

W.S. 1.379

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21  
BURO STAIRE MILEATA 1913-21  
No. W.S. 1,379

ROINN  COSANTA.

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

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 1,379.....

Witness

Peter Howley,  
Limepark,  
Ardrahan,  
Co. Galway.

Identity.

Captain Ardrahan Company Irish Volunteers,  
Co. Galway, 1915 - ;  
Battalion Vice-Commandant later.

Subject.

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

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

Nil

File No. S. 2693.....

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21

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No. W.S. 1,379

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STATEMENT BY PETER HOWLEY,

Limepark, Ardrahan, Co. Galway.

I was born in Limepark in the parish of Peterswell on the 12th April, 1894, and was educated at Peterswell National School until I reached the age of about sixteen years. I then left school and went to work on my father's farm at Limepark about the year 1910.

At that time conditions were very unsettled in my part of County Galway. Holdings were small and rents were very high. There were many evictions for non-payment of rent. The landlords had little mercy on the tenants who could not afford to pay the high rents, and evictions were carried out with the assistance of the R.I.C., a most unpopular force for that reason.

I remember that in the year 1909 my four brothers were working on my uncle's farm at Capard. One evening on their way home to Limepark from Capard they stopped at the village of Peterswell for refreshments. On leaving Hayes's publichouse one of my brothers saw an R.I.C. man with his ear to the door in a listening attitude. My brother struck him and he ran to the barrack, which my brothers had to pass on their way home. When they reached the barrack they found their way barred by R.I.C. men armed with rifles. They attempted to arrest my brother John who had struck one of them at the publichouse. A fight ensued and my brothers, armed with spades and shovels which they had with them coming from work, beat off the R.I.C. who took refuge in the barrack. They fired some shots from there but none of my brothers was hit. Two of the R.I.C.,

Sergeant Coughlan and Constable Clune, were badly injured. Constable Clune was compensated for his injuries by being promoted to Sergeant shortly after. After the fight one of my brothers went back to my uncle's house and the other three came home to Limepark. Early the next morning the three who came home were arrested and taken to Galway Jail. They were held prisoners there for three weeks until it was certified that Sergeant Coughlan's life was out of danger. They were then tried at the Galway Assizes, the charges being attempted murder and other things I cannot now remember. The jury disagreed in Galway on two occasions. The prisoners were then brought to Limerick and tried there. They were convicted and sentenced, one to four months, one to three months, and the third acquitted on account of his youth. It was at this same court in Limerick that Darmody and Hynes, two other Galway men, were acquitted of the murder of Constable Goldrick, who had been shot dead at Craughwell, Co. Galway.

Before I had left school I was brought to court and fined three times for assaults on R.I.C. and "Emergency" men. The fine was half-crown on each occasion. My father paid the fines and never blamed me in the least way. He was the leader of the Land League in Peterswell and had been involved in many incidents in the fight against the landlords. He was also one of the leaders in the historical Ward eviction in Loughrea. I mention those things to show that there was a continuous war being waged against the landlords and R.I.C. in County Galway right up to the formation of the Volunteers in the year 1914. My father told me that he was a member of the Irish Republican Brotherhood and that some of the most active of the Land Leaguers were also members

He took the oath as a young man. At the time of the formation of the Volunteers in Galway in 1914 he expressed the opinion that the Volunteer movement would not be a success without an inner circle, meaning the I.R.B.

I joined the Irish Volunteers on the formation of the Ardrahan Company in the early summer of 1914. I cannot remember now who organised the company, but the moment I heard that the Volunteers were drilling, my three brothers and I joined it. I cannot remember if there was any Company Captain when we joined. I do remember that the company was drilled by an ex-British soldier named Naughton from Athenry. The strength was about eighty men. The drill was simple and included falling in, dressing, left and right turns, forming fours, reforming two deep and keeping step on the march. There were no route marches that I can remember. The instructor - Naughton - was paid his travelling expenses and got some small remuneration for the drill instruction. The money was found for this purpose by a levy on the members of the company, which was eighty strong up to the time of the split in the ranks.

I remember very well the night the split occurred. Naughton, the instructor, came as usual from Athenry. The company fell in and Naughton addressed them. As far as I can remember, he put two view points before us - that we could guard the shores of Ireland for England against any foreign invasion or simply guard the shores of Ireland for Ireland. He then said that any Volunteer who was not satisfied to guard the shores of Ireland for England against the invasion was at liberty to leave the company. The Home Rule Bill was on the Statute Book at the time. Out of the

eighty or so men on parade only five left the ranks.

