

W. S. 1,007

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21
BURO STAIRÉ MILÉATA 1913-21
NO. W.S. 1007

ROINN  COSANTA.

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS.

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 1,007

Witness

Daniel Ryan,
Kilchreest,
Loughrea,
Co. Galway.

Identity.

Lieut. Ballycahalan Coy. Irish Vol's.
Co. Galway, 1917 - ;

Brigade Quartermaster later.

Subject.

Gort Battalion, Co. Galway,
1917-1921.

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

Nil

File No. S.2322

Form B.S.M. 2

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STATEMENT BY DANIEL RYAN,

Kilchreest, Loughrea, Co. Galway.

I was born in Gortacornane, Gort, in the parish of Kilbecanty on St. Stephen's Day 1898. I went to school at Loughcutra National School. In my early years I heard many stories of the Land League and the Plan of Campaign from my father who was a very active member of the Land League. He was also a member of the Gort Board of Guardians. My grandfather came from Cloughjordan, Co. Tipperary. My grandfather's two brothers were evicted, convicted and transported to Van Dieman's Land for their activities against the landlords. I learned this from my eldest brother, Rev. Fr. Michael Ryan, who went to Australia in 1920. He found the history of our two grand-uncles in Australia but I have forgotten the details. I would like to mention that my brother, Fr. Michael Ryan, was a Volunteer before going to Australia. About August 1918, a year before his ordination, he publicly read the Proclamation of the Irish Republic in Gort. The R.I.C. surrounded the town of Gort to capture him but he got out of the town with the aid of P.J. Pigott, later Adjutant Ardahan Battalion, South West Galway Brigade, (now deceased) and a couple of more Volunteers whom I cannot remember. Our house at Gortacornane was raided for him the same night but he was not at home. When going back to All Hallows College at the end of the holidays he travelled cross country with the aid of Volunteers.

When leaving for Australia in January 1920 he was escorted to the railway station at Gort by 300 Volunteers in charge of Thos. McInerney, O/C Gort Battalion, and Peter Howley, Vice Commandant of the same Battalion.

I joined the Volunteers in the summer of 1917. The Company was Kilbecanty Company in the Gort Battalion, which was then an independent Battalion in communication with G.H.Q. as far as I know. John Coen of Ballycahalan was the Company Captain. I myself was 1st Lieutenant shortly after joining, and Martin McGrath of Cloone was 2nd Lieutenant. The strength of the ^{Company} was roughly 65 to 70.

In 1917 and 1918 there was little activity beyond parades twice a week, drilling and route marches. We had scarcely any arms, but there were some shotguns and ammunition for them which we could lay our hands on when needed. I did some duty for Sinn Féin Courts and some police duty in 1918 or 1919 but I cannot remember details.

In the year 1919 John Coen, Capt. of the Company, was arrested and charged with drilling the Volunteers. He was released after a short while. At this time two armed R.I.C. usually followed us on route marches. We had three raids for arms in the year 1919. I took part in the three raids. The first was at Chibby Chase Cottage which belonged to the Perses of Roxboro. We got a small Winchester or Sneider rifle, one double-barrelled shotgun and one box of cartridges for the shotgun. The rifle was as good as useless to us as we never succeeded in getting ammunition to fit it. We met with no opposition in this raid. Our second raid for arms was at Baggott's of

Ballyturn House. We took no firearms but collected a few good swords. We also took a double-barrelled shotgun from Thomas Burke of Lisbrien while he was out fowling. Burke had boasted that the raiders had missed this particular gun (the gun he had fowling) in a raid which was carried out on his house about a month before that, very likely August. We knew the route he usually took and four of us surrounded him. We wore face masks. When called on to surrender the gun he put up his hands and walked away leaving the shotgun behind him. This man was definitely hostile to us. We had taken one shotgun for certain, maybe two, on the raid on Burke's house a month before. Our last raid for arms took place outside the Company area at Houston's of Loughcutra. Houston was a Scottish game-keeper for Lord Gough, a big landowner. We took a small automatic pistol and about one hundred rounds for it. We also took 50 shotgun cartridges. Houston was a man that would put up a good resistance if he got half a chance. We had to have a plan. We sent in two Volunteers who were not known to him. They said they were from Killinena, Co. Clare, and asked him if he would go to see a sick horse. Houston was well known as a quack horse doctor. He said he'd go the next day and, as is usual in Co. Galway, he saw his visitors to the gate. I and three Volunteers, Thomas Keeley, afterwards Engineer Gort Battalion, Patrick Glynn, afterwards Vice Commandant Gort Battalion, and Jeremiah Dwyer, a Co. Clare Volunteer, were waiting in ambush in the shrubbery outside. When the two "Killinena" Volunteers (I forget their names) came abreast of us with Houston they ordered him to produce the automatic pistol which we knew he always carried on him.

