

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21  
BURO STAIRE MILITIA 1913-21  
No. W.S. 1311

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS.

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 1,311

Witness

Patrick Mahony,  
Castleboy,  
Loughrea,  
Co. Galway.

Identity.

Captain Kilnadeema Company Irish Volunteers,  
Co. Galway.

Subject.

Kilnadeema Company Irish Volunteers  
Co. Galway, 1914-1921.

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

Nil

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STATEMENT BY PATRICK MAHONY,

Castleboy, Loughrea, County Galway.

I was born on the 7th March, 1896, at Kilnadeema, Loughrea, and was educated at Kilnadeema national school. After leaving school I worked on my father's farm at Kilnadeema.

I joined the Kilnadeema Company of the Volunteers in 1914. I remember attending a review of the Volunteers in Tuam in 1915 and a further review in Loughrea the same year. There was a very large attendance of Volunteers in Tuam and they were addressed by the late Mr. John Redmond and other speakers. I remember a Colonel Maurice Moore and a Colonel Cheevers at the Loughrea review. Colonel Moore was mounted on a white horse.

In those days parades of the Volunteers were held openly. Instruction in drill was given by a British Army reservist named Michael Dooley until he was called up on active service. When Dooley left we had as instructor a militia man named Kelly, and after him George MacQuade. I remember MacQuade's word of command when dismissing the company - "Spring sharply to attention, turn to the right, judge a pause and 'breek' off. I remember now that on the occasion of the Tuam review the Kilnadeema Company were in semi-uniform, wearing haversacks, bandoliers and slouch hats.

Laurence Burke of Kilnadeema recruited me in the first instance. The company broke up shortly after

review. I again joined Kilnadeema Company of the Irish Volunteers when it was reorganised in 1917. Laurence Burke was Company Captain. The strength of the company was then about thirty. Parades were held once a week at night after work. Foot drill was taught. There was no question of arms at the time but a good number of the Volunteers had their own sporting guns and were good shots.

There was a Sinn Féin club in Kilnadeema in 1917. As far as I can remember, it was organised by Laurence Burke, captain of the Volunteer company. A good deal of interest was taken in the parish of Kilnadeema in the by-elections in 1917. I remember that my father and mother were on holidays at Lisdoonvarna at the time of Mr. de Valera's election in Clare. They arrived home from the holidays out-and-out Sinn Féiners, although before the holidays they, like most elderly people in the locality at the time, took very little interest in the political situation. I remember also that at this time there was a great display of badges (celluloid-encased photographs of the 1916 leaders) and of the tricolour. Laurence Burke was a good organiser on the political side.

I remember the conscription scare in 1918 and the great national protest made to defeat the enforcement of conscription in this country. I remember the people signing the anti-conscription pledge outside the gates of Kilnadeema parish church. Rev. Fr. Dunne, P.P., Kilnadeema, was outstanding then and right through the struggle to the truce with England. He was a great source of inspiration to Sinn Féin and the Volunteers. He is now parish priest of Kiltulla near Athenry, Co. Galway.

The election of 1918 was a big event in our area. There was a great struggle between the Sinn Féin candidate, the late Mr. Frank Fahy, afterwards Ceann Comhairle Dáil Éireann, and the Redmondite candidate, the late Mr. William Duffy. Mr. Duffy was the sitting member at the time. He was a big business man in Loughrea, owning a grocery, bar and bakery. He was a good decent and well-respected man with many respectable supporters. He had also very many followers of the irresponsible type who acted as a mob and did their utmost to intimidate the rest of the people. They were mainly of the British ex-soldier type and many of them had just returned home from the British Army. I remember canvassing the parish of Kilnadeema on behalf of Mr. Frank Fahy. I also went to Loughrea on several occasions to help Sinn Féin during the election campaign.

In 1920 Kilnadeema Company raided the railway station at Loughrea for Belfast boycott goods. We got boots and shoes, some of which we destroyed. We then gave some of them to Volunteers who needed them, as we thought that would be better than destroying them. I cannot say what time in 1920 this raid was carried out.