They were Volunteer John Coen, my three brothers, Patrick, William and Michael, and myself. The five of us never afterwards attended any parade of the company, which disintegrated shortly afterwards.

I immediately joined the Ballycahalan Company of the Irish Volunteers. The strength was about thirty men. Peter Deeley was Company Captain. Parades were held twice a week at which simple drill was taught by the Company Captain. The late Mr. Frank Fahy, afterwards Ceann Comhairle, Dáil Éireann, often visited the company. He was always in uniform and was always called Captain Fahy. I do not know the origin of the title but he was always called Captain Fahy in Galway at the time. He was almost on all his visits to the company accompanied by his wife. As far as I know he went round from company to company recruiting members for the I.R.B. He swore me into the brotherhood at the end of 1914 or early 1915. I remained with the Ballycahalan Company until Liam Mellows arrived in Galway from headquarters in Dublin to organise the Volunteers in County Galway. The companies of Irish Volunteers I remember at this time were Gort, Kinvara, Kiltartan, Derrybrien, Beagh and Ballycahalan.

I cannot be sure where I first met Liam Mellows. Either he came to my house with Padraig Fahy of Ballycahalan, who was then a Gaelic League and I.R.B. organiser, or I met him at a parade of the Ballycahalan Company. I was not long acquainted with him when we decided to form a company of the Irish Volunteers at Ardrahan. I got a number of picked men in that area to form the new company, which numbered roughly fifteen to twenty men. A short time before that I had

picked a number of them for the I.R.B. and Padraig Fahy had sworn them in. Liam Mellowes came to the first parade of the newly formed (Ardrahan) company and appointed me Company Captain. That was early in 1915. The strength of the company remained roughly the same to Easter Week, 1916. I myself gave the drill instruction. It was very simple foot drill. There was no arms drill. Padraig Fahy of Ballycahalan Company kept in touch with us. I met him about twice a week. He was always going about organising Irish language classes and the I.R.B.

In October or November, 1915, a review of all County Galway Volunteers was held in Athenry. It is very difficult to estimate the number that attended. I would say that there were five hundred present. There were roughly fifty Volunteers in all from the Ardrahan, Kinvara and Ballycahalan Companies. The great majority of those who attended were from Athenry, Craughwell, Killeeneen, Clarenbridge, Derrydonnell, Castlegar, Cranmore, Maree, Kilconiron, Loughrea, Coldwood and Galway City. I am not in a position to name any other companies that attended as I was young and inexperienced at the time.

I remember very well boarding the train at Ardrahan on the way to the Athenry review. The Kinvara Company boarded the train at the same station. Captain John Burke was in charge of the Kinvara Company. The Ballycahalan Company entrained at Gort. They were under Captain Peter Deeley. There was one R.I.C. man at the station in Ardrahan to see us off. I had a Bulldog revolver loaded in five chambers. As the train moved out I fired two or three shots in defiance over the R.I.C. man's head. He was Constable

Cannon and he knew me well. All my company were armed with shotguns and the majority of them wore Volunteer caps. The Ballycahalan and Kinvara Companies were also armed with shotguns. As far as I can now remember, the Ballycahalan Company all wore bandoliers and haversacks but the Kinvara Company had no such equipment.

On arrival in Athenry we marched to the Showgrounds where the Kenny Memorial Park now stands. We marched past the review stand, on which were The O'Rahilly and one other Dublin officer whose name I cannot now recall. I cannot remember the names of the other officers who were on the review stand. Stephen Jordan of Athenry, afterwards a member of Dáil Éireann, was very active in connection with the march past. There was no address to the men as far as I know and remember. I would say that the main purpose of the review was as a show of strength and to induce young men to join the Irish Volunteers. A recruiting campaign for the British Army was in full swing at the time. As far as I remember, there was no clash with the R.I.C. on the occasion of the review.

When we arrived back in Ardrahan after the review the Ardrahan and Kinvara companies paraded past the Ardrahan R.I.C. barrack. The Ballycahalan Company had continued their homeward journey by train to Gort. We fired a few shots close to the R.I.C. barrack. The R.I.C. lined across the road and tried to stop us. There were about six of them, all armed with carbines. The Sergeant of the R.I.C. called on us to halt and we did so. He inquired if Volunteer Michael Silver of Ardrahan Company had a permit for the double-barrelled shotgun he carried. All the other Volunteer were armed with single-barrelled guns, for which no permit was required under British law at that time.