He pulled the gun on us but we overpowered him and took it from him. It was fully loaded with one in the breach. He meant business. We then went and searched the house and got one hundred rounds for the automatic and fifty shotgun cartridges. We brought Houston along with us for about half a mile, using threats of shooting etc., but he refused in spite of all to disclose where his other guns were, namely a shotgun and a rifle. He might have them surrendered to the R.I.C. by this time.

During the year 1919 I often did police duty and carried out duties connected with the Parish Court. We had some prisoners for whom we had to find prison accommodation.

On the 15th August, 1919, John Coen, Captain of our Company (Kilbecanty), and myself went to Ardrahan under orders from Peter Howley, Vice Commandant of the Gort Battalion, afterwards Vice Commandant of the Ardrahan Battalion, to fire at and wound but not kill Sergeant Elliott of the R.I.C. who was an officious and very up-to-date officer. The Sergeant was going from the barracks to his own house at Castle Taylor, about a statute mile along a path through the fields. It was in the middle of the day. We were in position along the path an hour before he came. We had a shotgun each which we got from Volunteers John Joyce and Martin Thompson of Ardrahan Company. We got the guns at the wood in Castle Taylor. They probably had the guns hidden there overnight. We had come on bicycles from Ballyturn and we put the bicycles in the wood. The Sergeant came along not suspecting anything. He was unarmed as far as we knew. We both

let him have the two barrels. He had harassed the people around Ardrahan. He was a bad weed. If the ammunition had been a little stronger he would have been killed. Anyhow he never again served in the R.I.C. We handed back the guns to Volunteers John Joyce and Martin Thompson and cycled to the pony races (flapper meeting) at Peterswell. The story was there before us that Elliot was shot but we said we didn't believe it. We didn't back a winner. We had no money in any case.

During the year 1920 I was still 1st Lieutenant in Kilbecanty Company. In the spring of that year I took part in the destruction of two evacuated R.I.C. barracks, Kilbecanty R.I.C. Barracks in my own Company area and Crusheen R.I.C. Barracks in Co. Clare. The reason I went to Crusheen was that an R.I.C. man's wife and family continued to live in the barracks after it had been evacuated. There was a danger that she would recognise local Volunteers. We removed herself, her family and furniture and destroyed this barracks. I travelled eight miles to do this job accompanied by Company Engineer Thomas Keeley, afterwards Battalion Engineer Gort Battalion, and Volunteer Patrick Glynn, afterwards Commandant Gort Battalion. Sometime in the summer of that year we warned three D.M.P. men who were home on holidays to resign. I and some other Volunteers, with Peter Howley, Vice Commandant of the Battalion (Gort), later Vice Commandant of Ardrahan Battalion, in charge, approached the three men in their homes. Two of them cleared out the next day and returned to Dublin. The third, Martin Moran of Cloone, said he would remain. He did so and joined our Company. He had good service in the Company

and is still alive and in receipt of a Military Service pension. About September or October 1920 we took two men who were friendly with the enemy out of their homes and warned them to have no more connection with the R.I.C. One of them, an ex-British soldier, went to England and the other behaved himself from that on.

Joseph Stanford, Captain Gort Company, afterwards O/C Galway South West Brigade, John Coen, Captain Kilbecanty Company (now deceased), and I suspected Thomas Quinn, Gort, a rate collector, of giving information to the enemy at Gort. He was at Rosepark, Gort, auctioning growing timber when the three of us approached him. We wore masks and walked into the crowd surrounding him. We pulled him out of the crowd, telling him that he was wanted on a charge of spying. One of us fired from a shotgun at him and wounded him in the body and leg. He got one grain in the eye for which he got one thousand pounds compensation for the loss of the sight of that eye.

In the early summer of 1920 Joseph Stanford, O/C Gort Company, informed me that he had learned from one of his intelligence officers in Gort that about five R.I.C. men were in the habit of patrolling the main Ennis road between Gort and Blackwater situated half a statute mile outside the town of Gort. I cannot remember how many times a week the patrol duty was carried out. We decided to attack and disarm them. About twelve Volunteers in all assembled at Blackwater for that purpose. Joseph Stanford was in charge. I would venture to say that it was early in June as the meadows were not cut. I must mention that the practice of the R.I.C. to patrol the main Ennis

road between Gort and Blackwater had never varied. They had always gone out and come back the same way. On the day we assembled at Blackwater, however, they took a different route on their outward journey. They went by the Tubber road, turned left at Cianahowin Cross and on over the railway line to the Ennis road at Blackwater. The R.I.C. surprised us instead of being surprised themselves and opened fire from their revolvers. We returned their fire and wounded one of them. They all succeeded in retreating to Gort. We did not suffer any casualties.

