

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21

BURO STAIRÉ MILEATA 1913-21

No. W.S. 1,326

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS.

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 1,326

Witness

Andrew O'Donohoe,  
Lickeen,  
Kilfenora,  
Co. Clare.

Identity.

Commandant, 5th Battalion,  
Mid Clare Brigade.

Subject.

National activities, Mid Clare,  
1912-1921.

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

Nil

File No. ....S.2607.....

Form B.S.M. 2

ORIGINAL

10.8.1326  
BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21  
BURO STAIRÉ MILEATA 1913-21  
NO. W.S. 1326

STATEMENT BY ANDREW O'DONOHUE,  
Lickeen, Kilfenora, Co. Clare.

(Formerly O/C, 5th Battalion, Mid Clare Brigade.)

I was born in January, 1897, in the townland of Lickeen in the parish of Kilfenora. My people were farmers. I received my education at Cahershertin national school which I attended until I was about fifteen years of age, having reached the sixth standard.

Our house was one in which the neighbours used to gather at night to discuss the events of the day and talk about old times. Some very old men comprised the gatherings and, as a youth, I was very interested in their accounts of Daniel O'Connell and his times, the Fenians, the various evictions in different parts of the locality, Parnell and Michael Davitt, the Land League, the Plan of Campaign and the Moonlighters. About the activities of the Lickeen Moonlighters, their trial and sentence, these old men told all they knew, and it was from them that I learned that my own people were prominently connected with the physical force side of the Land League movement. My Uncle Michael was, in fact, one of the leaders of the Moonlighters in the district. As a consequence of what I had been listening to in the course of these fireside talks, I concluded that, if Ireland could get rid of the landlords, the "peelers" and the informers, the country would be a happy one.

Evidence of the connection of some of my forbears with the Fenian Brotherhood was discovered by me one day when, while searching in an loft for some article, I found a ball pistol and an old cap. I was in my teens at the time and knew enough to realise that what I had found were Fenian relics, so I decided to take them to an old man who, I was aware, had been a member of the Fenian Brotherhood. He not only confirmed what I had suspected, but repaired the pistol and gave me a .32 revolver and some ammunition. He did not disclose to me how he had acquired these articles, nor did I ask him. In later years, I brought this gift with me into the Irish Volunteer movement.

About the years 1910 or 1912, there was widespread agrarian unrest throughout Clare, particularly in North Clare, which resulted in great "cattle drives", i.e., driving cattle off the lands of big graziers. A number of men who had participated in these events were charged by the R.I.C. and brought to trial at Ennistymon. As the accused were coming to the court, they were accompanied by a number of bands and a big crowd of sympathisers. Outside the town, they were met by a large force of police who allowed the people to pass, and then fell in at the rere. Inside the town, another detachment of police with drawn batons confronted the marchers, who next found themselves being batoned in front and rear by the police. The townspeople came to the aid of the people, with ash plants, bottles and pieces of scrap iron, and the police were put to flight, retreating to the courthouse around which the battle continued throughout the day. A good number on each side

received injuries, but the police, twenty-four of whom received medical treatment in the fracas, failed in the efforts to disperse the crowd who, up to the time the baton charges commenced, were behaving in an orderly way.

Behind the scenes which led up to this incident were the local landlords, on the one side, and the I.R.B., on the other side. The two big landlords in the district were Lord Inchiquin and H.V. McNamara. The latter's daughter was married to the County Inspector of the R.I.C., and it was this officer who had ordered the baton charges. Both landlords were harsh and very much out of sympathy with the people. Each of them had large tracts of lands scattered through the district, which were strictly preserved for the protection of game. The gamekeepers, whom they employed, frequently poisoned the tenants' dogs and, especially where this animal happened to be a greyhound, its destruction caused a good deal of resentment among a population that had a great love for the hound and a day's coursing. In fact, it was a provision of the tenant's contract on the estates of these landlords that he could not keep a greyhound and, where he failed to observe this provision, he was brought to court and generally fined or compelled to get rid of the dog.

In order to protect the landlords' interests, the British Government established a number of auxiliary R.I.C. stations all over North Clare. These were garrisoned by a sergeant and three or four men, and, when the rest of Ireland was being patrolled by policemen carrying batons, in North Clare it was a

regular sight to witness armed R.I.C. men while on patrol duty or protecting someone who was boycotted. The following is a list of the R.I.C. stations which existed in North Clare in the years before the outbreak of the first Great War in 1914:-

Ennistymon	-	District Headquarters.
Liscannor	-	R.I.C. station.
Lisdoonvarna	-	"
Kilfenora	-	"
Ballyvaughan	-	"
Fanore	-	"
New Quay	-	"
Carron	-	Police hut.
Ballydoura	-	"
Derrymore	-	"

Thus, in an area of about 150 square miles, there were ten police posts, all of which were held until 1919 or 1920 when a number were vacated. In addition, during the troubled period later on, detachments of military and marines were stationed near Ennistymon and Ballyvaughan.

I was not more than sixteen years of age when I made my first contact with the Irish Republican Brotherhood. Some members of that organisation, whose names I do not now remember, explained its aims and objects to another young fellow, Peadar O'Loughlin, Tullaha, and myself, and asked us if we were willing to join. We both agreed, and we were then told to call a few nights later to Markham's of Clogher, Kilfenora. The I.R.B. centre of the North Clare circle was Tomás O'Loughlin, a native of the Carron district, who was

then staying in Ennistymon. We met him at Markham's and we were sworn in by him that night. He gave us a lecture in which he stressed the following points:-

- (1) Never to discuss the I.R.B. with anyone other than a member;
- (2) Never to be seen in public places with other members who were known to be suspected by the R.I.C. as being in the organisation;
- (3) Never to speak above a whisper where there was a possibility of being overheard;
- (4) Never to sign a statement for the R.I.C. about anything.

O'Loughlin also questioned us on our knowledge of firearms and, on learning that neither of us knew anything about a rifle, he arranged later on to give us some training on a Winchester (.3850) rifle, its care and mechanism. He also gave us the loan of one of these rifles and a few rounds of ammunition with which to practise. The North Clare circle had at least three or four of these Winchester rifles which were procured by O'Loughlin through a merchant in Gort, Co. Galway, but whose name I now forget. O'Loughlin, I believe, paid for some of these guns out of his own pocket, but a few members of the circle subscribed between themselves to pay for one.

Between 1912 and 1915, meetings of our I.R.B. circle were held from time to time, mostly in

Markham's place. O'Loughlin, who was usually present, spoke on a couple of occasions about meetings of the Supreme Council which he attended, and appeared to be on terms of close friendship with Tom Clarke, later executed after the 1916 Rising. At one meeting, he gave us to understand that arms from America might be landed at Liscannor or Doolin in North Clare. After the inception of the Irish Volunteers, O'Loughlin did not openly play a prominent part in that movement, but he continued to be the centre for North Clare until his death in 1918. In the build-up of the Volunteers in the district, the men whom he had enrolled in the I.R.B. came in time to be the officers of the Irish Volunteers and the I.R.A.

Towards the end of 1913, a branch of the Irish Volunteers was formed in Kilfenora. Though I was a member, I do not remember very clearly any of the facts regarding the establishment of this unit and of the details of its activities. I'm certain, however, that for drill instruction we had the services of two ex Irish Guardsmen, Jim O'Donohue and John O'Connor, and that, at the big review of Irish Volunteers held in the Phoenix Park on Easter Sunday, 1914, a contingent from Kilfenora attended, headed by their brass and reed band. This band included members of the I.R.B. who during their stay in Dublin met other members of the Brotherhood from different parts in the country, and from them learned of the efforts which the Irish Parliamentary Party were making behind the scenes to secure control of the Volunteer movement. My recollection of subsequent happenings is that the Kilfenora unit disintegrated, as such, soon after the

Dublin review, and that, on the formation of a company of Irish Volunteers at Cloona following the Redmondite split in the autumn of 1914, a number of the Kilfenora men, including myself, joined the Cloona company.

The Cloona company for a time was managed by a committee, of which the first chairman was Thomas Barry. The mobilisations were held in Ardmore on the lands of J. & M. Collins, which were also used for hurling and football by the Cloona G.A.A. club. A vacant house in this place subsequently became known as "Liberty Hall" and was used in later years as the meeting place for all bodies connected with the Republican movement. In the early years of its existence, the Cloona company held weekly meetings for drill and target practice with .22 rifles. Timber rifles were obtained for drill purposes, and unlimited quantities of .22 ammunition seemed to be available through the hardware shops in Ennistymon where a few enthusiastic members of the company were employed. Expenses incurred in connection with training were met by weekly levies on the members who then numbered about fifty or sixty.

