

W.S. 1,370

**ORIGINAL**

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21
BURO STAIRE MILEATA 1913-21
No. W.S. 1,370

ROINN  COSANTA.

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.  
STATEMENT BY WITNESS.

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Witness

Joseph Clancy,  
Killaloe,  
Co. Clare.

Identity.

Brigade Training Officer,  
East Clare Brigade.

Subject.

East Clare Brigade,  
1918-1921.

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

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STATEMENT BY JOSEPH CLANCY,

Killaloe, Co. Clare,

formerly Brigade Training Officer, East Clare Brigade.

I was born on the 19th June, 1899, in Kilkishen, Co. Clare, and I was the youngest of a family of nine children. My father was a carpenter by trade. When I finished at the local national school I spent a short while at the trade with my father until I took it into my head to run away and join the British Army.

I was exactly sixteen years and a half when I enlisted in the 2nd Battalion of the Munster Fusiliers at Sarsfield Barracks in Limerick. I was sent to Ballymullen Barracks, Tralee, to do my training, but was transferred to France after three weeks. Within six weeks of my enlistment I was serving in the trenches in the First Great War. After being wounded three times I was discharged as medically unfit in July, 1918, and then came home to Clare on a pension of £2 - 7 - 9. In addition to being awarded the D.C.M., I had attained the rank of 1st Lieutenant before being discharged. While in the British Army I went through all infantry courses except signalling.

During my years of service in the British Army I came home on leave on three occasions. On the second occasion - the summer of 1917 - I brought with me a short Lee Enfield rifle, a bayonet and 20 rounds of ammunition. By that time my brother, Patrick, had become an officer in the local Irish Volunteer company and himself and a few others were very interested in my rifle. We arranged that they could have it and the ammunition by holding me up as I was on my way to Sixmilebridge railway station

returning to France. On reaching Limerick City that day I reported my loss to the military authorities and then proceeded on my journey. When I was finally discharged in June, 1918, I brought home two German automatic pistols, a short Webley and a quantity of ammunition. These arms were duly handed over to the local Volunteers.

I was at home only about three weeks when I joined the Kilkishen Company. At my own suggestion I immediately set about drilling the company and making it as efficient as any unit in a modern army. While at this work I did not go out of my way to put myself under the notice of the ever vigilant R.I.C. This policy served me well for a while and on one occasion in particular. About April, 1919, I met the East Clare Volunteer leader, Michael Brennan, by appointment in his cousin's house, Dr. Flynn's of Kilkishen. The place was raided by the police. Brennan managed to slip out by the back door and when the police entered the sitting-room they found myself and the doctor engaged in a quiet conversation. After apologising for intruding, the police left the house, and Brennan came back to resume our talks.

I continued to carry on my Volunteer activities, to enjoy my British Army pension and to be regarded by the authorities as a loyal citizen until the end of 1919. On New Year's Eve, however, along with another British ex-service man, Martin McNamara (The Neighbour), who, on being demobilised, also became a member of the Kilkishen Irish Volunteers, I cycled to Tom Hogan's, Cratloe, on orders from Brigade Headquarters. I was armed with the short Webley revolver which I had brought back from France.

At Hogan's we met Michael and Austin Brennan, Tom McGrath and about fourteen other I.R.A. men. Michael Brennan, then O/C of the East Clare Brigade, explained that he had decided to raid the Limerick General Post Office and to seize whatever money we could get our hands on, and that he intended to use the money for the purchase of arms. In connection with this raid, Brennan was aware through an inside contact, Dan Reddin, Sixmilebridge, that on the night in question the post office people in Limerick would be making up the money for despatch to the sub post offices for the payment of the old age pensions. Before leaving Cratloe, instructions regarding the raid were also issued. Brennan, with a party of six men, would enter the post office and hold up the staff. The money would then be seized and put into mails bags, taken to the docks to a waiting boat and brought by that boat to Cratloe. The remainder of the men, around a dozen, were told to occupy points along the street outside the post office until the raid was over.