I answered for Volunteer Silver, saying that we did not need permits and that we did not recognise him or his authority. The R.I.C. Sergeant then attempted to disarm Volunteer Silver but he held on to his gun. The R.I.C. party then stepped aside and allowed us to march past without further interference.

After the Athenry review there was nothing noteworthy up to Easter Week, 1916, except that I attended some lectures delivered by Liam Mellowes at Hynes's mill in Gort. The subjects included signalling, scouting and training in the use of arms without actual target practice.

As far as I know there was no brigade or battalion in County Galway before the Rising of Easter Week, 1916. I mean that the Volunteers had not been organised into battalions and brigades and that the company was the highest unit. I think that groups of companies, or at least representatives of the companies, met at different centres for lectures delivered by Liam Mellowes. For example, representatives of the Ardahan, Ballycahan, Kinvara, Gort, Kiltartan, Derrybrien and Beagh Companies met for the lectures at Hynes's mill in Gort when Mellowes was available. He held lectures for representatives from other groups of companies at suitable centres.

I remember Holy Thursday night, 1916. I attended a meeting at Hynes's mill in Gort. Representatives from the group of companies mentioned in the last paragraph were present. The meeting was called to make arrangements for a review of the Volunteers in Gort on Easter Monday. I cannot remember how we got the order for the review. I do remember a typewritten dispatch to the effect that all



the members of the companies whose representatives met at Hynes's mill were to go to Holy Communion on Easter Sunday. The reason I remember this so clearly is that I had ~~a~~ <sup>the</sup> <sup>PH</sup> typewritten document in my possession when I was taken prisoner on the 29th April, 1916. The order for the review in Gort and the order to go to Holy Communion came from Eoin MacNeill to the best of my knowledge and belief.

I remember, too, that at the meeting on Holy Thursday night Padraig Fahy of Ballycahalan told me that the Rising was to take place on the following Sunday, and that he and I were to take some arms and ammunition to Clarenbridge. When the meeting was over on Holy Thursday night I went with Padraig Fahy to Clarenbridge, taking some small arms with us. We called at Father Feeney's house at Clarenbridge but he was not at home. We then went to Walshe's of Killeeneen. A number of officers and men from the surrounding companies were gathered at Walshe's. Those I remember are Eamonn Corbett, afterwards member of Dáil Éireann, Michael Kelly of Coldwood, perhaps Martin Niland, afterwards member of Dáil Éireann, and Michael Fleming, Senior, of Clarenbridge. There were about fourteen or fifteen officers from various companies at Walshe's. We stayed there until 5 a.m. expecting, as I was afterwards told, news of the landing of the German arms. No news came and Padraig Fahy and I returned home on Good Friday morning.

On Easter Saturday I went to Confession in Gort. I met Padraig Fahy there and he told me that he and I were to go to Clarenbridge that night. We went to Clarenbridge and remained in Fr. Feeney's house until 7 a.m. on Sunday morning. Father Feeney was there all night with us.

We expected a dispatch to come from Dublin in connection with the Rising but it did not come. A big number of men were gathered at Fr. Feeney's, including Martin Niland of Kilcolgan, afterwards member of Dáil Éireann and Adjutant, Galway Brigade, Michael Fleming of Clarenbridge, Michael Kelly and Michael Cummins of Coldwood, Athenry, and Padraig Fahy and I from the Gort area. There were others present whom I did not know at the time. Fr. Feeney seemed to be very anxious and impatient all through the night. Before we left Fr. Feeney's house, which appeared to be headquarters in Co. Galway that night, a meeting was held at which it was decided to attack and capture R.I.C. barracks in our different areas. The Ardrahan and Peterswell barracks were to be attacked and taken, if possible, by the group of companies which met usually in Hynes's mill, Gort. Padraig Fahy and I represented that group at the meeting at Fr. Fahy's house. The attacks were to take place on Easter Sunday evening at 6 p.m.

Padraig Fahy and I left Clarenbridge at 7 a.m. on Sunday morning. Padraig cycled to Kilbecanty parish church and I went to my own parish church at Peterswell, where I attended Mass and received Holy Communion. Before Padraig Fahy and I parted we arranged to mobilise the various companies for Early's Wood, four miles from Gort on the main road to Loughrea. The place of mobilisation was about one mile from Peterswell R.I.C. barrack, which was the first to be attacked. The garrison at Peterswell barrack was three constables and a sergeant, and at Ardrahan five constables and a sergeant. The companies turned up at the mobilisation point at Early's Wood at 5 p.m. Shortly after that time a dispatch was delivered to us at Early's Wood by Volunteer Thomas Fahy of Gort Company. The dispatch contained an order to disperse. As far as I know, it was from Dublin.