In May, 1915, Ernest Blythe came to the district as an organiser. I remember having received a membership card which he issued to each Volunteer, and being led by him on some very tough route marches which gave a trying time to R.I.C. men who had orders from their authorities to keep Blythe under constant observation. During his stay in the area, he established new Irish Volunteer companies in Doolin and Liscannor. There was no company in Ennistymon at this time, as most of the old company followed Redmond into the



National Volunteers, and the few who stood loyal to the Irish Volunteer Executive transferred to the Cloona company. Because of his activities in Clare, Blythe was deported under DORA, a nickname given at the time to a piece of legislation enacted in the British Parliament and styled Defence of the Realm Act. Some time during Blythe's visit, Seamus Conneally, Cullinagh, became Captain of the Cloona company.

In 1915 a number of weekly papers supporting the Irish Volunteer movement came regularly to our company, especially "The Irish Volunteer", "The Worker's Republic" and "The Spark". Anyone capable of reading these papers intelligently could clearly see that the time for armed military action by the Volunteers and kindred bodies was coming soon, especially from what appeared in the issues in the spring of 1916.

I have now no clear recollection of having been told by anyone that the Rising in Easter 1916 was due to take place. In accordance with orders, I did parade on Easter Sunday at Ardmore, with forty-eight hours' rations. I would say that about thirty or forty men attended this parade. The company, however, was dismissed as a result of the notice inserted in the Dublin Sunday papers by Eoin McNeill, countermanding the previous order. Before being dismissed, we were instructed to report again at Ardmore on the following day, Easter Monday, at 3 p.m.

On Easter Monday the company paraded at the appointed time. Orders were given to collect all firearms in the district. My memory of these events leads me to think that the job of collecting guns went

on for two or three nights. In addition to the Cloona parish, firearms in the parishes of Kilfenora and Kilnaboy were also taken up. By Wednesday night, there was a shotgun available for every Volunteer in the Company.

Other events which occurred in the district during Easter Week 1916 were the cutting of telephone poles and wires between Ennistymon and Ennis. This was done by Tomás O'Loughlin and Seamus Murríhy. They came to Lickeen on Easter Tuesday evening, bringing with them several hundred yards of wire, a hatchet and wire cutters which they left in a field outside my house and which I had to hide. O'Loughlin went on to Carron in North Clare.

Another incident involved one of the teachers in Cahersherkin national school. This man came to me about the middle of Easter Week and said he had got a written note from Tomás O'Loughlin to tell Peadar O'Loughlin, one of the leading men in the Cloona company, to attack the Ennistymon R.I.C. barracks, and that the Doolin and Liscannor companies would also participate in the operation. The authenticity of this message was suspected and it was decided to ignore it. It occurred to some of us, however, that the incident might, with profit, be further investigated as this teacher could be an "agent provocateur", of whom Clare had some bitter experiences in the Fenian days. Nothing definite could be done for over a month as O'Loughlin had been arrested during the week after the Rising and he was kept in jail for a few weeks. On his release, he came back to Ennistymon where he lived. He denied all knowledge of the alleged

message and was very indignant about the whole matter. He refused, however, to countenance any action against the teacher, saying, "Obviously a British agent has been unearthed. We now know him. If he is shot or removed, he will be replaced and we may never find out his successor". This advice was not accepted by some people, as the teacher was boycotted for some time after, but, in fairness, I should add that, though he lived amongst us through very exciting times later on, he never again came under unfavourable notice.

Due to the fact that in Clouna, no word came to us from anywhere after receiving orders to mobilise on Easter Sunday and that we held ourselves ready during the ensuing week to meet for armed action at a moment's notice, it was a disappointing experience for the younger Volunteers. The only people arrested in North Clare after the Rising were Tomás O'Loughlin and Eamonn Waldron. The former was advanced in years and was detained only for a few weeks but Waldron was deported to England. No guns were surrendered by us in response to Sir John Maxwell's proclamation calling for a general surrender of arms after the hostilities in Dublin had ceased. The Clouna company kept together and held meetings in quiet places, but not as regular or as frequently as prior to the Rising. By means of I.R.B. sources principally, contacts were made with revolutionary elements in outside districts. Through the medium of new songs in praise of the Easter Rising and of the men who fought in it, the youth soon began to be interested. Concerts and dances were organised to raise money for dependants of the men imprisoned for their part in the Rising. By Christmas 1916, when

the first batch of the prisoners were released from England. I would say that, as far as the parishes of Kilfenora and Clouna are concerned, the position of the Irish Volunteer movement was sounder and stronger than ever before.

Clare had formed part of the Limerick brigade up till December 1916. In that month, representatives from all over Clare met in Ennis and decided to form a separate Volunteer brigade of their own, with Paddy Brennan of Meelick as Brigade Commandant. Arising out of this move, there was a recasting of the battalion areas, and so great was the rush of recruits once recruiting for Irish Volunteers re-opened, that new companies were formed in many districts. The area, from Inagh to Milltown-Malbay northwards to Galway and west of the village of Corofin, formed one Battalion after this reorganisation, and the Battalion Commandant was Seamus Conneally, Cullinagh. In the selection of officers for the key positions created as a result of the reorganisation, the I.R.B. always played the guiding part behind the scenes and was able to ensure that such positions were filled by members of the I.R.B.

The victory of the Sinn Féin candidate in the East Clare by-election in August, 1917, gave a great boost to the Irish Volunteers, Sinn Féin and other national organisations not alone in Clare but throughout Ireland. In Clare, branches of Sinn Féin sprang up in every parish with the aid of the Irish Volunteers. Cumann na mBan groups and Fianna Sluagh were formed in a number of centres, especially in the big villages and towns. A branch of the Cumann na

mBan, formed in Ennistymon about August, 1917, was the first to be started in North Clare, and about the same time a Fianna Sluagh was established in that town which kept going until after the Truce in July, 1921.

During the East Clare by-election, the Irish Volunteers from Clouna marched and drilled publicly when going to attend meetings in support of the Sinn Féin candidate who, of course, was Eamonn de Valera, and on polling day they were very active at the polling stations. The drilling and parading in public which then began for the first time after the 1916 Rising continued. In some parts of the Battalion area, officers were arrested for having participated in public drilling, but in Kilfenora and Clouna the authorities did not interfere.

It was about July 1917 that the first Lee Enfield service rifle came into the possession of the Irish Volunteers in our area. A British soldier, named Patrick O'Loughlin, came home on furlough to Ennistymon. He had been in France serving in the first Great War and the army authorities allowed men coming on leave to bring rifles and equipment with them. Three other Volunteers, Paddy Ward, Paddy Arkins and John McGann came with me to O'Loughlin's house where we seized his rifle and ten rounds of ammunition. A second rifle was also secured in another raid, but I was not on that job. By this time, the Clouna company had been divided and a separate company formed in Kilfenora. The two service rifles remained in the latter company which then had, as well, two Martin Henri rifles, three Winchester magazine rifles and a couple of .22 miniature rifles. It also had control of over a

dozen serviceable shotguns which had been collected during Easter Week 1916. These guns were not kept together in a dump but were divided out among the Volunteers for care and safe-keeping. Our supply of ammunition for all types of guns was very limited. We also had a number of revolvers and pistols. Most of these had been collected from private individuals, and I cannot say now what number of them was held by the company in Kilfenora at that stage.

The development of the Irish conscription threat during the winter of 1917 and spring of 1918 caused the Volunteer movement to grow stronger in North Clare. By February 1918, companies had been established in Ballyvaughan, Ennistymon, Kilshanny, Kilfenora, Tooraheera, and the companies which had lapsed in Ballinalackin, Doolin and Liscannor were revived. Protestsmeetings against conscription were held outside every chapel gate on Sunday after Mass, and collections were made to which practically every householder in North Clare consributed. Within the ranks of the Volunteers, the men became more enthusiastic, and the determination to resist conscription by every conceivable means increased in intensity. Every Volunteer got orders from G.H.Q. to provide himself with a pike for use against troops or police who might attempt to enforce them into the British army. The pikes were made by the local blacksmiths out of new rasps which cost 2/6d. each and they were fitted to handles, about six feet long.

Simultaneously with the anti-conscription activities, the Volunteers and Sinn Féin clubs in our battalion area became involved in the seizure of farms

used for grazing by owners who were never friendly towards any popular movements. The lands were ploughed and put under oats by people who had taken lots, mostly small farmers whose holdings were unsuited to tillage. Most of the ploughing was done by Irish Volunteers and, while this was going on, military and police came on the scene and took the names of those whom they found at work. It was made clear to the authorities that there was no question of confiscation of the seized lands and that the people who had taken lots for tillage would pay reasonable compensation to the owners. I cannot remember any Volunteers having been arrested in connection with the seizure of these farms, but in any event this would not be easily accomplished, as every man whose name was taken went on the run. On the other hand, four or five non-supporters of Sinn Féin were taken into custody and fined before the courts. Orders came from Headquarters in Dublin that Volunteers should not become involved in land trouble in future and these orders were observed throughout the area.