In the spring of 1920, about the time the potato crop was being planted, a man named Lacey came to the house of Laurence Kelly at Grangepark near Loughrea. Laurence Kelly was then captain of Kilnadeema Company. He had replaced Laurence Burke, who by then was O/C Loughrea Battalion. Mr. Lacey met Volunteer James Kelly, a brother of Laurence. Mr. Lacey inquired for the Company Captain. Volunteer Kelly said he did not know him but knew a man who could get in touch with him. He took this precaution as he had never before seen Mr. Lacey. He showed Mr. Lacey

into the parlour and went to find his brother Laurence. When the latter arrived it transpired that Mr. Lacey wanted to examine all the record books of the Loughrea Rural District Council. I remember also that Mr. Lacey had some copies of An tÓglach with him.

The books were kept in the boardroom of the workhouse where the County Home, Loughrea, now stands. Captain Kelly, Volunteers John Kelly, James Kelly, Laurence Deeley, Wallop (Michael) Walsh, Dominick Shiel and I raided the workhouse for the record books and brought them to Captain Kelly's house. Our task was rather easy as Volunteer Joseph Kelly was at the time Assistant Clerk at the workhouse and Volunteer Laurence Flynn was Assistant Master. Laurence Flynn afterwards became Brigade Police Officer in Galway South East Brigade. Those two Volunteers arranged to have doors open for us and to have the books at a certain place. The books were examined by Mr. Lacey in one day at Captain Kelly's house and then returned to the workhouse. I do not know why the books were examined except that I have a hazy recollection that Mr. Lacey was an auditor of the Local Government Department of Dáil Éireann.

I remember very well the night I was made 1st Lt. of Kilnadeema Company, although I cannot remember the date. It was early in 1920, I would say. It was because of a joking remark that I remember the occasion so well. I happened to be late on parade because it was a very busy day at home. When I arrived on parade somebody said I had been made 1st Lt. Volunteer Michael Walsh jokingly remarked that I should have been made last Lt.

Laurence Burke had by then been appointed O/C Loughrea Battalion or Brigade as it was then sometimes called.

About this time, roughly the first six months of 1920, our company blocked the roads in the neighbourhood of Loughrea by felling trees. The road blocks were in connection with the attacks on Moyvilla and Lough George R.I.C. barracks. I heard afterwards that the attack on Moyvilla barrack did not come off although we blocked the roads for it.

I remember the evening of the attack on Bookeen R.I.C. barrack. Captain Laurence Kelly asked me to select the men I considered most suitable to the number of a dozen. I selected the following:

Volunteer John Kelly, afterwards Divisional Engineer 1st Western Division, now Chief Inspector Irish Land Commission.

Volunteer Patrick Kelly, now a medical doctor in England.

2nd Lt. Thomas Mahon

Volunteer Patrick Flanagan, nicknamed "Joskin", afterwards a Sergeant in the Gárda Síochána.

Volunteer Thomas Fahy) These 2 Vols. were not related.  
Volunteer Thomas Fahy)

Volunteer Michael Power, afterwards member of the Gárda Síochána.

Volunteer Martin Murray

Volunteer Dominick Shiel

Volunteers John and Patrick Kelly are brothers of Laurence Kelly, then captain of Kilnadeema Company, afterwards O/C South East Galway Brigade.

The above-named nine, together with Captain Laurence Kelly, Battalion Commandant Laurence Burke and myself

(1st Lt.) would make up the required number I thought. When, however, I had selected the men, Captain Kelly informed me that he was not allowing me to take part in the attack and ordered me to take charge of the remainder of the company and block roads at Courheen and Millmount on the Loughrea-Gort road. I reluctantly, I must say, took charge of the road blocking operations with the remainder of the company. Their names are:

Volunteer	Thomas Kelly
"	Patrick Burke (brother of Comdt. Burke)
"	Thomas Pigott (in America)
"	Joseph Fahy (deceased)
"	Joseph Ryan "
"	Michael Walsh ("Wallop", decd.)
"	Patrick Martin) (not related)
"	Patrick Martin)
"	Laurence Martin
"	John Regan
"	Martin Darcy
"	John Mahon
"	Anthony Kelly (brother of Brig. Kelly) decd.
"	James Kelly (brother of Brig. Kelly)
"	Martin Leahy.