We left Hogan's, all cycling, about 11 o'clock at night and reached the G.P.O. soon after midnight. Everything went off like clockwork; the staff, on being ordered to put up their hands, quickly did so; the money was collected and placed in three mailbags and taken away by John Joe Hogan, Corrigerry, Jim Brennan, Corrigerry, and Jim Brennan, The Island. In less than a quarter of an hour the remainder of the party were on their way back to Clare. At Flannery's, Ballycullane, myself, Tom McGrath, Dan Lenihan, Tom McMahon and Martin McNamara separated from the others and went to our own homes. It was then that I made a bad mistake. Before going home I returned

the bike which I had borrowed from one of the Kilkishen R.I.C. men, Constable Cooke.

In subsequent enquiries made by the police I was connected with the raid on the post office, and on 26th January, 1920, I was arrested by a mixed force of R.I.C. and military and taken to Ennis jail. After a week I was shifted to Limerick jail and in the course of six or seven weeks found myself in Wormwood Scrubbs, having in the meantime spent terms in prison in Cork, Mountjoy and Cork again.

In Wormwood Scrubbs there were prisoners from all over Ireland. Like myself, many of them had never been tried on any charge and were being detained without trial. The prison conditions were anything but satisfactory and a series of hunger-strikes took place there. Altogether I spent forty-three days on hunger-strike in that prison and was actually on hunger-strike when the authorities announced that the British government had decided to release us. The prisoners were set at liberty in batches, the last batch including myself, Tom Byrne, Dublin, Mick Doyle, Eimerick, and Jerry O'Sullivan, Kerry.

I was only home from Wormwood Scrubbs for six days when a detachment of military and R.I.C. from Tulla came to my home to re-arrest me. I escaped into the fields adjoining the house, being hotly pursued by a police dog. The military fired after me but I got into a thick clump of briars and nettles, where I remained for two hours until the raiders withdrew. It was fortunate for me that the soldiers' bullets killed the police dog. After that incident I was 'on the run' until the Truce.

In the course of the raids on my home my British Army Pension Book was seized, and that ended the pension which I had been awarded on my discharge from the British Army.

On my return from jail in England I found that Michael Brennan had been removed from his post as Commandant of the East Clare Brigade and that his brother, Austin, had been appointed as Acting Brigade Commander. In actual fact, however, this made little difference in the affairs of the brigade, because until he was restored to his command about the end of April, 1921, Michael Brennan continued to be the leader of the I.R.A. in East Clare. His unquestionable fearlessness, his calmness of manner and the simplicity of his ways made him extremely popular with all ranks and highly respected by the civilian population. Though stripped of his rank, it was he who led every engagement in East Clare during the Black and Tan struggle, with the exception of the Feakle ambush and the incident in Woodcock Hill, Cratloe, in June, 1921, when two of our officers, Christy McCarthy and Michael Gleeson, were killed.

During my period "on the run" I spent a lot of the time in Michael Brennan's company. I had been appointed as Brigade Training Officer by reason of my post on the brigade staff and because of my experience in the 1st Great War. Both of the Brennan brothers, and especially Michael, generally consulted me when any question of importance arose, and on the latter's request we were generally together or in the same locality from the summer of 1919 onwards.

As Brigade Training Officer I took in hands personally the drilling of each company according as I

moved about the brigade area with Brennan. I always had a rifle or two with which I was able to give lectures on the rifle, its mechanism and care, how to load it and how to aim with it. I also gave instruction on the use of small arms and bombs. In this way every Volunteer of average intelligence in the East Clare Brigade could in an emergency be called upon to use the rifle or revolver by the end of 1920.

While engaged in the work as Training Officer, like every other "wanted" man I had to be careful of my movements in moving about the country, but the extreme loyalty of the people made this job a pleasure which I very much enjoyed. In fact their generosity at times, particularly when one took a drink, as I did, tended towards the development of carelessness for personal security. Being an old soldier myself, I was always cautious against falling into the hands of the enemy, and more so after the Black and Tans had arrived. Though I had several close shaves, I found myself in a very tight corner during August, 1920, when fourteen lorries of military, R.I.C. and Tans suddenly swooped one day on the village of Kilkishen. Martin McNamara (The Neighbour), Jack Curley and Michael Neville and myself were having a meal in Boyle's publichouse at the time. We were all 'on the run' and each of us was armed with a revolver. We were warned in time to get out by the back door into the fields but were observed by the raiders, who turned machine-gun and rifle fire on us. McNamara and myself became separated from the others and we ran along by a hedge for about two hundred yards, when McNamara was wounded in the knee. However, we kept going, with the enemy still on our tracks, and traversed about three miles through the country

until we crossed the Owenogarney river, which was waist high at the time, and got into the wood on the Belvoir estate where we eluded our pursuers.

