire party got back safely to Ennis and no arrests followed, due, I believe, to the fact that the police were under the impression that the attackers were from the locality and could get no evidence to connect any of them with the raid.

Our attempt to secure arms on this occasion met with general condemnation in the locality. Even the Irish Volunteers in Inch sent to the local papers a copy of a resolution passed at a meeting of the company condemning the affair.

Throughout 1919 there was practically no military activity by the Volunteers round Ennis, but by the end of that year the local company was well drilled and the majority of the members had a knowledge of the use of rifle and revolver. The organisation was on a very sound basis and discipline was good. The more militant element was very anxious for action to begin and this would represent about 30% of the unit.

The first attack on British forces in the town began with the shooting of Constable Swanton, an R.I.C. man who was engaged on detective work at Ennis Railway Station. He knew most of the important Volunteers in the county and kept a sharp watch on all trains. Orders were given to get him out of the way and on 24th February 1920, along with three others, one of whom was ^{Frank} George Butler, we fired on him as he was returning from the railway station. He was only wounded. Three Volunteer

who had nothing to do with the shooting were arrested - Bill McNamara, James Griffey and Thomas Keane. They were detained for about two months and then released for want of evidence.

Early in June 1920, I was notified to report to Drumconola, Ruan, around 8 p.m. On arriving there I found about 20 other Volunteers from Ennis and the surrounding districts. We were addressed by Joe Barrett, one of the brigade staff, who explained that it had been decided to disarm the military guard - usually an N.C.O. and six men - on its way back to barracks from the Butter Market where the military had an outpost, a motor repair depot. He said, too, that the disarming party would be chosen from the men present and that they would go through a number of rehearsals before the raid in an avenue which ran in a manner similar to the streets in which the attack would take place. The proposed operation was rehearsed that night, some of our men acting as the military party, carrying rifles at the slope and, in the same formation as the military guard passed through the streets. The rehearsals were continued nightly for about a fortnight. The time chosen for the attack was the eve of a horse fair in Spencil Hill, 4 miles from Ennis, then probably the second biggest horse fair in Ireland. Large crowds of people from all over Ireland assembled in Ennis on the day before, with the result that the streets were fairly crowded and even a number of deals in horses were made in the town before the fair commenced at all. From about 4.30 p.m. onwards all the men ~~chosen~~^{selected} for the operation were in the vicinity of the place chosen for the attack. In order to divert suspicion, one man - Michael Nugent, Barefield, Ennis - had been ordered to bring along a horse to this point and hold a sham sale in which most of the waiting party took part pending the arrival of the military guard. A position in the streets had been allocated to every man and the only one of the men whom I can now be

definite about was Joseph Barrett from the Killamona Company who was posted next to me. I had a revolver. The signal for action was a blast of a whistle from the other Joe Barrett, who was in charge.

Around 5 p.m. the military came along from the Butter Market into Carmody St. They were marching in pairs about seven or eight paces apart with bayonets fixed and rifles at the slope. My position was at Dunne's forge on the footpath. At the blast of the whistle I jumped into the road behind two soldiers, seized a bayonet in each hand while one of my comrades leaped in front with a drawn revolver and ordered them to put up their hands. They did so without a murmur. We took the arms to a waiting motor car at the corner of O'Connell St. and Carmody St. This car was driven by John Joe Egan of Ennis. He drove ^{the guns} them out the country to safety.

In the meantime the military - a corporal and six soldiers - were collected, marched to Jack D'Arcy's yard in Carmody St. and there locked into a shed where they remained for about a quarter of an hour before being released by the R.I.C. and military. The booty from the raid yielded us seven service rifles and about 350 rounds of .303 ammunition.

After the raid I hid my revolver in my sister's house in Barrack St. and then went on towards my workshop via D'Arcy's forge where I picked up a cartwheel and rolled it before me so as to give any "tout" the impression that I was engaged on my own business while the raid was in progress. Though considerable searches were made in the town and countryside by enemy forces, they found nothing, and while the attack was witnessed by a good many people who knew the participants well, not a single man involved was arrested, a fact which spoke well for the loyalty of the people of the area to the Volunteers.