Volunteers Laurence Deely, afterwards Sergeant Gárda Siochána, Patrick Walsh, Patrick Scully, Michael Hall, Patrick Pigott, brother of Thomas Pigott, William Tierney (decd.), Thomas Geraghty, Joseph Kelly, brother of Brig. Kelly, Thomas Forde, Michael Collins (in America), Thomas Fahy, Peter Fahy, brothers, both deceased, Patrick Power, John Flaherty, Freddie Walsh (decd.), Thomas Forde. Laurence Kelly, Company Captain, and Laurence Burke, Battalion O/C, took part in the attack on Bookeen R.I.C. barracks with the nine others I selected. I and the remainder of the company blocked the road, as ordered. If this list of names serves no other purpose from the historical point of view, it shows the strength of the company in July, 1920 (the time of the attack on Bookeen R.I.C. barrack) as forty-two, with every single man engaged

on active service on the night of the attack.

It was also in the summer of 1920 that Captain Kelly sought information from Closetoken Company regarding the movements of an R.I.C. patrol supposed to travel on foot almost every day from their barrack in Kilchreest in the direction of Loughrea as far as Taylor's Cross. As a result of the information he received, about twenty-five men, the majority from Kilnadeema and a few from Closetoken Company, took up positions at Millmount, about half a mile from Kilchreest on the road to Loughrea. Captain Kelly of Kilnadeema Company was in charge. The majority were armed with shotguns. One or maybe two had rifles, as far as I can recollect. The patrol did not come and I afterwards heard that they never again patrolled that section of road.

About this time or maybe later in 1920 there was a party of British cavalry stationed at Ballyduggan House protecting the owner, a man named Burke. I remember that Captain Laurence Kelly, Volunteer John Kelly and I spent a few evenings watching the movements of the cavalry as they exercised the horses. They sometimes crossed the fields and on one occasion we had a narrow escape as they galloped very close to our position. John Kelly went to visit at Burke's of Ballyduggan House. He pretended to be interested in some new kind of sheep-dipping pool or maybe it was a pump while, in fact, he sketched the layout of the place where the cavalry was quartered. He was an engineer by profession. The intention was to disarm the guard while the majority of the troopers were out exercising the horses. Before the plan was fully completed the cavalry force - about fifty men - left the place.



I remember the night following the ambush at Castledaly seeing two houses burning - Coy's and Carty's of Kilchreest. None of the Kilnadeema Company took part in the ambush as it was outside our battalion area. We expected that after the Castledaly attack the R.I.C. would come to our company area looking for two Volunteers - William Keating and my brother, Thomas Mahony. Keating had been working in a public house in Kilchreest. The R.I.C. there had threatened him as they suspected him of giving information about their movements. He left his employment on this account and stayed at home in Kilnadeema. My brother was recovering from the effects of a wound he received from an R.I.C. man named Crumm in Galway railway station a short time before.

About twelve Volunteers, all armed with shotguns, lay in ambush at Grangepark near the gate at Captain Kelly's house. Grangepark is about halfway between Coorheen Cross and the crossroads at Kilnadeema. Captain Kelly was in charge of the party. Commandant Burke, Battalion O/C, was on the run at the time in Ballinakill Company area, as far as I remember. We waited in ambush from nightfall until daybreak but the raiding party we expected did not come. We again lay in ambush the following night at Glanaclara about five hundred yards from where we were the previous night. We again waited from dusk until dawn but no raiding party turned up.