It was kept by Padraig Fahy. We then dispersed immediately.

On Monday I again met Padraig Fahy on his way to Killeeneen. I remember he said to me that he thought the rising would be postponed for about three months. About midnight that (Monday) night or in the early hours of Tuesday morning I got a dispatch from Captain Mellowes. It was delivered to me by Michael Kelly of Coldwood, Athenry. The dispatch stated that the Volunteers were mobilised at Killeeneen and that the R.I.C. barrack at Clarenbridge was to be attacked. The dispatch went on to say that I was to mobilise my company and take it to Tullyra, where we were to remain and guard the Galway/Ennis road. The dispatch also instructed me to notify the Ballycahalan Company to mobilise and to await instructions.

I went to Ballycahalan to notify that company as instructed. I gave the instructions to Captain Deeley or to John Coen, afterwards Captain of Kilbecanty Company. I cannot now recall to which of those two I gave the instructions. Two of my brothers, William and Michael, mobilised my own (Ardrahan) company and they assembled at my father's house at Limepark about 9 a.m. on Tuesday morning. We had instructions to be at Tullyra at 11 a.m. We marched the two miles from my father's house at Limepark to Tullyra and were there at the appointed time. I had about sixteen men in the company, all armed with shotguns and a plentiful supply of cartridges. There were also two revolvers, of which I had one. I got in touch with scouts from Kiltartan and Gort Companies. They scouted the road between Tullyra and Gort for the approach of British forces which Captain Mellowes expected to come that road. Thomas McInerney was chief scout and he kept in touch with Kinvara and other companies.

The barrack at Ardrahan was evacuated by the R.I.C. that (Tuesday) morning about 9 a.m. before we had taken up positions at Tullyra. They travelled by two side-cars to Gort. The R.I.C. also evacuated Peterswell barrack that morning and travelled to Gort. My job at Tullyra was to delay the advance of the British military and to notify the main body of the Volunteers at Athenry or Moyode of the position if and when they did arrive. I remained with my company at Tullyra all day Tuesday and the following day (Wednesday), when we were visited by Chief Scout Thomas McInerney who told us that the R.I.C. at Clarenbridge and Kinvara had been attacked. On Wednesday evening I sent Volunteer William Thompson, afterwards Q/M Gort Battalion and later Q/M Ardrahan Battalion, with a verbal message to Captain Mellowes for further instructions. The main body of the Volunteers was scattered that day over the Clarenbridge Farmyard and Athenry areas. Volunteer Thompson brought back a dispatch from Captain Mellowes to remain standing to in the same position, which I did.

On Thursday evening the Ballycahalan Company contacted us at Tullyra and we then heard that the main body was in Moyode Castle. Up to Friday we got no further orders and we stayed on at Tullyra. On Friday evening I got a dispatch saying that the main body was leaving Moyode and travelling southwards to Limepark. I received orders to leave Tullyra and to act as advance guard for the main body to Limepark. All the Volunteers arrived without incident at Limepark about 11 p.m.

The officers held a meeting at Limepark House shortly after arriving there. I was not present at the meeting but, as far as I know, the officers who attended that

meeting were: Captain Liam Mellowes, Captain Alf Monaghan, Eamonn Corbett, afterwards member of Dáil Éireann, Martin Niland, afterwards member of Dáil Éireann and Adjutant Galway Brigade, Rev. Fr. Feeney, Rev. Fr. Fahy, Frank Hynes of North Gate St., Athenry, Michael Fleming of Clarenbridge, Michael Kelly and Michael Cummins of Coldwood, Athenry, Michael Newell and Brian Molloy of Castlegar. There must have been several others whose names I cannot now remember or whom I did not know at the time.

The meeting lasted about five hours, or at least these officers were in the house all that time. About 5 a.m. Captain Mellowes came out from the meeting and gave orders to the assembled Volunteers, to the number of about four hundred, to disperse and return to their homes. When the main body arrived at Limepark they had, I think, four R.I.C. prisoners with them. The R.I.C. had been taken prisoners when the Moyvilla R.I.C. barrack had been attacked and taken on Wednesday or Thursday.