The movements of an R.I.C. patrol between Boston, Co. Clare, and Gort, Co. Galway, were being watched about this time. It was observed that nine or ten men did a patrol of this road once a week on bicycles. About September 1920 it was decided to attack them. Twenty-five to thirty Volunteers, including myself, assembled at Kilmacduagh. The patrol failed to turn up and we dispersed. Thomas McInerney, O/C Gort Battalion, and Peter Howley, Vice Commandant of the Battalion, were in charge.

Castledaly is just half way between Gort and Loughrea. Five R.I.C. men were in the habit of going frequently from Kilchreest to Peterswell. On the 30th October, 1920, they were attacked by the Volunteers on their return journey. There was no R.I.C. barrack at Peterswell as it had been evacuated and later destroyed by burning. There were about twenty-five men with shotguns and rifles, shotguns mostly in the attacking party. One R.I.C. man was shot dead and another wounded. We collected three rifles and five bicycles. The attack took place on the main road about two miles from Peterswell.

There was no house there then except Daly's of Castledaly, now dismantled, and the gate lodge. The five R.I.C. men were riding on bicycles at about fifteen to twenty yards apart and were armed with carbines. We were all lined along the wall of the road except four men at Castledaly Cross to cut off the retreat of the R.I.C. in the direction of Kilchreest. There were also three men at the Peterswell side to cut off any retreat in case the R.I.C. turned back towards Peterswell. All the Volunteers were on the side of the road opposite Castledaly Church as it was thought that we should not take advantage of consecrated ground. We had also two Volunteers to make sure that nobody left Daly's house. When the last R.I.C. man was within the ambush position, that is between the gate lodge and Castledaly Cross, a distance of about 180 yards, we were to open fire. This happened according to plan. I was in position between the church and Castledaly Cross. I was opposite the third R.I.C. man, at whom I fired. I'd say I hit him low with my first shot. He was turning to mount the fence on the far side of the road. He fell there and remained as he fell. The two leading R.I.C. put up no resistance and their rifles were taken by the men at Castledaly Cross. I was not in a position to see the remaining two R.I.C. men, the Sergeant and the Constable. The Constable was wounded but escaped with his rifle through the church grounds. The Sergeant escaped also through the fields south-west of the church. A couple of the Volunteers followed them but did not succeed in hitting either of them. I learned after that the wounded man who escaped through the fields did not die. Our general intention was, as far as I know,

to capture their arms without killing the R.I.C. Daly of Castledaly rode on horse-back cross country to inform the R.I.C. at Kilchreest of the attack. The Parish Priest, Fr. Corcoran, who is still Parish Priest of the parish, was going to the church to hear Confessions. He found an R.I.C. man's cap on the road. In the church he was told that an R.I.C. man was dying outside. He hurried out and administered the last rites of the Church to the dying R.I.C. man. The Parish Priest told me after that he died almost immediately after being annointed. I remember the date of this ambush as the following day was Sunday and I think Mrs. Quinn was shot in Kiltartan during the following week.

Reprisals followed immediately. On Saturday evening the R.I.C. opened indiscriminate fire around the village of Kilchreest. At midnight the same night they burned Carty's and Coy's dwelling-houses in Ballincurra, a quarter of a mile from the village of Kilchreest. They also burned Fallon's dwelling-house at Scalp, Castledaly, as we passed by that house on our way from the ambush. We came to the conclusion that was why they burned it. Fallon was questioned about us by the R.I.C. but he gave them no satisfaction. Cartys and Coys were known as members of the Volunteers. The Parish Priest of Kilchreest, Fr. Corcoran, now Reverend Michael Canon Corcoran, and Sergeant Cunningham of the R.I.C. succeeded in keeping the R.I.C. from burning the village of Kilchreest. Howley's dwelling-house at Cockstown, Ardrahan, was burned. The Howley boys were well-known I.R.A. man.

Patrick Loughnan, 2nd Lieutenant Beagh Company Gort Battalion, was amongst those who took part in the Castledaly ambush. Patrick Loughnan and his brother Henry were found murdered near Drimhasnagh Castle (near Ardrahan), headquarters of the R.I.C. Auxiliaries, by Volunteers in December 1920. They were buried at Shanaglish. Joseph Stanford, Captain of Gort Company, afterwards O/C Galway South West Brigade, Patrick Glynn, Volunteer Kilbecanty Company, afterwards Vice Commandant of Gort Battalion, John Coen, O/C Kilbecanty Company, and I dug their graves and fired three volleys over them. We dug the graves while a British Force was at Shanaglish Parish Church, a quarter of a mile away, and fired the volleys the moment they withdrew.