By that stage McNamara was in a bad way through loss of blood and fatigue, but we decided to go towards Quin until we came to Guerin's in Knoppoge. There we were given food and dried our clothes. A messenger sent to Ennis brought out Dr. McClaney, who treated McNamara's wound, which responded quickly to the treatment because within about a month McNamara was fit enough to take part in the attack on Scariff R.I.C. barracks on 18th September, 1920.

Scariff R.I.C. barracks was a two-storied building garrisoned by about a dozen men. Michael Brennan was in charge of the operation and for its success placed his confidence in a supply of hand grenades which had been received in the brigade from G.H.Q. in Dublin. These grenades were more than twice the size of a Mills bomb and had been manufactured in an I.R.A. factory in Dublin. I had no previous experience of them, nor, for that matter, had any other man in the brigade.

It was Brennan's idea to get a couple of men on to the roof of the R.I.C. barracks and, after breaking a hole through the roof, drop the grenades through the hole. He had reckoned that the explosion of the grenades would set the building on fire and thus compel the police to surrender. The barracks was located between two shops, Maloney's drapery on the left and Duggan's publichouse on the right. Access to the roof of the barracks was to be got through Maloney's.



In order to keep the police inside the building while the roof was being broken, about half a dozen snipers armed with rifles were to occupy houses opposite the barracks about a hundred yards away and on the far side of the Square. Their job was to keep sniping at the barrack windows while the attack was in progress. All the roads leading to Scariff were barricaded by the local companies, which also had to supply a number of men armed with shotguns for protective duty around Scariff. Martin McNamara and myself were deputed to break the roof of the barracks and to throw the hand grenades. For this purpose we were supplied with weights, 14 pounds each, secured to ropes.

The attack opened about nine o'clock at night. One policeman who was out in the village was making his way towards the barrack door when he was fired at and wounded by Michael Brennan, and this incident caused our riflemen to open fire. McNamara and I had first of all to remove some slates from the roof of Maloney's house and then get out on the roof. We were not long in doing this, nor did the breaking of a hole on the roof of the barracks occupy much time. With this accomplished, each of us threw four bombs through the hole into the barracks. None of the bombs exploded. The sniping continued until about eleven o'clock, but the police, who were replying vigorously with their rifles, were determined not to surrender. Just before the signal to call off the attack was given I went back to the roof and flung three more grenades into the barracks, but these also proved to be duds. As I was engaged in throwing these bombs the other men who were in the building with me withdrew from the place, leaving me locked in.

I managed to attract the attention of a few Volunteers, and with the aid of a ladder put up by them I got out.

In this attack, though we had no casualties, a good deal of valuable .303 ammunition was wasted. It was not all in vain, however, as the R.I.C. vacated Scariff a week or so later. With the removal of this enemy outpost, the country between Woodford in Co. Galway and Killaloe and Tulla in Co. Clare was entirely free of British troops, apart from about twelve or fifteen R.I.C. and Tans stationed in Feakle.

A week after the attack on Scariff R.I.C. barracks Michael Brennan led a party of about nine men into the village of Broadford where there was a police barracks. It was about half-past nine at night when we got there. The party were armed with revolvers. Some of the publichouses were searched for policemen who might be out drinking. One policeman, Constable Brogan, suddenly appeared from some house and came towards us on his way to the barracks. As he came near, a number of shots were fired at him and, though he managed to get away, his dead body was found next morning lying under a cart.

After shooting at Constable Brogan, Brennan and myself went into O'Brien's publichouse further down the village. As we were going in a policeman was about to get out by the back door, whereupon both of us fired at him and, though he was wounded, he managed to elude us and get back to the barracks. There were no other policemen outside the barracks and we then left the village.

At this stage I think I should refer to the four men who were shot dead while prisoners by Auxiliaries and

R.I.C. at Killaloe Bridge on 16th November, 1920. Three of these men - Michael McMahon (Brod), Alfred Rodgers and Martin Gildea belonged to the Scariff Company and had been 'on the run' after the attack on the Scariff barracks. They were all very young and after going 'on the run' did not take any precautions to conceal their haunts. The sleeping quarters which they had selected was in an old store in Whitegate, which they entered and left at all times of the day. It soon became common knowledge that they were staying there and I was sent by Michael Brennan to warn them to leave the place and to be more careful about their movements. Though other I.R.A. officers gave them similar advice, the unfortunate men paid no heed. Eventually they were captured one morning by a party of Auxiliaries who had come by boat from Killaloe. A fourth man, Michael Egan, happened to be working in the store. He was also arrested, and the four of them were brought to Killaloe as prisoners. A few nights later they were shot dead, after having received most brutal treatment during their period of detention.