The Volunteers dispersed and returned to their homes immediately after getting the instructions to do so. In a very short while there was nobody at Limepark except Captain Mellowes, Captain Monaghan, Frank Hynes and myself. I brought Mellowes, Monaghan and Hynes to my father's house for refreshments. They remained in the house until about 7 a.m. Mellowes spent a good while chatting with my father as the two were great friends. Mellowes seemed to be undecided as to his next move. After a discussion with me it was decided that the three of them would go to Patsy Corliss's house at Ballycahalan and rest there for <sup>the</sup> day <sup>PH</sup> and that I would meet them there at nightfall.

About 6 p.m., when I was about to leave for Corliss's, our house was surrounded by about sixty R.I.C. men, including a number who had come from Belfast. They came to our house in twelve motor-cars and were accompanied by Sergeant Elliott from Ardrahan R.I.C. barrack. They arrested me and my brothers William and Michael. Another brother, Patrick, was arrested the following Monday. They brought us to Limepark House, leaving their motor-cars at the gate house. They marched me and my two brothers into Limepark House in front of them as if they suspected that the Volunteers had not left the house. They approached the house very cautiously. They then searched the place very thoroughly but found nothing. They then took the three of us to Gort R.I.C. barracks and after a very short delay there we were taken to Renmore Military Barracks in Galway. From Renmore we were taken to Eglinton St. R.I.C. barracks, where we were held prisoners Saturday night and Sunday, the 30th April.

PH  
 On Monday the 1st May I was taken before the County Inspector of the R.I.C. in Eglinton St. R.I.C. barrack. He questioned me about my part in the rising and then said: "Have him at the boat at <sup>2</sup> p.m.". Before being taken away from Eglinton St. R.I.C. barrack I asked to be allowed to see my two brothers. My request was refused. I was taken to the docks in Galway and put on board a minesweeper. A naval officer with a rifle sat in front of me on the minesweeper. I was the only prisoner on board. The boat travelled all Monday night. I did not speak to any member of the crew until Tuesday morning. I then asked my guard where we were bound for. He replied, "We are bound for Queenstown, but I am not supposed to tell you".

About 9 a.m. on Tuesday morning we came alongside a Man-of-War in Queenstown Harbour. I forget the name of this ship. I was transferred to the Man-of-War and put into a small cabin with an armed guard at the door. The guard was armed with a rifle and bayonet. I had no overcoat and got no blanket. I was in the cabin until Wednesday morning, when I was transferred to another apartment where I was agreeably surprised to find twenty other prisoners from Galway. I learned from them that they were all arrested on Monday or Tuesday of Easter Week. Amongst them were George Nicholls, Miceál Thornton, Padraig Ó Máille, Frank Hardiman, Joseph Cummins of Coldwood, Frank (?) Carter, George Fahy of Athenry, Dr. Walsh and John Faller, both from Galway City. That evening the twenty-one of us were taken by sea to Kingstown, where we arrived on Thursday morning the 4th May. We were brought into the R.I.C. barrack there. After about two hours we were lined up to be brought into Dublin. I was then singled out as a special case and put aside.

The other twenty were taken to Dublin. I was later brought by myself to Dublin under an escort of five armed British soldiers. As far as I remember I was brought to Richmond Barracks and interrogated there by a military tribunal. They questioned me as to my part in the rising and where I was arrested. They then said that my papers had not arrived and told the escort to put me in with the others. I was then put in the gymnasium at the back of Richmond Barracks, where I met Eamon de Valera, Thomas Ashe and Seán Lemass. I think that nearly all the prisoners in the gymnasium belonged to Dublin and that they were nearly all Citizen Army men except Thomas Ashe's company. Seán Lemass was wounded twice in the leg and I remember we carried him in our arms to the toilet. When I was put

into the gymnasium Eamon de Valera and Tom Ashe called me aside and asked me where I came from. Eamon de Valera inquired what happened in Galway. I told him all I knew and he seemed to be very pleased that Galway rose. He then told me not to make friends with anybody I did not know as there were detectives amongst the prisoners.

I was held prisoner in Richmond Barracks from the 4th to the 9th May, and during that time Eamon de Valera and Thomas Ashe were taken out for trial. Before Eamon de Valera was taken for trial he shook hands with me and some other prisoners and said: "Be brave, men, it is for a noble cause". On Tuesday the 9th May about four hundred other prisoners and I were brought to the North Wall and taken by boat to England. About one hundred were taken with me to Wandsworth, London. I was kept there until about June, when I was transferred to Frongoch. I was taken to Wormwood Scrubbs in July and brought before the Advisory Committee. After two nights in Wormwood Scrubbs I was brought back to Frongoch and released about the end of August. I then heard that the British military were searching for me at Richmond Barracks after I had been taken to Wandsworth. It seems that the papers the British military were expecting from Galway arrived after I had been deported. My brothers were closely questioned in Dublin about their christian names.