I think it was in connection with the anti conscription campaign that we manufactured a couple of dozen of home-made bombs. These were made from canisters filled with scrap and charged with powder and fuse or gelnite with detonator and fuse. Like the pikes, I cannot recall whether these bombs were ever used in our battalion area.

In the South Armagh by-election, the supporters of the Irish Parliamentary Party candidate and imported members of the Ancient Order or Hibernians from outside constituencies were, with the tacit approval of the police authorities, making matters very rough for those

who sided with Sinn Féin. Approaching polling day, the Sinn Féin leaders felt that the prospects of their candidate would be jeopardised unless adequate protection was provided at the polling booths for their supporters. Accordingly, detachments of armed Volunteers were brought into the constituency. About fifty men went from the North Clare battalion. Again, in the general election of 1918 when trouble threatened for the supporters of Sinn Féin in East Mayo, North Clare supplied about a quarter of the two hundred Volunteers sent up from Co. Clare to maintain the peace.

In September 1918, an event occurred in North Clare which helped in a big way to lower the prestige of the R.I.C. in the district. It was on the occasion of the burial of the old Fenian and I.R.B. centre, Tomás O'Loughlin, in Carron graveyard. There was a big military funeral, and the I.R.B. members were determined that there would be a firing party over the grave. This would have meant arrest and imprisonment for the members of the firing party since the use of firearms by Volunteers was then a serious offence, and three or four R.I.C. men were present to see and report on what happened. Before the firing party appeared at the graveside, a small party of Volunteers ordered the police to face the graveyard wall and not to look about on peril of their lives. The police complied with the order and, with their backs to the grave, they were unable to see who composed the firing party or how the members of it were equipped. As soon as this part of the funeral ceremonies was over, the police were allowed to resume the role of onlookers, and crestfallen



men they looked as they left the graveyard to go back to their station. The Volunteers who held up the policemen were all unarmed and were strangers to them. No arrests were made over the incident, and the jokes and songs which were composed about it made the R.I.C. feel very small indeed.

After the death of Tomás O'Loughlin, he was replaced as centre for North Clare by Martin Devitt who was the most active member of the Volunteers in that area and was later killed in an engagement with the R.I.C. at Crowe's Bridge, near Inagh.

In December 1918, a decision of G.H.Q. to divide the Clare brigade into three separate brigades was carried into effect. The brigades became known as the East, Mid and West Clare brigades. North Clare formed part of the mid Clare area. The first officers of this brigade were:-

O/C	-	Frank Barrett.
Vice O/C	-	Martin Devitt.
Adjutant	-	Joe Barrett.
Quartermaster	-	Eamon Waldron.

The North Clare battalion, up to then known as the 4th battalion, was split into two battalions known as 4th and 5th. Kilfenora went into the 5th battalion area and the staff of that battalion were:

O/C	-	Peadar O'Loughlin.
Vice O/C	-	Thomas Shalloo.
Adjutant	-	Myself.
Quartermaster	-	Peadar Considine.

The following is a list of the companies which

comprised the 5th battalion, and the names of the officers:-

"A" - Kilfenora	- Captain - Paddy Ward.
	Lieuts. - John Joe Lynch; Paddy O'Loughlin.
"B" - Clouna	- Captain - Terry Coughlan.
	Lieuts. - James Kellagher; Thomas Gallagher.
"C" - Liscannor	- Captain - Michael Guthrie.
	Lieuts. - Peter Scales; James Nestor.
"D" - Toovahera	- Captain - Austin Geraghty.
	Lieuts. - Jack Moylan; Edward Lafferty.
"E" - Moymore	- Captain - Joe Murphy.
	Lieuts. - Patrick Finn; Willie Greene.
"F" - Doolin	- Captain - James Lafferty.
	Lieuts. - Michael Long; Michael Maher.
"G" - Kilshanny	- Captain - Patrick Kennedy.
	Lieuts. - Thomas Nagle; John J. Tierney.
"H" - Ballyvaughan	- Captain - Sean McNamara.
	Lieuts. - Michael Mullins; Anthony O'Donohue.
"I" - Ballinalackan	- Captain - Tom Dillon.
	Lieuts. - Pat Gardiner; Francis Doherty.

For some months after the creation of the Mid Clare brigade, a good deal of attention was devoted by the brigade and battalion staffs to the perfection of the organisation.

Due to an attempt by certain prominent Volunteers to form an "independent" brigade in the Mid Clare area, some trouble was experienced in 1st, 2nd and 3rd battalions in getting the situation there

under control. Of course, the "independent" brigade was not recognised by G.H.Q. It received no support in the 5th battalion area and, as far as I know, very little in the 4th battalion either.

The first meeting of the brigade council of the Mid Clare brigade, at which I remember a discussion on operations against the forces of occupation, was in June, 1919, when it was decided that in each battalion area police patrols should be attacked. Immediately after this, a meeting of our battalion council was summoned and it was agreed that the police patrol, which left Kilfenora R.I.C. barracks for Kilshanny, should be disarmed at Cahermore Cross, one and a half miles from Kilfenora. The battalion O/C was absent in Dublin, so I took charge of the operation.

There were usually four policemen in this patrol, armed with carbines and revolvers. I selected the following for the attack:-

Tom Shalloo	-	Battalion Vice O/C.
Peter Considine	-	Battalion Quartermaster.
Paddy Ward	-	Captain, "A" Company.
Terry Coughlan	-	" " "B" "
Austin Geraghty	-	" " "D" "
James Lafferty	-	" " "F" "

Geraghty and Lafferty were late in arriving. I placed Shalloo, Ward and Coughlan inside the fence, facing the road to Wingfield, while Considine and myself were on the other side, in the corner of a field, at the Kilfenora side of the cross-roads. I think all our party had shotguns, but one or two may have had revolvers. We also had three or four scouts posted

along the roads leading to Cahermore.

The police came long earlier than expected, at about 10.30 p.m. (date, 5th July, 1919). Instead of four, there were only two men in the patrol. As they came to the cross-road, I ordered them to put up their hands. They refused and, instead, tried to bring their guns to the firing position. As they did so, Considine and myself fired. I next heard a roar from the police, and they turned and ran off towards Kilfenora. Both of them were wounded and, as only one of them had dropped his gun - a carbine - we tried to intercept them but failed. The policeman who got away with his gun had his hand shot off, but the gun - a revolver - was attached by a lanyard to his shoulder, with the result that, though he threw the gun away, it was still hanging from him as he ran off.

None of the men engaged in this attack was arrested. Austin Geraghty, who was late in arriving, was apprehended in the widespread R.I.C. raids which followed, but no evidence was obtainable against him and he was released after a week or two.

In July, 1919, I took a party of four men to attack two R.I.C. from the police hut in Derrymore, at Ballyoraneen or Islandbaun. The police did not come along on that occasion. A week later, two police from that hut were shot dead in the same place, but I was not present.

During October, 1919, the Battalion O/C, Peadar O'Loughlin, Frank Molyneaux, a chemist, who worked in Ennistymon, and myself travelled in a car, which Molyneaux had provided and which was driven by a Volunteer, named Thomas McDonagh, to Lisdoonvarna

where we raided the private house of Mr. Curtin, proprietor, Lisdoonvarna Hotel. After knocking at the door, we got no answer and we forced an entrance, by using a crowbar. There was a caretaker in residence but he did not interfere. In the course of a search of the house, we found a Lee Enfield service rifle, a shotgun and an assortment of ammunition, all of which we seized.

Later in October 1919, a party of about twenty Volunteers cycled from Kilfenora to Moughaval, about three miles, and, from the latter point, went afoot to Ballyvaughan coastguard station to help the local company in the capture of that building and to disarm the coastguards who were reported to be after getting equipped with rifles. At the moment, I'm not sure whether the Captain of the Ballyvaughan company, Sean McNamara, was in charge of this operation or not, but in any case it turned out to be an easy affair. The coastguard station was surrounded. Sean McNamara and Ignatius O'Neill (O/C, 4th battalion) surprised the night watchman who made no effort to resist and, after that, the remaining seven or eight of his colleagues were made prisoners. The booty was not as big as expected, only one service rifle, a couple of telescopes and some ammunition.

The poor old coastguards were a rather harmless crowd, who generally were on good terms with the people. They were mostly Englishmen whose duties consisted principally of keeping a look-out for smuggling by sea and of operating a lifeboat service.

After the station had been captured, all the

coastguards were assembled in one room where we joined with them in a sing-song and in friendly conversation. Being strangers, we tried to give the coastguards the impression that we were a crowd from Dublin, and we parted with them on the best of terms.