By the autumn of 1920 I found myself in a position of which I had no experience whatsoever. In the local elections held in the previous month of June I was elected a member of the Tulla Rural District Council and subsequently was elected chairman of that body. All the new members were nominated by the Sinn Féin organisation but, like myself, many of them were "wanted men" and much sought after by enemy troops stationed in Tulla. The result was that the Council could not hold its meetings in the Council's offices and had to assemble secretly in all kinds of strange places, sometimes in local halls, sometimes in private houses and sometimes in outhouses.

The clerk of the Council facilitated us in every way he could, and whenever he required a meeting held he sent me word and between us we settled the time and venue. For all these "secret" sittings, local I.R.A. companies provided scouts to watch for raids by the enemy troops. Each meeting concluded its business without being interrupted even once. All told, I believe I presided at about eight meetings until the Truce arrived in July, 1921.

Soon after the New Year in 1921 it was decided to ambush a police lorry which travelled fairly often between Limerick City and Ennis. A party of about sixteen men armed with rifles and shotguns was assembled for this attack, which took place between two bends of the road at Cratloe overlooking which was the premises and outhouses of a substantial farmer named McInerney. We got into positions about nine in the morning, occupying both sides of the road at the bend nearest to Ennis. Tom McGrath, Tom Bentley, Matty McGrath, Tommy Wall and I were in an outhouse on the right-hand side of the road going towards Limerick. Austin Brennan had another party behind the wall on the opposite side of the road. They constructed rough platforms to enable them to fire over the top of the wall. The lorry came about one o'clock in the day, but from Ennis instead of Limerick as we expected. Someone of the party on the other side of the road accidentally fired a shot before the lorry reached the point at which it was arranged the shooting would start. This shot must have had an unsettling effect on our men because the casualties inflicted on the enemy were much lighter than we anticipated.

As the lorry came to the first bend it came under heavy fire, but the driver, who was not hit, successfully steered the vehicle round the bend and then, accelerating speed, got quickly out of the ambush position and went on into Limerick. Two policemen, including Sergeant McCarthy who fell from the lorry, were killed, and two rifles which came off the lorry were collected by us.

Our party then moved off through Cratloe Wood, on by the Windy Gap into Oatfield where it was dispersed. We had one casualty, Matty McGrath, who was accidentally wounded in the calf of the leg by one of his comrades. Michael Brennan was in charge of this attack.

A week after the Cratloe ambush the brigade staff decided to attack another policy lorry which travelled now and again from Sixmilebridge and Broadford and back. Between the local Volunteers and men who were brought in from outside districts, about thirty-five men armed with rifles, shotguns and revolvers were assembled at Parker's in Ballyvergal when I joined the party on the morning of 20th January, 1921. Michael Brennan, who was in charge, had decided to bring off the ambush in the vicinity of Parker's house, which was on the Sixmilebridge side of a crossroads from which roads branched off to Broadford, Windy Gap, Kilkisheen and Sixmilebridge.

It occurred to me that if the lorry came through Kilkisheen from Sixmilebridge on its way to Broadford it would bypass the position that Brennan had selected. I pointed this out to him. With some reluctance

he agreed to change to another position at the back entrance to Glenwood House, as suggested by me, but which would surely enable us to intercept the enemy going to Broadford.

At the back entrance to Glenwood House there is a curve in the wall behind which there is complete command of the road coming up from the crossroads. The ground inside the wall was also well above the level of the road outside, so that men behind the curved portion could easily aim over it. At this point seven riflemen under my own personal charge were posted. As far as I can remember they included Michael O'Dea, Paddy McCarthy, Paddy Quinn, all from the Tulla side, Jackie Ryan (Bishop), Clonconry, Broadford, Jack McCormack, Clonlara, Martin McNamara, Kilkisheen, and Joe McNamara, Bodyke. Michael Brennan, armed with a revolver, stood behind this group, and it was on his orders that they were to open the attack. Further along the inside of this wall on the Broadford side was a party armed with shotguns and rifles. One of them, Dan Lenihan, carried a Mills bomb. Austin Brennan, still Acting Brigade Commandant, was some distance away from us, but I can't remember any men being with him.