On the 18.10.1920, I reported at Costelloe's disused house in Barafield, 4 miles from Ennis, at about 9 p.m. All told,

about fifty five other men from 1st, 2nd and 3rd Battalions of the Mid-Clare Brigade had assembled there, and Frank Barrett the Brigade O/C. was in charge. He told the parade that Ruan R.I.C. Barracks was to be attacked next morning and particulars of the plan were given by him. He said the garrison consisted of fourteen R.I.C. and that one of these men, who was friendly with us would co-operate in the attack. The allocation of the R.I.C. throughout the barracks was also explained; eleven of them slept upstairs in two large rooms, six men in one room and five in the other. One man slept downstairs, while two were on night duty in the day room, also downstairs. Milk was supplied to the garrison by a man called Callanan, a herd, who lived about 100 yards or so from the barracks. Each morning around 7.30, one of the two police on night duty went over to Callanan's for the milk, crossing a field in doing so, and was admitted on his return by the other policemen. The man who would be at the door next morning would be our friend inside the barracks. This constable's name turned out to be O'Carroll. As soon as the other policeman reached Callanan's he was to be held up outside the house and made prisoner. At that stage O'Carroll would open the back door of the building and admit the main party which was to consist of three sections of ten men each.

Jim Quin, Frank Keane and myself, all armed with revolvers, were detailed to hold up the policeman at Callanan's. The party moved off from Barefield about 4.30 next morning and arrived in the vicinity of Ruan before dawn around 7 o'clock. Half a mile or so from the barracks we removed our boots and went barefooted the remainder of the way. Quin, Keane and myself took up our positions outside Callanan's. We were there half an hour or so when the policeman emerged from the barracks for the milk. He was taken completely by surprise and surrendered without fuss. At the same time Constable Carroll opened the

back door and admitted the main body who were waiting in a group behind the barrack wall. We held on to our prisoner until the barracks was captured and then took him to the front of the building where other prisoners were held on the main road. One policeman was mortally wounded and two others wounded slightly inside the building. They did not put up their hands when ordered.

The barracks was then burned and our capture included 14 rifles, 13 or 14 revolvers, some boxes of Mills hand grenades, a quantity of Verey lights and several thousands of rounds of ammunition. We also took the bikes which the police were using. Constable O'Carroll went off with the column and afterwards fought in a number of engagements against the British forces.

After the attack I went with Jim Quinn to my sister's place at Kindifin, near Gort, Co. Galway, where we rested for a couple of days and then, getting the loan of bicycles, returned to Ennis. I cannot recall now whether there were any reprisals by the British troops following the capture and destruction of this barracks.

As 1920 wore on matters were getting lively for the forces of occupation in Clare and the R.I.C. and Tans were getting desperate. A number of savage reprisals had followed attacks and ambushes on their barracks and military convoys in different parts of the county, particularly in Lahinch, Miltown-Malbay and Ennistymon after the Rineen ambush and in the countryside adjacent to these towns. The Bishop of Clare vigorously denounced these reprisals and was the most outspoken member of the Irish Hierarchy in condemnation of British rule in the country.

Towards the end of November 1920 a party of masked and armed men raided the Bishop's palace outside the town in the middle of the night. His Lordship was away from home and when

the raiders, who were mostly Black and Tans, failed to find him they attempted to set fire to his home. In this they were not successful and not much damage was done. A further raid was expected and about fourteen men of the Ennis Company were put on guard of the Palace on the night of the expected raid, 5.12.1920. The Bishop was again absent from home. We remained there until morning but nothing happened. Next day the Tans raided the place but all the garrison of the night before had by then departed. The honour of sleeping in the Bishop's bed on that night was shared by Jim Quinn and myself and the room was placed at our disposal by the housekeeper. After that incident there were no more visits by 'masked and armed men' to the Palace during the night time.

On 4.1.1921, picked men from the 1st Battalion, Mid Clare Brigade assembled after dark at Barefield, four miles from Ennis. I was one of a party of about 20 men who were there. We proceeded to Slaveen, a mountainous district, 7 or 8 miles distant, and 3 miles or so to the west of Ennis. There we met another party of about 30 men drawn from the 3rd and 4th Battalions, and fixed our quarters for the night. Next morning we proceeded to Caherea where more men - about 20 - from the 2nd Battalion joined us. At about 8 o'clock the column, then roughly 70 strong and mostly equipped with rifles, were divided into sections prior to taking up positions to ambush a convoy of four or five military lorries which were expected to travel from Kilrush to Ennis.