About Christmas, 1920, I remember going to Ballinagar in the Ballinakill Company area. A very large number of Volunteers had assembled at a big house, then Lewis's of Ballinagar. I would say that there were about

fifty men in all, drawn from Kilnadeema, Closetoken, Ballinakill, Leitrim and Derrybrien Companies. I remember that the mails were raided at Ballinagar in the hope that the R.I.C. would come out from Woodford to investigate.

The intention was to attack them if and when they came. All the men were armed with shotguns except a few who had rifles. Peter Howley, Vice Commandant of Gort Battalion, had a rifle. I remember a dispute between the members of Ballinakill and Leitrim Companies. Each company objected to an attack in its own area. The Ballinakill Company had a dispatch from Laurence Burke, O/C Loughrea Battalion, who was then on the run in Ballinakill Company area. I do not know what the dispatch contained but I have a hazy recollection that it had a bearing on the refusal of the Ballinakill Company officers to allow an ambush in their company area.

Owing to the dispute between the two companies, the Kilnadeema and Closetoken Companies decided to return home. The two companies marched to Kylebrack and there decided to ambush a party of R.I.C. expected from Woodford to Loughrea. We took up positions at Kylebrack right inside the wall of Dalystown demesne. This meant a much smaller party (about twelve instead of fifty) for an attack on the R.I.C., and, to make matters worse, the position at Kylebrack was five miles nearer Loughrea, an R.I.C. stronghold. Nevertheless we decided to have a crack at the R.I.C. near our own areas if they came the way, as we expected them to do. I think we had in mind also to give good example to the Ballinakill and Leitrim Companies with whose conduct we were very disappointed. The R.I.C. did not come the way. Captain Laurence Kelly, afterwards

O/C Galway South East Brigade, was in charge of the two companies at Kylebrack. The other officers present were Patrick Coy, Q/M Loughrea Battalion, Patrick Connaughton, captain of Closetoken Company, and myself, 1st Lt. of Kilnadeema Company.

In the early spring of 1921 there were many meetings of the battalion council. They were held in different company areas. Things were not going smoothly. There were disagreements as to where ambushes were to be laid. I remember Captain Laurence Kelly saying at one of the meetings that he would welcome any attack in his own company area of Kilnadeema. I remember well about this time Captain Kelly telling me that he was very tired of all the wrangling and disagreements. I think he sent word to Michael Brennan, O/C East Clare Brigade, for assistance. I am not too sure of this. It is possible that Michael Brennan could have been invited to Galway by Seamus Hogan of Kilrickle, now Professor Hogan, University College, Cork. Seamus Hogan was then a member of Brennan's Flying Column and he would naturally be anxious to have Galway reorganised.

I remember Good Friday, 1921. That day there was a big ambush laid for the R.I.C. at Aille Cross on the Loughrea-Woodford road. There were at least one hundred men in position, with Michael Brennan, O/C East Clare Brigade in charge. A lorry load of R.I.C. was expected as a result of a raid on the mails carried out early on Good Friday morning by the I.R.A. The R.I.C. were expected from Loughrea by the main Loughrea-Woodford road. I remember very clearly that Brigadier Brennan went out into the middle of the road and asked us to take aim at him

from our position. He wanted to impress on us that we were not to fire until the R.I.C. reached the point where he stood. The other East Clare officers who were there were, as far as I can remember, Patrick Brennan, brother of Michael, Seamus Hannon, Wall, Harry O'Meara and Seamus Hogan, who at the time was going under another name. We took up positions in the early morning and withdrew about 3 p.m., as the R.I.C. had not turned up by then. Most of the Galway Volunteers were armed with shotguns. All the Claremen had rifles and some had grenades in addition. I remember that Commandant Jack Fahy of Gort Battalion was with Brigadier Brennan when he arrived.