There was a raid on my house about the 16th November, 1920. They didn't get me or my brothers. They actually found me the same night in another house but didn't recognise me. I am of opinion that if they knew me that night I would have been in the same position as the Loughnan brothers were shortly after. After the Castledaly ambush most of us who were in it had to go on the run.

On St. Stephen's Day 1920, as far as I now can recollect, Patrick Ruane, Quartermaster of the Gort Battalion, told me that he had got instructions from Thomas McInerney, O/C Gort Battalion, to collect as much arms and ammunition as possible to attack the R.I.C. Auxiliaries stationed at Drimhasnagh Castle in the parish of Ardrahan. They were in the habit of travelling daily to Gort in a lorry. Patrick Ruane and I travelled to

Clooney, Co. Clare, to Con McMahon's (now deceased) Battalion headquarters to get all the arms and ammunition we could borrow there. We walked the distance of about thirteen miles cross-country and saw Con McMahon and some local Volunteers who were with him. He gave us the loan for one week of three rifles and one hundred and fifty rounds of .303 and twelve small grenades about the size of a good duck-egg. He gave us detonators for the grenades. The two of us brought back what we got cross-country to a place called Killen in the Beagh Company. We contacted Joseph Stanford, Captain Gort Company, Thomas Keeley, Gort Company Engineer, Volunteer Patrick Glynn of Ballyturn, later Vice Commandant Gort Battalion, John Coen, Captain Kilbecanty Company, and maybe another one or two, and went to the headquarters of Thomas McInerney, Commandant Gort Battalion, near Granagh. Patrick Ruane, Quartermaster of the Gort Battalion, did not go with us. He was exhausted after the journey to Clare. He wasn't too strong. Thomas McInerney, O/C Gort Battalion, did not give permission to proceed with the ambush. He said the time was not suitable. Patrick Ruane and myself brought back the rifles, grenades and ammunition to McMahon's headquarters in Clooney within the time we promised. We had walked cross-country about forty-five miles including the journey to Granagh. We were annoyed coming back from Granagh after seeing Thomas McInerney, the Gort Battalion O/C, because permission was not given for the proposed ambush as we had hoped to get at the Auxiliaries and, apart from anything else, to have satisfaction out of them for the murder of the Loughnan brothers. We were sure they were responsible for the murders.

In the winter of 1920/1921, I can't remember the exact date, Joseph Stanford, Captain of Gort Company, later O/C Galway South West Brigade, John Coen, Captain of Kilbecanty Company, and I met in the workhouse grounds Gort. We came in there from cross-country, entering the grounds at the back of the workhouse. We had an appointment with Michael Kelly, Gort Company Intelligence Officer, who worked in the town of Gort. We moved down to the entrance gate off the street waiting for Michael Kelly who was not there at the exact appointed time. From inside the pillars of the entrance gate we saw five R.I.C. men armed with rifles coming in the direction of the gate. Joseph Stanford and I were at the wicket gate to the left as you leave the workhouse. We could not be seen by the R.I.C. owing to the high wall running from the wicket in the direction of the Ennis road. John Coen was standing behind the main gate pillar separated from us by the small wicket gate. The R.I.C. were in pairs, two, two, one and about 25 yards between them, and the nearest two had approached to within thirty-five or forty yards of our position when they halted. The remaining three halted at the same time. Before they came to a halt we discussed whether we would attack and decided against it except they came closer to the gate. In that case we would have no choice but to attack as they would see us leaving our positions. The R.I.C., who were a town patrol, turned back. Michael Kelly, the Gort Company Intelligence Officer, arrived after the police had gone and we inquired from him if the patrol was a regular thing. What he said was that the R.I.C. did the patrol four or five times a week between 7 and 8 p.m. We then planned to

attack the patrol and capture their rifles inside a week.

We contacted John Fahey, Captain Peterswell Company, Martin Fahey, Engineer Peterswell Company, Volunteer Joseph Madden, Volunteer Patrick Carew and Volunteer Thomas Fahey, afterwards Captain Peterswell Company. We also contacted the following from Kilbecanty Company:

Volunteer Patrick Glynn, afterwards Vice Commandant
Gort Battalion

" Michael Reilly, afterwards Adj. Gort Battn.

Company Engineer Thomas Keeley, afterwards Engineer
Gort Battalion

John Coen, Captain Kilbecanty Company

and three or four more whose names I can't remember. All were armed with rifles and shotguns, mostly shotguns, and assembled a quarter of a mile at the back of the workhouse ready to move into planned positions in the street when Michael Kelly, Gort Company Intelligence Officer, and Volunteer John Connell, Gort Company, hurried up to us and said that the workhouse was surrounded by military and R.I.C. We withdrew immediately. We learned about a fortnight later that a courting couple were in the workhouse grounds the first night we were there and that very likely they knew us, and either by loose talk or otherwise the enemy learned our intentions.