The men of the local company provided a number of scouts who were posted on points of vantage to signal the approach of the police lorry. At about 3 o'clock in the evening the scouts reported the lorry was coming from Kilkisheen. I got on top of the road fence, having shelter behind a bush which partly protruded over the fence, and from there I had an excellent view of the country about. I was afraid of a shot being discharged prematurely, though I had the utmost confidence in the group of men who

were with me. As the lorry came nearer I began to tell them to wait for the order to fire. When the lorry was six or seven yards from us Michael Brennan gave this order. The timing was perfect, as also was the aiming, because after the first volley nearly all police were dead or wounded. The lorry halted just a few feet from the wall. Two of the police managed to jump off the vehicle, leaving their rifles after them. Both of them made their way back to the police barracks.

Most of the police were dead, including the District Inspector for the area whose name was Clarke. The wounded men did not survive long; eight of the enemy lost their lives in the encounter. The booty included eight rifles and four or five revolvers and a quantity of ammunition. The lorry was burned. We had no losses.

After the attack the local men were sent to their homes, while those "on the run", including myself, went off towards Broadford. The reprisals by the British were on a big scale, the Auxiliaries from Killaloe being very prominent in this work. My own home in Kilkishen was left in shambles by the police and military but was not burned. About nine houses altogether went up in flames, and, though dozens were arrested, none of the men engaged in the attack was among them.

The Glenwood ambush might be said to have put an end to single lorry patrols by the enemy in East Clare. From that time onwards whenever the enemy ventured outside his barracks into the country he usually did so in strength. Occasionally a convoy of two or three lorries might venture forth, but then only along routes which afforded no suitable site for attacks by I.R.A. forces, who had no more

powerful weapon than the Lee Enfield rifle and not even many of them at that - I'd place the figure for the whole brigade as being not more than twenty-five. Again, a further consideration made us hesitate about attempting an ambush unless there was a good chance of compelling the enemy to surrender, and that was scarcity of .303 ammunition. Our haul of this out of the Glenwood operation was disappointingly small, as far as I remember not more than a thousand rounds, if it even reached that figure.

I think it is only right to have it recorded, too, that the scale of the reprisals after Glenwood and the widespread terrorism employed by the enemy on the civilian population did tend, for a while at least, to curb our activities in the brigade area.

After the Glenwood ambush it was noticed by the local Volunteers that an R.I.C. man named Murphy had started to make visits to houses around Oatfield, Belvoir and Broadford dressed as an agricultural labourer, and that in the same disguise he frequently took despatches between the R.I.C. barracks in Broadford and in Sixmilebridge. During the course of his visits to the houses in the locality he was always asking questions about the I.R.A. Two of the I.R.A. men 'on the run', Martin McNamara (The Neighbour) and John Curley, were told about Constable Murphy's movements and they decided to waylay him in the vicinity of the scene of the Glenwood ambush. He came cycling from Broadford in the middle of the day, I can't give the date, and was held up. On being searched he was found to be unarmed and, as far as I now can recollect the only things of interest found were a number of snapshots of police in Broadford barracks, including himself.



He was taken into Enagh wood and shot that night by McNamara and Curley. His body was buried in the vicinity and during the Truce was handed over to the British authorities in exchange for the bodies of Christopher McCarthy and Michael Gleeson, who were killed at Woodcock Hill in an engagement with British military on 15th June, 1921, in which I did not participate.

The months of February and March, 1921, form a period in which there was no military activity in East Clare other than the cutting of trenches on the roads or erecting barricades thereon. At the end of March the Mountshannon Company reported to the brigade staff that Auxiliaries and R.I.C. from Killaloe had begun to make raids in the district very often and that the civilian population were receiving a good deal of abuse from the raiders. It was ascertained that the raiding parties varied from two to four lorries of men, roughly from twenty to forty. As we felt we could now match such a force with about twenty-five riflemen and a couple of dozen men armed with shotguns and revolvers, Michael Brennan decided to attack the enemy inside the village of Mountshannon.