I think I should mention before going on to the reorganisation of the Volunteers in 1917 that just after the commencement of World War 1 a branch of the Red Cross was formed in Ardrahan. The principal organiser was Mrs. Shaw Taylor of Castletaylor, Ardrahan. The sole purpose of the Red Cross branch in Ardrahan seemed to be the knitting of socks and the making of shirts for the British soldiers in



France. A number of local girls were organised to do the sewing and knitting. They met in Labane Hall which was burned down by the Black and Tans in 1920. A national school teacher named Peter Noonan, a native of Kerry, and I, with about ten or twelve others, entered the hall on the second night of the Red Cross branch meeting. The local medical doctor, a local priest, a couple of R.I.C. men and a number of local girls who had already joined the branch were present when we entered. Mr. Noonan mounted the stage and addressed those present. He protested against Irish girls making socks and shirts for British Tommies. He was backed up by myself and the others who came with us. The result was that our protest put an end to the Red Cross branch in Ardrahan. For his part in the protest Mr. Noonan was almost immediately dismissed from his position as national teacher. He emigrated to America.

In the early summer of 1917 an attempt was made in County Galway to split the Gaelic Athletic Association by the formation of what were described as Kickham Hurling Clubs. These clubs were sponsored in Galway by followers of the Irish Parliamentary Party. I do not know if this was attempted outside Galway. In any event, the Kickham clubs disappeared in Co. Galway in 1918.

After the general amnesty of June, 1917, an order was issued by the British government prohibiting drilling in Ireland. On the first Sunday of July, 1917, I took a G.A.A. hurling team to Gort to play a match with Gort G.A.A. hurling team. When we arrived in Gort I marched the men in military formation through the town. All the members of the team were Irish Volunteers and the majority of them were in the I.R.B. as well. When we were marching past the new school in Gort I gave the command "halt" to the men

in order to procure tickets for admission to the playing field. Sergeant Elliott and three constables from Ardrahan R.I.C. barrack together with some R.I.C. from Gort were standing near the school. Having purchased the necessary tickets I gave the order "Quick march, right wheel", bringing the men on to the playing pitch.

A week later I was arrested by R.I.C. and taken to Gort R.I.C. barrack, where I was held prisoner for two days and a night. While I was there two Volunteers from Clarenbridge Company, Michael Fleming and James Lynch, and a Volunteer named Michael Trayers from Gort Company were brought in as prisoners. The four of us were brought under a British military escort to Renmore military barracks, Galway. We were held prisoners in Renmore for about three weeks. We were courtmartialled on the 14th August. About a week before our courtmartial another prisoner was brought into Renmore. He was John Burke, Captain of Kinvara Company. All five of us were charged with illegal drilling. On the 15th August we were informed of the findings of the courtmartial. Volunteer Trayers was sentenced to three months' hard labour; Lynch to four months hard labour, Captain Burke nine months' hard labour, and Fleming and I got two years' hard labour.

On the evening of the 15th August, 1917, the five of us were removed under R.I.C. escort to Galway jail. We commenced a hunger-strike immediately, which we continued for three days. In the second week of September we were removed to Mountjoy jail. There were forty political prisoners there from twelve different counties. About the 18th September, after demands for political status had been refused, we broke everything that was breakable in our cells and commenced a hunger-strike with Austin Stack of Kerry

in charge. About the third day of the strike the prison authorities started forcible feeding.

I think it was on the second or third day of the forcible feeding that Thomas Ashe died as a result of being forcibly fed. The strike continued after his death for five or six days, after which the prison authorities agreed to our demand for political status. The forcible feeding was a most unpleasant and nauseous experience. Amongst the prisoners on that hunger-strike were Seán Treacy and Tomás Malone from Tipperary, three Brennan brothers from Meelick, Co. Clare, and ten or twelve other Claremen; J.J. Walsh; Joe McDonagh, Joseph Kelly from Ballaghaderreen, Volunteers Murray and Sullivan from Cork; Fionán Lynch from Kerry and, if my memory is not at fault, Seán T. O'Kelly, now President of Ireland.

It would have been some time in October that all the hunger-strikers were removed from Mountjoy to Dundalk Jail, where political treatment was refused us. We immediately commenced another hunger-strike. We were then released according as the prison medical officer certified our lives in danger. We were released in batches under the Cat and Mouse Act from the third day of the strike. On the fifth day of the strike the last thirteen strikers were released. We got a wonderful reception from the Volunteers and Cumann na mBan in Dundalk. They lined up outside the jail gate with a pipers' band which played us to the hotel where a big reception was held for us. The first time ever that Irish political prisoners were granted political status was on the occasion of the Mountjoy hunger-strike of 1917.