We had retired from our positions a good while, maybe an hour, when on our way home across country we saw two lorry loads of R.I.C. going by a circuitous back road to where we had been in position. They always travelled by the workhouse to Woodford on the main Loughrea-Woodford road. That was the road Brigadier Brennan expected them to come. That evening they went out the Loughrea-Gort road for about a mile to Coorheen Cross, turned left there and approached the position we had vacated, by Kilnadeema. They had never before, to our knowledge, taken that road. By the time we saw the two lorries the Clare Flying Column and the Galway Volunteers from Gort, Peterswell and Derrybrien were on their way to Derrybrien, where the Clare Column often stayed. The men from my company area who took part in this prepared ambush were: Captain Laurence Kelly, myself (then 1st Lt.), Thomas McMahon, 2nd Lt., and Volunteers Thomas Mahony, Michael Walsh, Patrick Flanagan, Michael Power, Martin Leahy, Patrick Scully, Laurence Deeley, Dominick Shiel and Thomas Fahy.

On Good Friday evening Captain Laurence Kelly followed Brennan's Flying Column to Flagmount in Co. Clare and stayed with them for about two weeks. I remember that he returned to Kilnadeema to arrange a meeting between Brigadier Brennan and Galway I.R.A. officers. This meeting took place without much delay in Captain Kelly's house. Those present included Brigadier Michael Brennan, Patrick Brennan (his brother), Patrick Houlihan and Seamus Hannon, all of Clare. The Galway officers present, as far as I can remember, were Laurence Kelly, Kilnadeema Company. Daniel Ryan, Kilbecanty Company, Gort Battalion, Gilbert Morrissey of Athenry, Peter Howley, Vice Commandant of Gort Battalion, Cornelius Donnelly, Captain of Abbey Company, Sonny (Patrick) Leahy, Captain of Leitrim Company, Martin Nevin and Patrick Coy, Battalion Staff Officers of Loughrea Battalion, Patrick Connaughton and Frank Fallon of Closetoken Company, and myself. I cannot remember some of the ranks of the officers in this list and cannot be sure even of all the ranks I have given. Patrick Flynn, Captain of Derrybrien Company, was also present. The big sitting-room in Kelly's was filled with officers. The appointment of Captain Laurence Kelly as O/C South East Galway Brigade was confirmed at the meeting. I think he had been in an acting capacity as Brigade O/C for some short period. I do not know what other appointments, if any, were made that night.

The four Clare officers and Daniel Ryan of Kilbecanty Company stayed at Kelly's that night. The following day Volunteer James Kelly, a brother of the newly-appointed Brigade O/C, was on sentry duty outside

the house. He saw two lorries, one full of R.I.C. and one empty, going in the direction of Kilchreest from Loughrea. After some time he saw dust raised by the lorries, which at this time were coming in the direction of Kelly's house. He ran into the house to tell the officers. Brigadier Brennan came out of the house to fight outside, but Volunteer Kelly advised him to go inside. Brigadier Brennan went inside and all the officers took up positions within. They asked Mrs. Kelly to leave the house for safety but she refused, saying that she might be able to help load the guns. Miss Daisy Kelly went outside to signal if and when the R.I.C. approached the house.

The R.I.C. party pulled up at Kelly's gate. Some of them dismounted and went into the house of John Conway closeby. They served a summons on Mr. Conway to attend a grand jury. They then mounted their lorries and continued by Kilnadeema to Loughrea, completing a journey of seven miles in the serving of the summons and using two lorry loads of R.I.C. for the purpose. That was about May, 1921. I heard afterwards that the empty lorry was filled with R.I.C. at Kilchreest R.I.C. barrack before the serving of the summons.

At this time there was only one rifle in the company. I had become Company Captain on the promotion of Laurence Kelly to Brigade O/C, and we were most anxious to secure more rifles by disarming two R.I.C. dispatch riders who travelled on bicycles from Loughrea to Kilchreest and back almost every day. Laurence Kelly, Brigade O/C, Laurence Smyth, Battalion O/C, Volunteers Frank Fallon, Patrick Tierney, John Kelly and I took up positions at noon about a mile from Loughrea on the Loughrea-Gort road. Laurence Smyth had been appointed Battalion Commandant some

time previously following the arrest of Laurence Burke. We remained in position until late evening and were about to withdraw when we saw a private motor car containing five R.I.C. pass in the direction of Kilchreest from the Loughrea direction. All five were armed with rifles. I should have mentioned that <sup>the</sup> two R.I.C. dispatch riders for whom we had been waiting failed to turn up. These two were always armed with rifles.