The main party, about 50 strong, occupied positions along a by-road which ran at an acute angle from the main road and from a point 300 yards to the south west of Caherea National School. Their positions extended about 200 yards and while those nearest to the main road were only 20 to 30 yards from it, the men on the other end of the line were up to 200 yards from the road.

On the Ennis side of the main party were posted two sections of 10 men all equipped with rifles. One section under Joe Barrett, Brigade O/C. Operations, was placed behind a fence running parallel to the main road on a piece of rising ground about 300 yards on the east side of the road, while the other section under Sean Casey, O/C. 3rd Battalion, occupied positions also on rising ground 250 yards on the west side of the road and almost opposite the men of the other section. The latter party were ^{roughly} just a quarter of a mile on the Ennis side of the main party. I think it was the intention to allow the first lorry or two to pass the main party to be dealt with by the other two sections. Frank Barrett, Brigade O/C., was in charge of the operation.

We took up positions around 8 o'clock in the morning and remained there all day. Round 4 p.m. scouts along the Ennis road reported a lorry travelling from Ennis and immediately afterwards sent word that more lorries were coming behind it. The lorries drew up about 500 yards from the positions held by the two supporting sections and the occupants proceeded into the fields on the east side of the road apparently with a view to outflanking Joe Barrett's section. The latter anticipated this move and ordered a rearguard action. There was an exchange of shots lasting for 10 minutes or so. It was getting dark at the time and the Brigade O/C. decided to take no part in the shooting; he ordered the main body to retire over Kiltunna mountain on our rear. The other section under Sean Casey retired in the same direction. None of the I.R.A. party was hit in this operation and I can't say if there were any casualties among the enemy.

Some time after the Caherea ambush an attendant in the Ennis Mental Hospital was fired at and wounded for, it is alleged, having given information to the enemy forces in Ennis

that an I.R.A. column was lying in ambush at Caherea. While we were waiting there during the day he cycled past along with another attendant. They were both returning from a short holiday in their own homes in West Clare and had seen the column lying round the ambush positions. I had nothing to do with this shooting and am not aware if there was official approval for it.

Before the capture of Ruan Bernacko

~~After the Caherea affair~~ a column of about fifty men assembled in Carahan on the road from Ennis to Tulla to attack a lorry of military which was expected to pass that way. I cannot recall the date when this took place. Most of the party were placed inside the walls of the road running through Carahan while about a dozen men with rifles were posted at points in the adjacent fields. It was planned to fell a tree in front of the lorry on the middle of the ambush position and, for this purpose, the column commander, Paddy Con McMahon, Ennis, and myself cut a tree almost through with a cross-cut so that when the lorry came to the required spot it could be knocked instantly across the road.

Positions were taken up at 10 a.m. Some time between 3 and 4 in the evening a small van came along and was allowed to pass before it was recognised that it contained six R.I.C. men, the scouts having taken it for a civilian vehicle did not trouble to see who were inside. It was too late to fell the tree when it was noticed that the van carried police and had got almost clear of the ambushing party before fire was opened. Only one of the occupants was wounded in the heel, another got a bullet through his cap. After this the column withdrew.

While the Black and Tan war was raging, very few of the loyalist supporters in Ennis carried their colours on their sleeves and of those who did, two families made themselves particularly objectionable to the I.R.A. One was Shaughnessys who kept a " " pub in Market St. and the other was ~~the~~ Mills, who

resided in Mill View. Mr. Mills was an Orangeman and a bigot. He detested the Sinn Fein movement and everybody belonging to it, especially Dr. Fogarty, Bishop of Clare. It was suspected that he was involved in the attempted burning of the Bishop's Palace, while he openly assisted in the supervision of the destruction of T.V. Honan's premises, an incident referred to further on.

At O'Shaughnessy's, though all publicans were warned against serving drinks to the enemy forces, or at least letting it be known that they were welcome, the Black and Tan members of the Ennis garrison were received with a "céad míle fáilte", and also their friends, especially the ladies. The I.R.A. in the town decided to attack the place and to kill as many as they could of the occupants.