In March 1921 Joseph Stanford, Patrick Glynn, John Coen, John Fahey and his brother, Martin Fahey, discussed the question of contacting Michael Brennan of Clare with a view to asking him to send us a leader and equipment. It was decided to send me and John Burke, Lieutenant Derrybrien Company, to contact Michael Brennan.

John Burke and I went cross-country about ten miles to Flagmount where we saw Henry O'Meara, Battalion Commandant. He told us there was to be a council meeting of his own battalion that night at Lacrue, Feakle, five or six more miles away. He invited us to the meeting, saying that Brennan might be there. We went and the meeting was presided over by Thomas McGrath, one of the staff officers of Michael Brennan's brigade. McGrath took our story and promised to convey it to Brennan. As far as I can remember we got a dispatch in a week or ten days from Brennan to meet him in Derrybrien and to have all the armed men we could muster with us. We did this and brought about ten men armed with rifles and shotguns to meet him. They included Joseph Stanford, John Coen, Patrick Glynn, Thomas Keeley, three from Derrybrien Company, myself and two or three others I can't remember.

We stayed at Derrybrien that night and next day, which was Holy Thursday 1921, we proceeded from Derrybrien to Dalystown, two miles south-west of Loughrea. Brennan had a Flying Column of between thirty and forty men with him, all armed with rifles. We put up at Daly's of Dalystown. We left Daly's at about 7 a.m. Good Friday morning and took up positions at Dalystown Gate and scattered over half a mile on both sides of the road. We were so arrayed that there was no danger from our own fire. Some of the men were in Coy's farm house. Some were in the gate lodge. We remained in the ambush position until about noon when Brennan decided to withdraw.

We proceeded by the by-road to Derrybrien, seven or eight miles from Dalystown. I forgot to mention that the

mails were raided early on Good Friday morning - a little after 6 a.m. - near Dalystown, in the hope that the enemy would come out as a result of the raid. When we got one and a half miles from Dalystown on our way to Derrybrien Brennan let the men into local houses for food. While inside drinking tea we heard the signal shot which we knew meant that enemy forces were in sight. We saw them but they were out of rifle range and they withdrew before they could be approached. They were in lorries. We then proceeded to Derrybrien. From there Brennan and his Flying Column went back to Co. Clare and we retired to our own area.

It would not be a fortnight after that I got a dispatch from Brennan to meet him at Flagmount, Co. Clare. This I did. Captain Houlihan, Hannon and his brother Paddy were with him. Brennan handed me a dispatch from headquarters Dublin to read, which stated that he was getting charge of South East and South West Galway Brigades, comprising the area south of the railway line from ~~Ballinasloe~~ Ballinasloe to Galway and the Clare/Galway boundary both brigades adjoining Clare. This was the first time that these two brigades became known as Galway South East and Galway South West. The boundary line between the two brigades ran through Kilchreest on between Closetoken and Craughwell on to Athenry. Kilchreest was in Galway South East, Craughwell South West, Closetoken South East, Athenry South West, Kilnadeema South East and Derrybrien South West.

Brennan said he was going to organise both brigades and appoint officers. He came to Kelly's of Kilnadeema

and had a meeting there with the newly appointed officers of the South East Brigade. The officers of the South West Brigade met him at Limepark. Those that met Brennan at Limepark included Thomas McInerney, Peter Howley, Gibbert Morrissey, Martin Neilan, Joseph Stanford, Patrick Glynn, John Fahey, Martin Fahey, Thomas Fahey (brothers), John Coen, myself and a few others whose names I can't remember. I think it was General Brennan's intention to make the new brigade and battalion staff appointments that night in Limepark because he made the appointments for the South East Brigade area at Kelly's the night he had the meeting there.

The meeting at Limepark was abandoned before the business was finished as British military and R.I.C. came quite close to Limepark House (unoccupied at the time). It turned out that the enemy were on their way to raid houses in Peterswell and they came to within about half a mile of Limepark. The enemy comprised three lorry loads and about fifty cavalry. It was in the small hours of the morning in the month of April 1921. All armed Volunteers at the meeting remained standing to under General Brennan until the British Force passed out of the neighbourhood. Then the I.R.A. marched off to their various areas. General Brennan came again after a fortnight, this time to Healy's of Rathealy near Limepark, and appointed brigade and battalion staffs. I was appointed Brigade Quartermaster South West Galway Brigade.