The Ballyvaughan R.I.C. barracks was only about three-quarters of a mile from the coastguard station and, while the raid was in progress, we had posted a number of the local Volunteers on all the roads in the district to act as scouts and particularly to watch out for the movements of the police. One scout, named Thomas O'Loughlin, a blacksmith, was noticed by the police as they began to follow up his movements. He observed this and suddenly stood. The police stood too. He remained stationary for over an hour until he was satisfied the raid was well over and then went home. The police kept watching him and even his house after he had gone in there. Next day, he was questioned by them as to what he was doing on the previous night and he was safely able to answer, "Just taking care of you fellows".

I have already said that our battalion was very short of ammunition for whatever guns we had. The shotgun was a weapon which, at the end of 1919, had not yet lost its value in guerilla fighting, and any chance of getting that type of gun or suitable ammunition was taken. The battalion commandant, Peadar O'Loughlin, received advance information that H.V. McNamara, a local landlord very much disliked by the people, had invited some of his Unionist friends and some British army officers to a shoot on his preserves in Carron. The commandant gathered a party

of seven men for the purpose of disarming Mr. McNamara and his friends. Though I was not in this party, I heard a good deal about it afterwards from the Commandant himself and from the men who took part. All accounts were unanimous in saying that, as the men were being instructed for the attack, the commandant insisted that everything possible should be done to avoid inflicting injury on the members of the shooting party. The attack was arranged to take place on 2nd December, 1919, at a crossroads in Sessiaghmore through which it was known the party would be travelling in two motor cars. In order to halt the cars, a barricade was erected across the road. At about 9 a.m. the cars reached the crossroads and stopped when in front of the barricade. The occupants were ordered to put up their hands and surrender their guns. The reply was a volley of shots which our men answered. The shooting went on for about twenty minutes. By that time, McNamara's party managed to get out of the cars and make their way to a nearby house in which they barricaded themselves. Our men were not in a position to press home the attack further. The commandant had been wounded near the eye, and two of his men were also wounded, Paddy Ward, in the back of the head, and Austin Geraghty, in the shoulder and arm. Besides, their supply of ammunition was almost exhausted. Every member of Mr. McNamara's party was wounded.

This affair got a considerable amount of publicity in the British and Irish daily papers. For weeks after, military and police searched the countryside and interrogated dozens of people. Only

one man was charged in connection with the shooting. He was not in the attack, but he was a Volunteer. Most, if not all, of those who had been ambushed identified him as having been one of the attackers. Ultimately, he was acquitted.

Kilfenora R.I.C. barracks was one of the nearest police stations to the scene of the attack which I have last referred to, and like the other stations in the adjacent districts, it was reinforced after this incident. Among the reinforcements were two young R.I.C. men named Moore and McGill. They moved around the village a good deal after girls, a pastime which often kept them out late at night. We decided to attack these two policemen, not so much for the sake of shooting them as to entice out reinforcements whom we would also be able to attack. The operation was fixed for the night of 7th December, 1919. Four men, armed with revolvers, were assigned to a position at Howley's corner which is opposite the Catholic church and about thirty yards from the barracks. The men moved in about seven o'clock. People were on their way to the Rosary in the church at the time. As the two R.I.C. men came down the village towards the barracks, some women came between them and the waiting Volunteers who were thus compelled to withhold their fire. The delay enabled the police to get within a few yards of the barracks before fire could be opened. Altogether, not more than a dozen shots were fired after them. One policeman was wounded before they got into the station. Our party waited for some



time but the police did not come out. In addition, to the four men armed with revolvers, we had seven or eight others with rifles who were to deal with the reinforcements.

Not long after the last mentioned incident, a party of about six men armed with rifles sniped the Kilfenora R.I.C. station. I was not present that night, nor was there any purpose behind the operation other than to annoy the police and make life uncomfortable for them. It was the type of activity which, in later years, came to be regarded as part of a war of nerves. A half a dozen shots directed against a barracks after nightfall was enough to keep the members of the garrison inside on the alert until the next morning, and in the meantime their "jumpy" condition was displayed by the wild barrage of firing which they maintained during the hours of darkness. Apart from the psychological aspect, there was also the waste of ammunition which added considerably to the expenditure of the British government in their efforts to defeat us. However, the enemy did not allow this type of harassing operation to continue for long in Kilfenora because he withdrew the R.I.C. altogether from that centre early in 1920.

In the general destruction of police barracks which took place on the night of 3rd April, 1920, Kilfenora barracks was destroyed. I was in charge of the job myself, and it was carried out by the use of the pick and crowbar by the members of the local company. Other vacated R.I.C. stations in our

battalion area destroyed on the same night were Liscannon, Carron, Ballydoura and Fanore.

There was a slack period in military activities in North Clare from the spring of 1920 to the autumn of that year. Two factors, in my view, contributed to this. Firstly, the Vice O/C of the Mid Clare brigade, Martin Devitt, was killed in an engagement with the R.I.C. at the end of February, 1920, and secondly, the R.I.C. were withdrawn from all the smaller stations about the same time and they were concentrated in the bigger villages and towns which did not then render them to be so vulnerable to attack. On leaving the country districts, they rarely visited them after, except in strength and when using fast transport. With regard to Devitt, it had become recognised, even among his own men that his name was a synonym for trouble for the British authorities. He was fearless, resourceful and eternally on the alert for an opportunity to strike at the foe. He regarded his position as an I.R.B. centre for North Clare as one which demanded from himself unceasing examples in ridding the country of alien rule. His loss was a big blow to our brigade, and it is very doubtful if it was afterwards made good. Devitt was replaced by the O/C of the 5th battalion whom I succeeded. My place as Battalion Adjutant was filled by Peadar O'Brien, Ballykeale, Kilfenora.

In September, 1920, the 4th battalion brought off an ambush at Rineen, about two miles from Milltown-Malbay, in which six R.I.C. men were killed and the lorry in which they travelled, together with all the

arms and equipment, was captured. Though I offered whatever assistance I could in the way of men and arms for this attack, I was led to understand that all that was wanted was five or six rifles and some .303 ammunition. These were made available, and there was an arrangement between myself and the 4th battalion officers that I should take about half a dozen men with me to Ennistymon on the night of the ambush where I would get back the rifles I had lent and assist in attacking the enemy, should he attempt reprisals in the town.

Unfortunately, though I attended at the appointed place with my men, none of the 4th Battalion turned up. The enemy did carry out most frightful reprisals that night and there was no one to molest him. It was a splendid chance lost because the British forces - R.I.C., Black and Tans and military - all went berserk in their orgy of destruction, becoming frightfully drunk in the process and, throwing all precaution to the winds, became sitting ducks for properly placed ambushers. Perhaps it is only just to add that, after capturing the lorry, the 4th battalion men were surprised by enemy reinforcements and were lucky to escape with only a few wounded. The wounded included the Battalion Commandant. In effecting their retreat, his men became widely separated, and that night they were scattered in small groups over an area of about ten miles wide. It would have been practically impossible to have them re-assembled in time to deal with the enemy engaged in reprisals

between Milltown-Malbay, Lahinch and Ennistymon.

Less than a week after Rineen, a daylight raid by a party of R.I.C. and Tans was made on the village of Kilfenora in my battalion area. They looted a number of shops in the village and then cleared out. In the surrounding country, they shot a stallion and a number of cattle. Owing to the suddenness of the raid, it was not possible to interfere with the intruders.

About the middle of October 1920, I received word from brigade headquarters to select ten or twelve men from my battalion, each of whom was to be armed with a revolver, for the purpose of raiding the R.I.C. barracks in Ruan. This operation was planned by the brigade staff, and Ruan is about twelve miles, as the crow flies, from Kilfenora. The following are the names, which I can remember, of those whom I selected:-

Sean McNamara	-	Noughaval Company
Nicholas Healy	-	" "
Paddy Devitt		
Tom Shalloo	-	Vice Commandant
James Kelleher	-	Cloona Company.
Peadar Considine	-	Battalion Quartermaster
Paddy Hehir	-	Kilshanny Company
Mickey Vaughan	-	Kilfenora Company
Paddy Ward	-	" "

A few nights after hearing from the brigade, I took a party to Kilnaboy where a scout joined us and led the way across country to Ruan which we reached about half-past four next morning. Outside Ruan, we

met Joe Barrett, brigade O/C, operations, who explained that there had been a change in plans and that we would not be going into the barracks, but instead we would do outpost duty a quarter of a mile outside the village of Ruan on the Corofin road, to deal with any enemy reinforcements that might come from the R.I.C. barracks in Corofin, about three miles away. Barrett then asked for the revolvers which we were carrying and gave us rifles instead. He told us too that, for the previous couple of days, he had been training men from the 1st and 2nd battalions in mock attacks in which each man was put through the part he would be called on to take in capturing the Ruan barracks. We then went on to the position which had been allotted to us.