Two days after my release from Dundalk jail I arrived home by train at Ardrahan. I got a very big reception. Many Volunteers from different companies were at the railway station to greet me as well as a large number of friends and neighbours. I lined up the Volunteers at the railway station in Ardrahan and marched them in military formation past Ardrahan R.I.C. barrack. I now remember very distinctly that in the hearing of the Ardrahan R.I.C. I purposely used the same words of command for which I had been sentenced to two years' hard labour. Perhaps I should have mentioned that one of the medical doctors who did the forcible feeding in Mountjoy jail was Dr. Lowe.

While I was in prison from July to October, 1917, the Gort Battalion of the Irish Volunteers was formed. When I arrived home I was informed by the Battalion O/C, Thomas McInerney, that I had been appointed Vice Commandant in my absence. I held the rank of Vice Commandant of the Gort Battalion from that time to May, 1921, when I was appointed Vice Commandant of the Ardrahan Battalion.

In December, 1917, as Battalion Q/M William Thompson, Volunteer Michael Silver, Volunteer Martin Thompson and I were returning from a Volunteer parade we were held up by Sergeant Elliott and three constables from Ardrahan R.I.C. barrack. They demanded our names and where we were coming from. We refused to give them any information. They said they would take us to the barrack. They afterwards changed their minds and allowed us to proceed home. We were unarmed and the R.I.C. were armed with rifles on the occasion. A week later the four of us were summoned to appear in court under the Defence of the Realm Act. We did not appear

and we were fined twenty-two and sixpence or a month in jail. On New Year's Day, 1918, Battalion Q/M William Thompson was arrested and brought to Galway Jail. On the following day the remaining three of us who were fined went to Ardrahan R.I.C. barrack and demanded to be arrested. Our purpose in doing this was to be with Thompson in case he would not receive political treatment in jail.

Sergeant Elliott refused to arrest us, saying that he had no men available to escort us to Galway. We said we did not need an escort as we would go ourselves if he supplied us with the travelling vouchers. He refused the vouchers but told us to come the next day and that he would arrest us. We told him to go to a hot spot and warned him that when he wanted us again he might not get us so easily. X That night he arrested Martin Thompson. The following day Silver and I went to the barrack and again demanded to be arrested. This time Elliott agreed and Silver, Martin Thompson, who had been held in Ardrahan from the previous day, and I were brought to Galway Jail. We were not locked in separate cells and we immediately began undermining prison discipline in every way we could think of. After two weeks we were taken to the office of the Governor, who told us that we were being released as the fines had been paid. We told him that nobody had our authority to pay the fines and refused to leave. He said he would get the R.I.C. to remove us, so we decided to leave.

During the year 1918 there was a good deal of organising work carried out. I visited each of the ten companies of the Gort Battalion on several occasions. Sometimes I drilled the companies myself. On other visits I supervised the drilling by the company officers.

Apart from this, the year 1918 was generally quiet until the general election. All the Volunteers in my battalion area canvassed on behalf of Mr. Frank Fahy, the Sinn Féin candidate, and helped with transport on polling day.

At the commencement of 1919 there were no arms in the battalion except some shotguns owned by individual Volunteers and a few revolvers. I would say that there were ten to fifteen such shotguns at our disposal in each company area. As a result of raids for arms we added a miniature rifle and some shotguns in good condition to our store of arms. As the R.I.C. had notified farmers and other owners of shotguns to hand in their guns for safety to the barracks, we raided any owner who we thought was likely to hand in his gun. The majority of the owners preferred to give their guns to us rather than to the R.I.C. Apart from the raids for arms in 1919, I cannot recall anything noteworthy except perhaps that hurling matches were specially organised in defiance of the ban which had been imposed on the G.A.A. by the British. I remember attending five or six such matches on one particular Sunday. We called it Gaelic Sunday in County Galway. The Parish and Arbitration Courts were also formed in 1919. The Arbitration Court usually sat in Loughrea, sometimes in Gort. Rev. Fr. Dunne, then P.P. Kilnadeema and now P.P. of Kiltulla, Athenry, was Chairman of the Arbitration Court. Other members of the Arbitration Court were Thomas McInerney, O/C Gort Battalion; Martin Forde of Kilchreest and Bernard Geoghegan or his brother from Shangarry near Kilrickle.