On the night of 3rd April, 1921, Brennan, with riflemen who were nearly all drawn from outside the Mountshannon Company, billeted for the night around the townland of Bohatch just outside Mountshannon. The local company, as usual in such cases, provided scouts who were to keep guard for the night and also supplied eight or nine men who were to use shotguns in the next day's engagement.

At about half-past five the men were aroused from their billets by the scouts, who brought word that a force of military and police which had come in lorries from the Tulla direction were approaching Bohatch. Dressing as quickly as we could, our party assembled on the side of the hill at the rear of Bohatch. While getting to this point a number of our men were observed and came under machine-gun and rifle fire from the enemy, who now were coming through the fields in an encircling movement and were about three-quarters of a mile from us. Myself and three or four others returned the fire as we gradually retreated into the hills towards the rest of the party, who, under Michael Brennan's direction, were falling back into mountainous country free from roads over which the enemy could not run vehicles if they attempted an outflanking movement.

The enemy kept advancing after us, the section directly below us being led by an R.I.C. sergeant named Norton. He was coming over a turf bank well exposed but at a distance of about eight hundred yards when I fired at him. He rolled back into the boghole. In the course of the exchange of shot another police constable called Kelly was also wounded.

As soon as the sergeant was put out of action this halted the enemy. The few men and I who were covering the retreat now assumed that the rest of our party were well clear of any threat of encirclement and we accordingly fell back until we joined the others.

By this time it was clear that our projected ambush in Mountshannon would have to be abandoned, and there was also the danger that if we decided to engage the enemy

they might be able to hold us until reinforcements came to them from the Galway side on our rear. Gort, Loughrea and Woodford, which were all strongly held by them, were only an hour to two hours' journey by lorry, while danger also threatened us from the Feakle side. After a discussion with some of his officers, Brennan decided to abandon the idea of further fighting and to make for Flagmount, a very friendly and safe area on the shores of Lough Graney. The journey involved a detour through mountainous country, but guided by some of the local men we reached there about four or five o'clock in the evening, very tired, hungry and thirsty men. Quarters were, however, soon found for us and each man was given a good meal. We rested there for the night and the next day the party dispersed.

The West Clare Brigade was one which had not done much in the way of fighting and the enemy troops there took every advantage of the inactivity of the local Volunteers by doing very much as they pleased. The brigade there was very poorly equipped, not having more than a half dozen rifles, but the Brigade Commandant was most anxious to bring off at least one attack on a big scale. This was beyond his own resources. He, Seán Liddy, was a very close friend of Michael Brennan and soon after the Mountshannon encounter they met. On Liddy's suggestion Brennan decided to take a detachment from East Clare into West Clare area to help his friend in his difficulty.

On 20th April, 1921, the East Clare Column selected by Brennan mobilised at Rineanna on the river Fergus, and on two boats provided by the local Volunteers embarked from Rineanna point about ten o'clock that night

on the expedition. My recollection is that the number of men who set out was not more than twenty. Each man was equipped with a rifle, while some of us also carried revolvers. The boats landed at Crovahan near Kildysart about half-past eleven and we were met there by the West Clare men. No delay was made until we set out for Kildysart, reaching there around midnight, when we took up positions to ambush a party of the local police who frequently did a night patrol about that hour. The patrol did not come out. The combined force of East and West Clare men left Kildysart sometime after one o'clock in the morning for billets which were prepared for us in Tullycrine five miles or so from Kilrush. We reached our destination about five o'clock that morning and, after a hearty meal, went to the billets in the local farmhouses.

I think we were in Tullycrine until the evening of 22nd April, when we set out at about six o'clock in the evening for Kilrush, being led to our positions by Volunteers from the district. One section under Jack McCormack, Clonlara, East Clare, went to deal with the Coastguard Station; another section under Bill Haugh went to the Workhouse, while I was one of the party who, under Michael Brennan himself, occupied positions along Moore St. and Francis St. where it was expected the night patrol of police would be visiting.

We must have been waiting for a couple of hours before any of the enemy put in an appearance, and then it was only a couple of policemen who came along. At that stage we were actually wondering what was delaying the patrol and a few of us had come up towards the Square to

look for the police. The couple that we met were challenged and shouted back that they were police, whereupon we fired, killing one, Sergeant McFadden, and wounding another.