So far as my party was concerned, nothing happened until after daybreak when a scout came from the direction of the barracks and told us the operation was a failure. About five minutes later, another scout arrived with the correct account. The barracks had been captured with all its equipment, and the garrison were prisoners. In a short while, we were called into the village where two of the police, Constables Wilmot and Carroll, were handed over to us, with orders to detain them in my battalion area until further instructions were received. Taking the two prisoners, we made our journey homewards without incident, having got a much needed feed on the way at O'Brien's, Caherlough. The two prisoners were sent on to Diffley's cottage in Carron where the local company provided a guard over them.

I forgot to mention that a char-a-banc to take

away the booty from the Ruan barracks was provided by Dwyer's of Lisdoonvarna. This vehicle was driven by Mick Delahunty, a Tipperary man who was then employed in Dwyer's. I can give no exact figures as to what comprised the booty but, as far as I can remember hearing, it included fourteen rifles, fourteen revolvers, several thousand rounds of ammunition, hand grenades and all the policemen's bikes. The R.I.C. barracks was burned to the ground.

Three nights after the taking of Ruan barracks, John Joe Clohessy, then attached to the brigade staff, came to me with orders to release Constable Wilmot. I cycled with him to Diffley's in Carron and set this prisoner at liberty. The other prisoner's detention was only a sham. He, Constable Carroll, was the man who had planned and arranged the capture of the barracks, and it was pre-arranged that, as soon as this was accomplished, he would join the I.R.A. and go into active service with our battalion. Subsequently, he fought in a number of engagements with the Mid Clare brigade.

Towards the end of November, 1920, at a brigade council, the question of forming a brigade flying column was discussed. It was agreed that a column should be formed, to consist of men on the run and of six men selected by each battalion, making a total of between fifty and sixty men. Joe Barrett was appointed column commander.

The column assembled for its initial course of training about the middle of December, 1920, in my own native district. Only the 4th and 5th battalions

supplied the quota of men asked for, the other battalions sending a couple of men each. However, this presented no difficulty as the 5th battalion - and indeed the 4th - could furnish volunteers galore. The difficulty then was to explain to the men who had not been chosen why they were omitted. In all, I would say that about thirty-five men attended the course.

The training course, which was supervised by the column commander, was conducted by Ignatius O'Neill and Martin Slattery, both ex British soldiers. It consisted of lectures on the care and mechanism of the Lee Enfield service rifle, aiming exercises and judging distances. While in the district, the men from the outside districts were billeted on the farm-houses in Lickeen and Tullaha, but some supplies of food were got from the shopkeepers in Kilfenora. An elaborate scouting system was established to guard against surprise by enemy forces stationed in Ennistymon (three miles), Corofin (eight miles) and Lisdoonvarna (six miles). After the third or fourth day, word was received from Volunteer sources that a convoy of two enemy lorries had started to travel between Ennistymon and Ennis, which were about seventeen miles apart. The column commander decided to attack this convoy.

The place chosen for the attack was in the townland of Monreal South, about three miles from Ennistymon. In that town, there was a mixed force of R.I.C. and Black and Tans, about fifty strong, while a military detachment of over a hundred men

occupied the workhouse, a half a mile out along the road to Lahinch. While the site selected for the ambush was, without question, the best available for miles along the road used by the convoy, still it was not a suitable position for engaging more than two lorry loads of troops. At that stage, the enemy were getting "cagey" and, when travelling in lorries, kept the vehicles well separated, at least a hundred yards apart and usually a good deal more.

From the positions which were at our disposal in Monreal South, troops moving in lorries along the main road would be exposed to effective fire for a stretch of not more than two hundred and fifty yards. It was a big advantage to be able to subject all the lorries to the opening volleys from our guns and, if any one of the enemy vehicles was outside range, owing to the superior armament and equipment which the occupants carried, the surprise element, in our favour at the outset, could be quickly counteracted. As well, if most of the enemy were not put out of action by these initial volleys, the survivors, by dismounting quickly and availing of the cover provided by the road fences, had a clear command of the ground that gradually sloped from the road southwards for about two hundred and fifty yards to the Inagh or Cullinagh river, which here ran roughly parallel to the main road. In that stretch of ground between the main road and the river, the only cover came from slight depressions and rocks which were fairly plentiful, apart from a low fence situated about thirty yards from the main road and more or less parallel to it. On the far bank of the river,



the land rose rather steeply for about forty or fifty yards, and this slope was heavily covered with scrub and briers. From the top of the slope southwards, the ground was relatively flat for upwards of a mile but it was intersected a good deal by the fences of fields, varying in size from a quarter to a few acres. A by-road from the main road in Monreal South ran across Moanannagh bridge through the townland of Moanannagh.

The main road from Ennistymon runs fairly straight until it comes near a small bridge in Monreal South, and from there, for a distance of about six hundred yards, forms a curve until it comes to a bend, three hundred and fifty yards from the crossroads in Monreal South, after which it runs straight for well over a mile in the direction of Ennis. At this bend, on the northern side of the road, the ground rose rather sharply for about a hundred yards and then, for a stretch of over two miles northwards, forms a more or less undulating plain, broken here and there by hillocks. This country has the usual quota of stone fences, found in areas people by small farmers in this part of Clare. About twenty yards on the Ennis side of the road bend already referred to, a double stone wall, six or seven feet high, runs from the main road almost due north over the rising ground for about a quarter of a mile until it meets a stream which comes down from Cloona to the north-east. Also meeting this wall, about forty yards from the stream, is a narrow by-road which serves three or four houses in that part of Monreal South. On the right-hand side of the stone wall are two protruding cattle shelters,

or "mothans" as they are called in North Clare. They are approximately the same size, about twenty yards square, and are bounded by walls similar to that from which they protrude. The front wall of the lower shelter is about twenty yards from the main road at the left-hand corner, and about thirty yards at the right-hand corner.

The scene of the Monreal ambush is shown on the sketch attached to the original copy of this statement.

The day picked for the attack was 18th December, 1920. On the previous evening, some of our officers had visited the selected site to inspect the ground, fix the positions and arrange for the disposition of the column. As they were so engaged, they were noticed by a detachment of military coming from Ennis in lorries. The military dismounted and opened fire, but no injury befell our officers, the only casualties being a few cattle killed.

Next morning, the column was roused early and, after breakfast, left their billets around half-past six. Including a dozen scouts drawn from the local Volunteers, I would estimate the total strength of the party as being close on fifty strong. Most of the men carried rifles but some also had shotguns and, as well, a number carried hand grenades taken from Ruan barracks. The ambush position was reached well before daybreak, perhaps round eight o'clock. The weather was bitterly cold and a heavy frost had made the four-mile journey from Lickeen across the fields and bogs very difficult. The column was divided into two sections which I shall call A. and B. Section A. was allocated the positions

on the lower or the river side of the road, while Section B. was placed on the opposite or northern side.

I was with Section B. which comprised about seventeen or eighteen men under the control of Sean Casey, O/C, 3rd battalion. Section A. was under the personal control of the column commander, Joe Barrett, and comprised about twenty men. I have not much of an idea as to the personnel of that section, how they were allocated or, in fact, what happened to that section during the fighting which ensued. As things turned out, I and some of my comrades had our own hands full in trying to cope with the enemy, and I had no time to watch what was taking place elsewhere.

I may have forgotten the names of a couple of men who comprised Section B., but the following is a list of those whom I can remember:-

Sean Casey	-	O/C, 3rd Battalion
Patrick Costelloe	-	O/C, 2nd "
Tom Shalloe	-	Vice O/C, 5th Battalion.
Paddy Devitt	-	5th Battalion.
Sean McNamara	-	" " (later O/C, 6th Batt.)
Joe Griffey	-	" "
Austin Geraghty	-	" "
Joseph McNamara	-	" "
Michael O'Loughlin	-	" "
Conor O'Donohue	-	" "
Sean Callaghan	-	" "
Ignatius O'Neill	-	4th "
Stephen Wall	-	" "
Patrick Powell (alias Cahill), a native of Birr.		
Myself	-	O/C, 5th Battalion.

This section occupied the cattle shelter nearest to the road, taking positions along the front wall and side wall which came up from the main road. I am now unable to fix the position of each man, but I'm definite that I was placed on the extreme right-hand corner and that Ignatius O'Neill was a few feet on my right. Pat Powell and Sean Callaghan were at the other corner with some hand grenades.