At about 10 p.m. on the night of 16th April, 1921, a party of 8 or 9 men under Paddy Con McMahon, and including Eamon Barron, Jim Quinn, Frank Butler, Joe Frawley, Paddy McCormack, ^{Jack O'Carroll} and myself, all armed with revolvers called at O'Shaughnessy's pub. The door was shut at the time, but was opened in answer to Paddy Con's knock, who stepped back a few paces after knocking. As soon as the door opened he hurled a Mills hand grenade into the bar and the rest of us fired into the place with revolvers. Inside were Sergeant Rue, who was killed outright, Constable Vanberburgh, Mrs. Danagher and Miss O'Shaughnessy, who were all wounded.

As a reprisal for this attack the establishment of T.V. Honan, a prominent member of the Ennis Sinn Fein Club, was burned to the ground and then blown up by military engineers; the private house of Patrick Considine, Turnpike, Ennis, and the Old Ground Hotel were also burned, while the furniture of the Clare Hotel was removed and burned. The Black and Tans, R.I.C. and military joined in these reprisals which occurred on 19.4.1921.

On 20.4.1921, as a counter-reprisal, Ennis Volunteers, again under Paddy Con McMahon and including Frank Butler, Frank Keane, myself and, I think, Paddy McCormack, entered the private house of Mills, to whom I have already alluded, ordered out the occupants and set the place on fire. It was destroyed in less than ten minutes, despite frantic efforts to save the place by military fire brigades. The burning was carried out in the ~~night~~ ^{day} time around 3.30^h. All of our party were armed with revolvers and we met no opposition.

The last operation in which I was concerned prior to the Truce was on 8.7.1921. A week previously two Volunteers from Killamona, Frank Keane and Patrick O'Keeffe attempted, while unarmed, and without official approval, to disarm two Black and Tans in Duggan's Boot Shop in O'Connell St., Ennis. They failed in the attempt and, in trying to get away, ran into a cul-de-sac in Lysett's Lane where they were overtaken, wounded and ~~taken~~ ^{made} prisoners. In the shooting a child named Morrissey was killed.

Keane and O'Keeffe were taken to the County Infirmary in Ennis where they were kept under armed guard. The nurses in the hospital were mostly on our side and brought word to the Volunteer officers in Ennis about the movements of the guard. They had observed that the guard was changed each morning at 6 o'clock and noticed, too, that the retiring guard would be off the ward where the prisoners were detained for 10 or 15 minutes before the new guard came on duty there. It was decided to attempt to rescue the two prisoners.

Paddy Con McMahon was in charge of the rescue party and with him were Frank Butler, James Quinn and myself. On the morning of 8.7.1921, we entered the infirmary as soon as the night guard had left and were supplied with masks made by the nurses who directed us to the ward where the wounded men were lying ^{we} and took them from their beds to a pony and trap which

was waiting at the infirmary gate. O'Keefe, a big man of about 15 stone weight, was unable to walk and I had to take him on my back from the bed to the trap.

There were other Volunteers covering off the entrance to the infirmary but I do not remember who they were, nor can I think of the names of those who took charge of the rescued men in the trap in which there was one lady, either a nurse or a member of the Cumann na mBan. The trap and its occupants got away safely as did all the men concerned in the rescue.

There is a further incident which I had forgotten about. It concerns a raid made on Ennis Railway Station during 1919 when about a dozen men from the local company, under Liam Stack, then O/C. of the unit, seized a consignment of food, drink, household equipment and a number of bikes which were consigned to the British troops stationed in Corofin. All the material was destroyed except the bikes, which we kept, and the raid was completed without any interference.

As regards the ranks held by me in the Volunteers, I held the rank of -

2nd Lieutenant, Ennis Company, from early in 1919 to the end of 1919.

1st Lieutenant from end of 1919 to April 1920.

Captain (Ennis Company) from April 1920 to April 1921.

Battalion I.O. 1st Battalion, Mid Clare Brigade, from April 1921 to Truce.

Signed: Peter O'Loughlin
(Peter O'Loughlin)
Date: 10.8.34

WITNESS: D. Griffin
(D. Griffin)