The shooting in the town was a signal to the men watching the Coastguard Station, where the Marines were stationed, to open fire. The duty of that section was to keep the garrison inside the station, and this they did effectively. Two Marines who were out with girls were captured. Both were unarmed and they were held as prisoners until our men withdrew.

At the Workhouse Bill Haugh had positioned his section opposite the front entrance. There were soldiers stationed in that building and Haugh had given instructions that no man was to fire until he gave orders. He had planned to allow the soldiers who might come out on hearing the shooting in the town, to be well outside the entrance gate before opening the attack. True enough, the troops did come out soon after the shots were fired at Sergeant McFadden and his companion, but not many of them had emerged through the gate when one of Haugh's men fired before getting orders. The others with him followed suit and the military made for the entrance gate as quickly as they could. In their efforts to get inside, the soldiers bunched at the gate, thus becoming easy targets. There can be little doubt but that a number of them were hit, but I can give no idea of the actual casualties. No further attempt was made by the military to leave their post, though Haugh and his men waited there for hours after.

It was after dawn before we left Kilrush, and when we did so we marched through Cooraclare to billets in Cree, where we got food and slept until evening. About ten

o'clock that night we moved off again towards the Shannon, and at Cahermurphy we parted from the West Clare men to re-embark on the boats which took us back to Rineanna.

I think it was about May, 1921, that Michael Brennan got under control portion of Co. Galway. By that time he was reinstated as Commandant of the East Clare Brigade. I have no exact idea of the party of Galway which now came under his command but it included the country between Lough Cutra and Lough Derg, which to all intents and purposes had no I.R.A. organisation worth speaking about. Not alone was Brennan anxious to have the area organised and to lift the morale of the people there, but he also wished to do something that would relieve enemy pressure in the East Clare Brigade area.

Learning that a patrol of police in a tender travelled fairly regularly between Loughrea and Woodford, he decided to attack it. A column, about thirty strong, armed mostly with rifles but some men carrying shotguns, selected from throughout the East Clare Brigade area went into Galway through Derrybrien and met about half a dozen Galwaymen, who acted as guides until we came to Dalystown, where there was a suitable position beside Dalystown House to attack the patrol we had heard about. Positions were taken up early in the morning. About eleven o'clock the scouts, all local men, reported that enemy troops were moving towards us from Loughrea but along a different road to that along which they usually travelled. It looked at first as if the enemy had learned of our presence. We had been led to believe by the local men that the district contained a number of people who, from hostility towards the I.R.A. or fear of reprisals,

would not hesitate to report to the police or military that we were lying in ambush. After a quick discussion with some of his officers, Brennan considered it safer to move out of the position. We did so by falling back towards the Derrybrien mountains under the guidance of our Galway friends. While doing so it was observed that the enemy troops we had heard about consisted of only one tender of about ten men. By coming along the road they travelled they were just exercising caution not to use the same road each time they came out on patrol. This practice had not previously been made known to us. Instead of waiting to find another suitable opportunity, it was considered wiser to leave the locality until an intelligence system was built up there which would enable us to have precise information regarding the enemy's movements. The intervention of the Truce did not allow us to have the organisation in that part of Galway sufficiently well developed before attempting any other attacks there.

It is true, however, that on a couple of occasions small columns of about a dozen men did make incursions from East Clare into Galway afterwards, but they did not have any luck.

I have been asked about the encounter between the I.R.A. and British troops which took place at Fortane Cross between Tulla and Bodyke at the end of June, 1921. I was not present on that occasion, nor is there, I believe, anybody now alive who was. I'm practically certain that what happened was this: Matty McGrath, then Commandant

of our 6th (Feakle) Battalion, was on his way home, or to where he was staying for the night, when he walked into a patrol of soldiers who challenged him and ordered him to put up his hands. Instead of doing so, he drew an automatic from his pocket and opened fire, shooting dead the lieutenant in charge of the patrol and wounding three of the soldiers. He then jumped over the fence and made his escape.

McGrath afterwards was mortally wounded in Kerry during the Civil War. He was a splendid specimen of manhood, a fine athlete, cool and absolutely fearless. Though usually reticent, he described this particular shooting incident to myself soon after it happened.

Signed: Joseph Clancy

(Joseph Clancy)

Date:

11<sup>th</sup> March '56

11th March, '56.

Witness: D. Griffin (D. Griffin)

(Investigator)

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