As soon as our places were pointed out to us, each man got to work, making a loop-hole through the wall for his gun. Gaps were also made at each of the corners, where the back walls of the two shelters joined and the side wall coming from the road, to enable us to get away in the event of a retreat being necessary. This proved to be a very wise move as, during the subsequent fighting, our men got out through these two gaps without being seen by the enemy. Had we been obliged to climb over the high walls surrounding the shelters, we would have been exposed to the enemy's fire.

At about a quarter past nine o'clock, our scouts reported that three lorries of enemy troops were on the way from Ennistymon. From the positions in front of the shelter, we had no view of the road on the Ennistymon side, and could only see the lorries as soon as they passed the point where the wall met the road. It was arranged as part of the plan of attack that the leading lorry would be allowed to come around the bend, and that fire would not be opened on it until it came under the cattle shelter, when it would be attacked by the men along the front wall of

that position, and also by some of the men in section A. below the road who were behind a short stretch of a low stone wall facing the main road. This would allow the second lorry to be at least around the bend before the attack began, where it would come under the fire of the remainder of the men in section A. and from the portion of Section B. whose positions were along the side walk of the shelter.

Things did not work in accordance with these arrangements because, as the enemy almost reached the site of ambush, a shot was accidentally discharged by one of the party on the other side of the road. Though the lorries did not stop, I could hear them slowing up. Almost immediately after this shot went off, all the men in section A. opened fire on the first lorry which by then had come round the bend. The lorry accelerated speed. As it sped past the cattle shelter, it came under our fire, but the driver was not hit though several of his passengers toppled on to the roadside; either killed or wounded. This lorry, which contained military, drove on to the cross-roads where it pulled up.

In the meantime, the second lorry had rounded the bend and received a hot reception until it halted almost in front of a quarry on the roadside just beside the spot where the high wall from the shelter joined the road. The driver of this lorry had been hit, and his passengers were a mixed party of R.I.C. and Black and Tans. They were quickly off the lorry and took shelter underneath it and also in the quarry. They were not long in getting into action, using rifle

grenades with good effect, and of which we had our first experience. The survivors from the first lorry also were not slow in making their presence felt as they brought a machine gun into action against our position. An attempt to dislodge the police from the quarry and from the vicinity of the second lorry was unsuccessful, as some hand grenades thrown by Powell and O'Callaghan from the shelter did not explode.

The rifle grenades used by the police began to prove effective. They concentrated on the corner of the shelter nearest to them, and gradually began to batter down the wall. Flying shrapnel and splinters from the stones compelled our men to vacate that post. O'Neill and myself were busily engaged in dealing with the machine gun and snipers firing from the direction of the cross-roads. After some time, I happened to look behind and noticed that most of the garrison in the shelter were moving towards the rear. We then left our position and went to the other corner where we soon realised why the men were leaving. Bombs were exploding all around the place, and it simply could not be held. We then went after the others through the two gaps which had been prepared that morning. I would say that, by this time, the fighting was in progress for about a quarter of an hour.

In the meantime, the occupants of the third lorry, which pulled up before it reached the bend where it would have come under fire, had dismounted and begun to advance from the road up the high ground on our right flank. This party had a machine gun also, but they were being held in check by a few of our section who had left the shelter before O'Neill and myself, and who

had retreated under cover of the high wall coming up from the road. Our men had crossed this wall into a long field on the left, where there were a number of depressions in the ground that enabled them to move further away from the enemy by making short runs or crawling from one hollow to another. While one or two men were moving, another man remained behind, firing whenever he got a chance of seeing any of the enemy. In that group, I recognised Tom Shalloo, Stephen Wall, Paddy Devitt, Joe Griffey and Sean McNamara. I made my way after them and parted with O'Neill after having crossed the wall. Using the same tactics as the others, I reached within about fifty yards from the end of the field. I had good enough cover here, but the enemy had come closer. His machine gun post had now advanced about one hundred yards from the road and was not more than one and a half times that distance from me. Fire from this gun was sweeping the end of the field. I had seen Tom Shalloo and Stephen ~~Callagher~~<sup>Wall</sup>, making a dash which enabled them to get across the by-road and into relative safety, as beyond it there was good cover.

Between myself and the by-road, I knew that Paddy Devitt, Sean McNamara and Joe Griffey were pinned down by the enemy fire. The trouble with them was that McNamara had been badly wounded through the thigh, and he had to be helped along. Gradually, I made my way to the by-road and found the trio lying in a depression, Devitt firing an occasional shot whenever he saw a target. After joining them, we decided that McNamara and Griffey should continue their way towards the by-road, while Devitt and myself covered their

retreat. We opened up fire which was sufficiently effective to enable the retiring pair to reach their objective. I next went off while Devitt covered me. I too got clear, after which I was able to engage the enemy until Devitt made the journey.

There was more shooting to our left as we got across the by-road, and found that it was coming from O'Neill and a few others of the Column who were with him. I sent off Griffey to tell them to wait as we needed assistance to carry McNamara who was after losing a lot of blood and was now in a weak condition. Devitt and myself helped him along for roughly a hundred yards when we made contact with O'Neill and the others. We now had all the men who had comprised section B. in the cattle shelter except Powell and Callaghan. It seems the pair of them, along with a couple of the scouts, had been among the first to retire and they had taken a different route to us. The only serious casualty which we had was Sean McNamara, though several men had received scratches from stone splinters.

There was now a danger that reinforcements might arrive who, by using transport, could avail of by-roads at our rear to cut off our retreat. In view of the small size of our little force, about fourteen men, nearly half of whom carried shotguns, we decided to continue the retreat as best we could through Cloona towards Lickeen. The enemy's machine and rifle fire was still being directed at us, but his advance had stopped. He had not moved more than one hundred and fifty yards from the main road. As we moved towards Cloona, the cover continued to be



good, so his fire did not unduly worry us. After we had proceeded about three hundred yards from the by-road, we noticed that the enemy diverted his fire. Later, we learned the reason for this was because Powell and those with him had been seen. They were moving to the left of our party, towards Cahersherkin. We crossed the railway line near the level-crossing in the townland of Cullinagh, through the townland of Russa into Cloona.

As we were moving through Russa, reinforcements, comprised of R.I.C. and Black and Tans from Ennistymon, approached the scene of the ambush. Seeing the figures on the high ground behind the cattle shelters vacated by us, they opened fire. The fire was promptly returned. The exchange of shots lasted for several minutes before the reinforcements realised they were firing on their own men, the military, who had advanced a short distance after us. There were some casualties, and it gave rise to a lot of bad feeling afterwards between the military and the police. Perhaps it was just as well for us that this incident occurred, as it may have been the cause of the enemy failing to press home his advantage which he definitely had at that stage. Two or three lorry-loads of fresh troops, using fast transport, could, if intelligently used, have made it extremely awkward for us to escape.

On reaching McCaw's house in Cloonagh, we left McNamara there under the charge of the local Volunteers. His wound received treatment and got a rough dressing. We resumed our way until we got as

farmas Michael Conway's, Knockavoulty, where we rested for an hour or so, and also got some food. After that, we made our way to Lickeen where the men remained for three or four hours. I had a discussion with the senior officers who were in the party, and we decided on taking defensive action against reprisals which we expected would follow that night. Most of the men, however, were in an exhausted condition and were not fit for further action, so the party was sent off into the hilly country in Doon, to the west of Kilfenora, where they were billeted for the night under the protection of an extensive scouting system set up by the local I.R.A. company.

Under cover of darkness, Sean McNamara was removed in a donkey cart, filled with a bed of hay, by two Volunteers named Micky Vaughan and Michael Queally, to Daly's of Caherminane, and on the following night he was taken to

About nine or ten o'clock on the night of the ambush, Sylvester Barrett, brother of the column commander, came to me in Lickeen to ascertain how we had fared in the fighting. From him, I learned that all the men in section A. were safe but that Bill Carroll, Paddy O'Loughlin, Bill McNamara and Jack Hassett had been wounded.

The reprisals which we had anticipated came off. In the townland of Tullaha, O'Loughlin and Torpey's houses were burned, and also a couple of haystacks in the district. These burnings were carried out by police reinforcements which had come from Corofin. The troops and police from

Ennistymon were involved in reprisals in other parts of the locality.

I have no accurate figures of the casualties which the British forces sustained at Monreal. From time to time, I have heard different estimates of these losses which varied very much. I am certain though that, in the first lorry, not many survived injury, and I also think that, in the subsequent fighting, a number of the enemy were hit.

My recollection of events after Monreal is that the Brigade column was reduced in size and that the men from the 4th and 5th battalions were instructed to go back to their own areas.