Ballyturn House is in the parish of Kilbecanty and in my own old company area of Kilbecanty. Baggot, a Justice of the Peace, lived there with his wife and two

daughters. Gort is between three and four miles away to the north west. Saturday the 14th May, 1921, was a market day in Gort. My sister, Brigid Ryan, now Mrs. Alphie Kearns of Kilmacduagh, was at the market in Gort that day. She usually came home the direct way by Lough Cutra but that evening for some reason or another she came home by Ballyturn. When she arrived home she did not even wait for a cup of tea but came straight away to where Joseph Stanford, John Coen and I were in the fields in my brother's farm.

She told us that a military-looking man on horseback passed her on the road near Ballyturn and went into Baggot's house. We came to the conclusion that the man was District Inspector Blake of the R.I.C. District Inspector Blake had been sent specially to Gort to kill the I.R.A. organisation in that area. He had been a British Officer during World War No. 1, and we considered him a very dangerous enemy to our forces. He had raided churches during Divine Service. On one of these raids our chief scout, Martin Coen, had a narrow escape from the guns of Blake and his men. Their bullets chipped pieces off the headstones in Kilbecanty cemetery with Martin dodging from headstone to headstone until he finally got clear away under cover of hedges. Blake was often on horseback. Immediately my sister brought us the news we began to plan as to how we'd get him, but we got word that he made little delay at Baggot's and we were one and a half miles away.

The previous January or maybe December 1920, we had put up a canvas tent in Gortacornane wood for

sleeping accommodation. It held ten to twelve men and was fitted with good heavy blankets. We had dry heather underneath/^{over} which we put a layer of straw which we brought in sacks in case it would be tracked. We had a good carpet on top of the straw which we got from a neighbour. We had a fair share of comfort in the tent. We used it only for sleeping as many of us could not sleep at home after the Castledaly ambush. We went for meals to local houses where we were always welcome. At times three or four slept in the tent, at other times up to ten. We were very careful to approach the tent from different points so as not to make a path.

Before we went to camp on Saturday evening the 14th May we talked a good deal on what my sister had told us about Blake going to Baggot's. We figured out that surely he had gone there to arrange something for the following day - a party of some kind. We sent a dispatch to Patrick Glynn and Thomas Keeley to come to the camp that night. They arrived along with Thomas Craven, a North Galway Volunteer on the run. The six of us settled down to discuss Blake and the possibility of the party. We decided to move close to Baggot's avenue in the morning and to get two scouts, Volunteers John Keeley and Martin Coen, to scout the Kilbecanty road and around the gate lodge outside the drive leading to Baggot's.

When all this was decided Captain Patrick Houlihan, a member of General Brennan's Brigade Staff and Flying Column, arrived at the camp. He gave us a start as he hit the canvas a blow of his rifle on his way in and

knocked an awful blast out of it. He was very welcome as he was an experienced officer and a marksman above the ordinary. We told him of our plans and he was delighted.

We moved in the morning of Sunday as decided and lay in wait in the wood close to the avenue leading to Baggot's for word from the scouts. Of the seven of us I think three had shotguns, four had rifles and about three had revolvers. At about 1 p.m. we got word from scout John Keeley that a private motor-car containing three men and two women had gone into Baggot's. I must now mention that we also had Michael Kelly, Intelligence Officer Gort Company, lying under cover to identify Blake and his party. We got word from Kelly that Blake was in the car.

We then took up positions, four lining the drive on the right-hand side going out to the main road with a fallen poplar tree about forty feet long for cover. Two were in the gate lodge with positions at the two windows facing the entrance gate and two inside a coped wall about three feet high outside the lodge. The two at the wall were brought into the lodge as Captain Houlihan thought that they were in bad positions. Joseph Stanford, Patrick Glynn, Volunteer Craven and myself were at the fallen tree, with Joseph Stanford in charge. Patrick Houlihan, John Coen, Michael Kelly (who joined us after identifying Blake) and Thomas Keeley were at the windows of the gate lodge facing the gate with Houlihan in charge of that party.

We had taken the precaution to close one side of the gate to prevent the car driving through our

position too quickly. We remained in position, lying prone except for the four in the lodge, until the car appeared at about 8 p.m. It was a long wait but the day was very fine. The men in the party in Baggot's were dressed in white pants and sports coats. They had played tennis during the day.