We concluded that the party of five R.I.C. in the private car would return to Loughrea. We again took up positions at Coorheen Cross, about a mile from Loughrea on the road to Gort, to attack and disarm them on their return. They returned about dusk. Brigade O/C Laurence Kelly shouted "halt" as the car came near. We were in position just inside the fence of the road. Before they had fully pulled up, four shotgun men fired at the car and broke the glass. The one rifle in our party got jammed. The R.I.C. seemed to be on the point of surrendering but suddenly they moved off as fast as they could. It seemed to us that when they realised that the volley fired did them no damage, they changed their minds about surrendering and moved off before we could do anything about it.

Shortly after this, about the middle of May, 1921, Michael Brennan came again to Brigadier Kelly's house at Grangepark, Loughrea. He inquired how we got on since he left. He praised our attempt at disarming the R.I.C. party, saying that it was hard to expect four of five badly armed men to disarm five fully armed R.I.C. On the occasion of this visit General Brennan wrote three

dispatches and addressed them to three persons: connected with a sitting of the British Court in Loughrea.

One was to the Magistrate who came from Limerick, as far as I remember; the second was to Mr. Austin Toole, British Court Clerk, and the third was addressed to Mr. James Mulcair, a local solicitor. The three letters which General Brennan signed were given to Volunteer James Kelly to deliver. The Magistrate did not turn up and Volunteer Kelly delivered the other two letters to Messrs. Toole and Mulcair. The court did not sit.

About six of the East Clare Flying Column again came to my company area on Sunday evening, the 10th July, 1921. Seamus Hannon was in charge. About a dozen from my company area went with the Claremen to a place called the Fishpond, a mile from Kilchreest on the road to Gort. We went there to attack a party of R.I.C. expected to be returning the next morning to their barrack in Kilchreest after being on night duty protecting Mr. Perrse of Roxboro. We took up positions at daybreak just inside the fence of the road as you go from Kilchreest to Gort, with Captain Hannon in charge of the entire party. We opened fire on a party of six R.I.C. with Sergeant Cunningham in charge, and one of the R.I.C. fell wounded. The firing lasted about a quarter of an hour. Our position was not very suitable, being close to the village of Kilchreest where there was an R.I.C. garrison. In addition, our line of retreat had to be uphill with little cover of any kind, and the attack was not pressed home.



The attack at the Fishpond reminds me that on two occasions in 1920 Volunteers Patrick Flanagan, Dominick Shiel and I went to Captain Patrick Callanan of Kilchreest Company and to his brother, Captain Bartly Callanan, who had replaced his brother as Captain on our second visit, to get first-hand information about the R.I.C. patrol guarding Mr. Perrse of Roxboro. We got no satisfactory information from the Kilchreest captains.

The officers and men of Kilnadeema Company area who took part in the attack on the R.I.C. at the Fishpond on the day of the truce were Laurence Kelly, O/C Galway South East Brigade, Laurence Smyth, O/C Loughrea Battalion, Volunteers Thomas Mahony, Michael Walsh, Patrick Flanagan, Dominick Shiel, John Kelly, Thomas Fahy and myself.

There was no branch of Cumann na mBan in my company area before the truce. The local people were all in sympathy with the I.R.A. and were always very good to us, helping us in every way possible. There were no spies in the area. None of the R.I.C. helped us in any way. I was not a member of the I.R.B.

Signed:

*Patrick Mahony*  
(Patrick Mahony)

Date:

*16th December 1955.*

Witness:

*C. Moynihan*  
(Investigator)16th December 1955.  
(C. Moynihan)BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21  
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