On the 14th January, 1921, the Brigade Vice Commandant, Peadar O'Loughlin, and myself seized the rate books held by the rate collector for the Kilfenora district, a man named Connole. This official was on our side and the seizure, which had been arranged with him beforehand, was merely a matter of form. This action of ours was in accordance with a decision of the Clare County Council, then under the control of I.R.A. and Sinn Féin members, and very much at loggerheads with the British local government board. The seizing of the rate books was a preliminary to the collection of the rates by the I.R.A. and took place throughout Clare. From thence onwards and for some time after the Truce in July, 1921, the local company officers, under the supervision of the battalion staff, collected the rates. This meant a good deal of extra work, sometimes performed at considerable personal risk to the men engaged on it. However,

the public co-operated in fine style and, generally speaking, the job was done very well. There was only a very odd defaulter.

I overlooked mentioning earlier that, on the night of Holy Saturday, 1920, when Kilfenora R.I.C. barracks was knocked down, we also seized from Mr. Connole - he was income tax collector for North Clare - all the income tax papers held by him. It so happened that, due to a clerical error, he had received, a day or two previously, the documents relative to income tax for a big part of Co. Galway, all of which was included in the papers taken by us. Incidentally, these papers were burned the same night.

I believe that it was in February, 1921, that the Brigade council decided to split the 5th battalion and to create a new battalion - 6th - to control the part of my battalion area north of a line running roughly from Doolin to Carron, as far as the Galway border. The O/C of the newly created 6th battalion was Sean McNamara who had been wounded in Monreal. In the area of the 6th battalion, the enemy held two posts, the police barracks in Lisdoonvarna and the coastguard station in Ballyvaughan, which was then garrisoned by a detachment of marines.

On 31st March, 1921, in pursuance of a brigade order to attack enemy troops in each town where they were stationed - at that time there was no enemy post in my battalion - I was given the town of Ennistymon for the purpose of carrying out this order, although Ennistymon was in the 4th Battalion area. The 4th battalion were to go into action in Milltown-Malbay.

We got the assistance of some of the Ennistymon company whom we decided to use as scouts.

For this operation I had mobilised about thirty-five men, armed with about a dozen rifles, shotguns and revolvers. We were assembled at Kilcorney, near the town, when two of the Ennistymon men, Sean Healy and another man, came to warn us that the enemy had apparently been forewarned about the attack because police and military had taken up a number of positions about the town and its surroundings. I decided to take no chances and abandoned the operation. As Healy and his comrade were going home, they were captured by a party of soldiers but were released later that night.

After the Monreal engagement, the enemy did not give us a further opportunity of engaging a convoy along the Ennis-Ennistymon road with any hope of capturing it because, from that event onwards, the strength of the convoys was considerably increased. The number of lorries varied from six to ten or eleven, accompanied by one or two armoured cars. In addition, he sent troops between these two points by train and timed the convoys so that, as they passed through my battalion area, the trains came through a short time afterwards. The railway line ran at the rear of any position from which the convoys could be attacked or sniped.

A representative from G.H.Q. in Dublin, who visited Clare about May, 1921, was present at a brigade council meeting of the Mid Clare brigade, held at Patsie Hegarty's of Kilnamone, informed the meeting

that G.H.Q. was not satisfied that the Clare brigades were pulling their weight in the struggle and called for more action so that the enemy pressure on some of the other Munster counties, particularly Cork, might be diverted. The council meeting lasted well into the night and, when it ended, this representative - I can't recall his name - was still dissatisfied with the explanations put forward unanimously by the members of the council for the absence of big-scale attacks on the enemy, namely, the enemy convoys were now too big and the nature of the terrain did not lend itself to engaging more than two or three vehicles.

On the termination of the meeting, the delegates got accommodation for the rest of the night in Killnamona. Of course, the locality was well protected, while we rested, by scouts provided by the local company.

Next morning, the scouts reported that an enemy convoy was on its way from Ennis. The G.H.Q. representative went with a number of us to a point where we could view the convoy with safety. It consisted of two sections, with five or six lorries in each section, and in between the sections was an armoured car. Each lorry was about one hundred and fifty yards apart, while the sections were separated by about half a mile. This sight apparently impressed our distinguished visitor because he then agreed that such convoys were unassailable except that they could be sniped. But, as I have already explained, sniping, so far as the 5th Battalion area was concerned, was out of the question. In fact, I had about a dozen men with me in Monreal on one

occasion to bring off a sniping operation, when the distant sound of a train coincided with the approach of a convoy and I had to abandon the intention. Some sniping against these road convoys did occur, but this was done by men from the 4th battalion whose area was on the south side of the Inagh river and from country which was relatively free from surprise by other enemy forces.

About 19th May, 1921, the O/C of the 6th battalion, Sean McNamara, asked me to bring about a dozen men to assist him in an attack on the marines stationed in Ballyvaughan. I took ten or twelve, mostly armed with rifles and a few with shotguns, to the Corkscrew Hill national school where McNamara was waiting with his party which also numbered about a dozen, equipped partly with rifles and partly with shotguns. McNamara told me that he had an arrangement with a Miss Grant, employed as an assistant in the Ballyvaughan post office, by which this lady would send word to him when the marines would be coming from their post, the coastguard station, nearly a mile from the post office, to collect the mail. It was the practice of the marines to ring the post office, enquiring if there was any official mail and also to give the time that the mail would be called for, by a marine escort. McNamara had a scout, with a bicycle, waiting outside the post office to bring word to him from Miss Grant. We waited all day, but no message came. I had a battalion council meeting fixed that night at Kilshanny, about ten miles away, so I left the men who came with me and cycled off to the meeting.

On the following night, I had to go to the brigade council meeting in Hegarty's of Kilnamona at which the representative from G.H.Q. attended and to which I have already alluded. On the day after this meeting, the news came from the O/C, 6th battalion, that he had attacked the marines the previous day in Ballyvaughan, killing two and wounding a couple more, and capturing two or three rifles.

I believe it was after this brigade council meeting that the Vice O/C of our brigade led a party of about twenty riflemen, drawn from 5th and 6th battalions, into Ennistymon on a Sunday morning to fire at a party of police returning to their barracks after half-past nine o'clock Mass. The party got into the town before dawn and took up positions in the monastery grounds which commanded the entrances to the two R.I.C. posts, the courthouse and the police barracks, across the road in Parliament Street. Myself and Thomas Gallagher were detailed to go on to the fair green, with orders to open fire on the top windows at the back of the police barracks as soon as we heard shooting from the monastery. However, on getting to the fair green, we found that, owing to the intrusion of other buildings, we had no view of the barracks windows, but, before we could make contact again with the main party, firing at the police had started. Each man only fired a couple of rounds when the shooting stopped. Knowing that the cessation of the firing meant that the main party was withdrawing, Gallagher and myself left the fair green and joined the others at the Pound road and, from



there, the detachment went across country towards Tullaha, Kilfenora.

There was instant enemy activity after the attack. A lorry of military, which came along the Ballagh road to Cahersherkin, came within four or five hundred yards of us, and whether they had seen us going through the fields or not, the soldiers made no attempt to make contact with us. Subsequently, we learned that several enemy lorries, full of troops, had gone off in the early hours of the morning to raid the Doolin district and they had not come back by the time the attack had occurred.

One policeman was wounded in this operation and all the others ran for safety into the barracks. We had no casualties.

In March or April 1921, the Auxiliaries came to Corofin. They had a big reputation as seasoned and ruthless soldiers. Our brigade staff was anxious to emulate the feat performed by the Corkmen at Kilmichael, and eagerly sought an opportunity to do so. The Auxiliaries soon provided the chance, by travelling in lorries between Corofin and Ennis.

About the middle of May 1921, the brigade O/C, Frank Barrett, assembled upwards of seventy or eighty men, nearly all armed with rifles, at Kilnamona where they billeted for the night. These men came from all over the brigade area. Next morning, after having breakfast and getting conditional absolution from Father Hamilton, later Canon Hamilton, then on the staff of St. Flannan's College and one of the leading lights in the Sinn Féin movement in Clare, the party

marched to Toonagh, about four miles away and roughly midway on the main road between Ennis and Corofin, which are nine miles apart. Positions were taken at about seven o'clock in the morning, and one or two lorries were expected to come from Corofin some time before noon. It was the intention to attack them on their way to Ennis.

There were about twenty-five men from the 5th and 6th battalions in the ambush position.

Around four o'clock in the evening, the enemy was still without coming. A shot suddenly rang out which could be heard for miles through the country. This happened accidentally, but it caused the O/C to withdraw from the position. He had come to the conclusion that, owing to the lateness of the hour, the Auxiliaries were not going to travel to Ennis that day, and furthermore, he had a feeling that the shot, which had been discharged by one of the men, might have been heard either by the enemy or by someone who might warn him. Placed as we were between Ennis and Corofin, the party could be quickly surrounded by troops moving from these two points. On our withdrawal from Toonagh, the men were instructed to disperse to their home areas, and it was the last occasion before the Truce that I personally was connected with an operation planned by the Brigade staff.