The car stopped at the gate and one man, Captain Cornwallis I believe, stepped out of the car to open the second side of the gate. They got the order "Hands up, surrender" from Glynn and myself as arranged beforehand. Cornwallis dodged for cover very quickly and opened fire from his automatic at the men by the fallen tree. All our party then opened fire on the car and on Cornwallis, but before he was killed he had fired shots and very nearly got Stanford. Blake fell out of the car dead. McGreedy also fell out dead and Mrs. Blake. Lady Gregory was saved being hit. It looked as if Mrs. Blake tried to fire her own or Blake's gun. It was known that she always carried an automatic and at times threatened people in the town of Gort with it. Fire ceased and we approached the car.

We found Lady Gregory in a sitting position behind the car. She looked quite cool and answered "yes" in a cool, calm voice when asked if she was alright. She said she wished to go to Baggot's and we proceeded there with her. We met one of the Miss Baggot's in the drive and handed over Lady Gregory to her. Lady Gregory was daughter-in-law of the famous Lady Gregory. Miss Baggot had heard the shooting and was hysterical.

We dismantled the car and collected the two or three revolvers. We delivered a note to Baggot and told him to give it to the enemy forces in Gort. It was to the effect that if reprisals followed we would burn his house and that his own life would be in danger. We then went to Gortacornane and removed all furniture out of my house expecting it to be burned. Nobody slept in it that night or for weeks after. We learned later that immediately after our departure Baggot sent his coachman to Gort R.I.C. Barracks to report the ambush. The R.I.C. soon arrived on the scene, firing in all directions as they came. In their search of the woods they shot one of their own men, intentionally it was learned, as he was about to resign. His name was Kearney.

They proceeded to Gort, firing indiscriminately, breaking into shops in the town and looting. They also commandeered Dr. Sandes, Nurse Galbrath, Nurse Mulkerrins and, I think, Nurse Barry to lay out the bodies in the R.I.C. barrack. That Sunday night or early Monday morning they burned three farm-houses in Ballycahalan and Kilbecanty Company areas: John Coen's house, Michael Fahey's and Patrick Callanan's. It seems that Baggot did not deliver our note until Monday. We thought that what stopped them from burning more houses was the delivery of the note we gave Baggot.

We broke up camp after Ballyturn ambush. Captain Houlihan went home immediately to his own area in Co. Clare. Stanford, John Coen, Glynn, Craven, Thomas Keeley, Kelly and myself put up in farm-houses on the Co. Galway and Co. Clare border but in our own Brigade area. We

posted sentries at night and the O/C of the Brigade and myself, Brigade Quartermaster, took our turns as sentries. The weather was extremely fine and as the enemy were travelling in large numbers there was little we could do to attack them. Ballyturn ambush made them very busy and brought them to our area daily, raiding and searching in large numbers. We were more or less on the defensive.

About the middle of June 1921 the British Forces carried out a very large-scale round-up, taking in the area Loughrea to Gort south of Lough Cutra as far as Ballinruan, Co. Clare, north east to Killanena south to Feakle, north east to Woodford, Marble Hill, Dalystown, and completed the circle at Loughrea. They moved from Loughrea and Ardahan and Gort and made their headquarters at Chibby Chase Cottage in the Kilbecanty Company area near the Co. Clare border. The round-up lasted six whole days and nights, from a Sunday night to the following Saturday night, taking in a separate area each day, rounding up all the men and boys and bringing them to a point for scrutiny by the R.I.C. each evening. No I.R.A. prisoners were taken in my brigade area as a result of this round-up. Three I.R.A. prisoners were taken in the Co. Clare portion of the area rounded up. They belonged to Feakle Battalion and to General Brennan's Flying Column. Rochford and Twohey were two of the prisoners; I can't remember the name of the third.

The round-up was in progress a day or two when we got word from the Gort Company (on the Tuesday I'd say) to avoid the mountains. A British soldier who was driving a lorry from Gort to Chibby Chase Cottage with supplies

said that they were to take in all the mountains bordering Clare and Galway and that the round-up was to last five or six days. He was just a soldier who talked in a garage in Gort while getting petrol for his lorry. When we received this information the Brigade O/C, Joseph Stanford, immediately passed it on to General Brennan and took the necessary precautions in our own brigade area. Stanford, John Coen, Michael Reilly and myself came down to Kilmacduagh, four miles west of Gort. I believed at the time, and still believe, that the intention of the British Forces was to encircle Brennan's Flying Column and also to capture the I.R.A. men who took part in the Ballyturn ambush as well as all the wanted I.R.A. men in the area.

The Brigade O/C, Joseph Stanford, and myself had actually twenty-five men assembled at Russane, Kilbecanty, on the Sunday night the round-up commenced, to block roads in the Kilbecanty area to harass the enemy and prevent them using motorised transport. We knew nothing of the round-up until we heard the rumble of lorries and the trotting of the cavalry. We had to abandon the road blocking. We disbanded the twenty-five Volunteers except a few for scouting. With the aid of the scouts we were able to keep outside the circle during Monday and Tuesday, when we acted on the information from the Gort Company to go down from the mountains to the low-lying country.