I was in charge on one occasion later, early in July, 1921, when another attack on the Corofin Auxiliaries was arranged to take place at Willbrook, about three miles west of Corofin. The Auxiliaries had started to come out there a few times a week to

Patterson's mills for water, travelling in one or two lorries and varying in strength from about twelve to twenty men.

For this engagement, I had got reinforcements from 3rd, 4th and 6th battalions, and the total I.R.A. strength as we took up positions about four o'clock in the morning was up to sixty men, the greater part of whom had rifles and the remainder shotguns. The men were divided into three sections, a section on each side of the road around the entrance to Patterson's avenue, and another section of about seven men on a piece of high ground on the left-hand side, two hundred and fifty yards or so from the cross where the road branches off for Kilfenora. Each of our men had rations with him for the day.

After waiting until half-past seven in the evening, there was no sign of the enemy, and, as it was then too late to expect him, I gave orders to vacate the position and to assemble on a piece of high ground overlooking Patterson's yard and at the back of it, three hundred yards or so from the avenue. This order was just complied with, when two lorries of Auxiliaries came round the crossroads towards Patterson's. It is my own opinion that we were seen by the enemy because, when the lorries got into the avenue, the occupants jumped off and at once opened fire. We were in an exposed position at the time, and the heavy growth of bushes and briers into which we had to retreat for cover considerably hampered us. Anyway, none of the I.R.A. party was hit.

The Auxiliaries made no attempt to leave the

avenue, but sent a lorry back to Corofin for reinforcements. This move was counteracted by the action of a few men whom I had placed on the Corofin side of the crossroads who had orders to erect a barricade as soon as the lorries had gone down the avenue. These men had carried out their job alright.

A position of stalemate had more or less then arisen. The enemy would make no move without reinforcements and, owing to exposed ground surrounding the avenue, we could not advance to where we might hope to inflict losses. In the avenue, the Auxiliaries had splendid cover and could easily hold out until after nightfall. After some return fire by our men, I decided to send them off in sections towards Killmore where they dispersed.

I think the only casualty in this encounter was myself. While covering off the retirement of the sections, I had some men with me. One of these had a shotgun which discharged, through an accident, wounding me in the heel. I was taken to Ballymurphy, Roughaval, where I was attended by Dr. Pearson of Lisdoonvarna. In the same house where I was kept was another wounded I.R.A. man named Gerald Griffin, a native of Limerick. It was some weeks after the Truce before I was able to properly walk again.

With regard to the political side of the movement, I was not very prominently connected with it, although I was a member of the Kilfenora Sinn Féin club. I also arranged for the holding of Sinn Féin courts and ensured that these courts were protected and policed by Volunteers who also enforced the

courts' decrees. Apart from this, I'm not able to give any first-hand information concerning the activities of these courts.

I was also elected as a member of the Ennistymon rural district council - on the Sinn Féin ticket. After the local elections held in 1920, this body was, I think, entirely composed of men like myself - I.R.A. officers or persons nominated through Sinn Féin clubs. Owing to the fact that a lot of the members of this council were on the run, they could not attend the meetings of the council at the council's offices in the Ennistymon workhouse. This difficulty was got over by the council's clerk and his assistant - the brothers Nicholas and Joe Griffey of Ennistymon. They fixed the meetings for places of which the enemy forces were kept in ignorance, such as, the Golf Links, Lahinch, and Furryglen national school. I was present at a few meetings in both places which lasted for a couple of hours, and all the business was transacted before adjourning. While the council was sitting, scouts were posted to warn the members of the approach of enemy troops. In no instance was there a meeting raided.

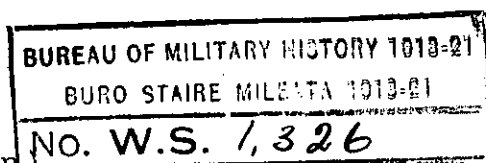
SIGNED: Andrew O'Donohue

(Andrew O'Donohue)

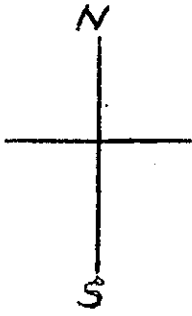
DATE: 17<sup>th</sup> December 1955

17th December, 1955.

WITNESS D. Griffin (D. Griffin)

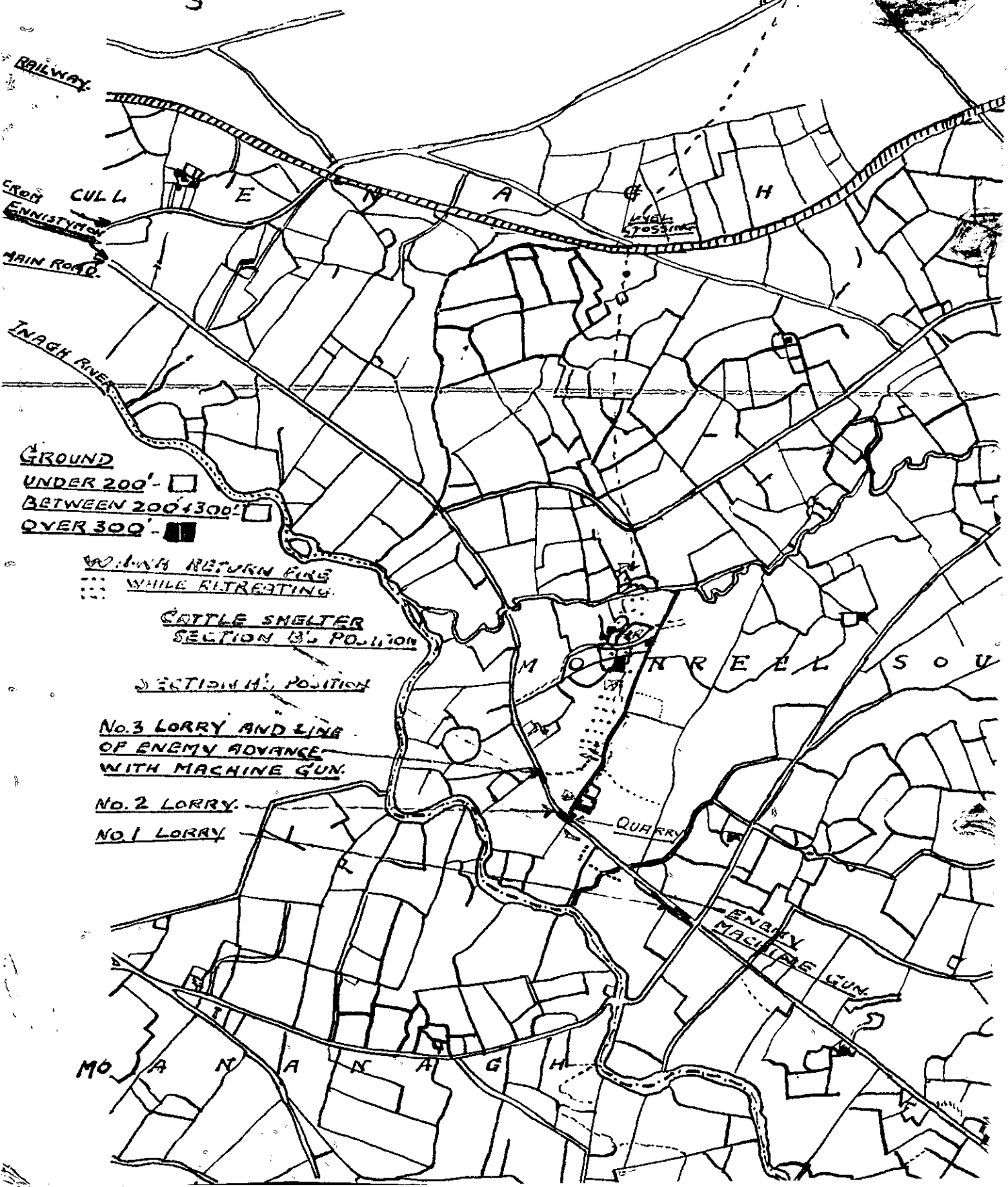


# MONREAL AMBUSH : 18.12.1920.



SECT. 14. 15  
LINE 14. 15

R U S S A



**GROUND**  
 UNDER 200' - [white square]  
 BETWEEN 200 & 300' - [light gray square]  
 OVER 300' - [dark gray square]

W.I. INNS RETURN FIRE  
 WHILE RETREATING

CATTLE SMELTER  
 SECTION B'S POSITION

SECTION H'S POSITION

No. 3 LORRY AND LINE  
 OF ENEMY ADVANCE  
 WITH MACHINE GUN.

No. 2 LORRY.

No. 1 LORRY.

QUARRY

ENEMY  
 MACHINE GUN.

M O A N A N A G H