As I have already stated, we were on the defensive and it was no easy job. It was our hardest time. There was no enemy party coming our way small enough to be attacked with the arms available to us.

A week before the Truce Stanford, Brigade O/C, got a dispatch from General Brennan asking us to meet a party of

ten to twelve men of his Flying Column under Captain Patrick Houlihan at Derreen in the Kilbecanty Company area on the Saturday night before the Truce. About ten from our Brigade area, including Stanford; John Coen, Thomas Keeley, John Kelly, Patrick Glynn, Michael Reilly, John Fahey and Thomas Fahey (brothers), a couple more Volunteers from Peterswell Company and myself met them at Derreen and all proceeded to the Punch Bowl one mile south of Gort on Sunday. We remained there four hours in the hope that our scouts would report the enemy coming in that direction as they gave an odd run out that way. They did not turn up.

We went back to Derreen Sunday night with the small column under Capt. Houlihan. They went home to Clare Monday morning by Flagmount. We went to Killeen in the Beagh Company area near the Clare border. It was between 1 and 2 p.m. on that day that we got news of the Truce. Brennan's dispatch informing us of the Truce came first to Derreen and then followed us on to Killeen. That was the cause of the delay.

I was in touch with my Battalion Quartermasters from the time I was appointed Brigade Quartermaster. It was the intention of the Brigade Staff at this time to form a larger Flying Column but before this could be achieved the Truce came.

The following lists show the names of the officers and men who took part in the Castledaly and Ballyturn ambushes as far as I can remember them:

Castledaly

- Patrick Glynn, Volunteer Kilbecanty Company, afterwards
Vice Commandant of Gort Battalion.
- Thomas Keeley, Company Engineer Kilbecanty Company,
afterwards Battalion Engineer Gort Battalion.
- Michael Reilly, Volunteer Kilbecanty Company,
afterwards Captain Kilbecanty Company
and Adjutant Gort Battalion.
- Peter Burke, Volunteer Kilbecanty Company.
- John Coen, Captain Kilbecanty Company.
- Joseph Stanford, Captain Gort Company, afterwards
O/C Galway South West Brigade.
- Patrick Loughnan, 2nd Lieutenant Beagh Company,
afterwards murdered together with his
brother by R.I.C. Auxiliaries.
- Lawrence Mannion, Volunteer Beagh Company (deceased).
- John Fahey, Captain Peterswell Company, afterwards
O/C Gort Battalion.
- Martin Fahey, Company Engineer Peterswell Company,
afterwards Brigade Engineer Galway South
West Brigade.
- Thomas Fahey, Volunteer, afterwards Captain Peterswell
Company.
- Joseph Madden, Volunteer Peterswell Company.
- John Healy, Volunteer Peterswell Company.
- Peter Howley, Vice Commandant Gort Battalion or Brigade,
afterwards Vice Commandant Ardrahan Battn.
- Thomas McInerney, O/C Gort Battalion or Brigade,
afterwards O/C Ardrahan Battalion.
- Martin Holland, Volunteer Kilchreest Company.
- Michael Callanan, Volunteer Ardrahan Company (deceased).
- Martin Dooley, Volunteer Ardrahan Company.
- Michael Fallon, Volunteer Peterswell Company.
- Thomas Kelly, Volunteer Peterswell Company.
- Patrick Keeley, Volunteer Peterswell Company.
- Myself, Daniel Ryan, 1st Lieutenant Kilbecanty Company,
and
afterwards Brigade Quartermaster
Galway South West Brigade.

Ballyturn.

Joseph Stanford, Captain Gort Company, afterwards Brigade
O/C Galway South West Brigade.

John Coen, Captain Kilbecanty Company.

Patrick Glynn, Volunteer Kilbecanty Company, afterwards
Vice Commandant Gort Battalion.

Thomas Keeley, Company Engineer Kilbecanty Company,
afterwards Battalion Engineer Gort Battalion.

Thomas Craven, Volunteer from North Galway.

Michael Kelly, Company Intelligence Officer Gort Company.

Patrick Houlihan, member of General Brennan's Brigade
Staff and Flying Column

and

^{Ryan,}
Myself, Daniel, 1st Lieutenant Kilbecanty Company,
afterwards Brigade Quartermaster Galway
South West Brigade.

Scouts

Volunteers John Keeley and Martin Coen.

Intelligence Officer

Michael Kelly, named above.

Signed: Daniel Ryan
(Daniel Ryan)

Date: 12th September 1954

12th September 1954.

Witness: Con Moynihan
(Con Moynihan)