Volunteers from each company were appointed to enforce the decisions of the courts; I would say about three or

four from each company. These Volunteers had to act only in cases of hostile people who did not recognise the Dáil Éireann Courts. I remember on one occasion having to give instructions to Volunteers to arrest a witness in Loughrea for contempt of court. He was an agent of Lord Lascelles and he refused to recognise the Dáil Arbitration Court. From this time, and especially from the time the R.I.C. vacated the smaller barracks, the Dáil Courts and the Volunteers succeeded very well in keeping law and order in the rural areas.

In the year 1919 there were two or three attempts made to shoot Sergeant Elliott of the Ardrahan R.I.C. Volunteer Patrick O'Shaughnessy, afterwards Battalion I/O Ardrahan Battalion, scouted the road between Ardrahan and Labane on two or three occasions in the hope that Elliott would come that way with an R.I.C. patrol. Although patrols did come on those occasions Elliott did not happen to be in them. At the end of 1919 we had orders from Brigade Headquarters in Galway not to attack or disarm R.I.C. patrols. The reason given for this order was that County Galway was to be kept quiet for a purpose. It was never stated for what purpose County Galway was to be kept quiet. At the time I thought that perhaps arms were to be landed here.

The order that County Galway was to be kept quiet was given to me verbally by Brigade Adjutant Martin Niland on the occasion when I had a number of officers and Volunteers assembled at Limepark to attack eight R.I.C. and a Sergeant who were stationed at Roxboro as a guard for Major Persse of Roxboro House. I remember that the Brigade Adjutant also said that fortified places were not

to be attacked without submitting a plan to Brigade Headquarters. I explained to him that the R.I.C. were in Roxboro as a result of a land dispute which was on the point of being settled and that the R.I.C. guard would probably be leaving Roxboro in a few days. He said that as long as we had a brigade we had to recognise it. The result was that I had to abandon the attack planned for that night.

I was disappointed because the Sergeant in charge of the R.I.C. guard at Roxboro House was friendly and had conveyed to me that he would surrender if attacked. He was a native of Connemara, County Galway. On the following day I got a carpenter named John Fallon of Moneen to draw a plan of the place where the R.I.C. guard was billeted. This was sent to Brigade Headquarters in a day or two. In about a week afterwards I got permission from the brigade to go ahead with the attack, but by this time the R.I.C. guard had left as the land dispute had been settled.

The Dáil Éireann Loan was very well supported in the Gort Battalion area. I remember that the sum of £400 was subscribed in the Ardrahan parish alone. Drilling continued in 1920 in secret. Parades were well attended and discipline was good. I remember that in April or May, 1920, two revolvers were taken from two R.I.C. men who were on their way back to their barrack in Kinvara after having left a patient at the Mental Hospital in Ballinasloe. They were driven by Volunteer Henry O'Shaughnessy of Gort Company who did a good deal of intelligence work. Volunteer O'Shaughnessy gave me the tip about the journey to Ballinasloe. I took eight or ten Volunteers from the Ardrahan Company with me and met the car at Eserkelly on its return journey from Ballinasloe. We fired a few shots over the car and



O'Shaughnessy, who was driving, pulled up. The two R.I.C. men handed up their two revolvers without any trouble.

We did not wear masks. O'Shaughnessy, who was questioned by the R.I.C. after the hold-up, told me afterwards that it was a pity we did not wear masks as it would have saved him the questioning.

In June, 1920, Thomas McInerney, the Battalion O/C, and I decided to make another attempt to shoot Sergeant Elliott, who had been exceptionally hostile to the Volunteers from 1916 onwards. We decided to have him shot on his way from the R.I.C. barracks in Ardrahan to the house, about half a mile away, where his wife and family resided. He was in the habit of going there from the barrack every Sunday and Holyday. We arranged for two officers of the Kilbecanty Company to carry out the job. They were Captain John Coen and Lieutenant Daniel Ryan. We arranged to have two Volunteers from Ardrahan Company near the place of the attack with shotguns and cartridges so that the two officers would not have to bring arms with them from their own area. We arranged also that the same Volunteers would take the arms away and dump them when the operation was completed. Elliott went the way as expected and was fired on by the two officers and seriously wounded. He died a few months afterwards. This attack on Elliott took place on the 29th June, 1920. I am certain of the date because horse and pony races were held in Peterswell on that day and that was the only Holyday in the summer that those races could be held. I was in charge of the races in Peterswell that day and the two officers reported to me there that evening that they carried out the job.

I remember that on the day of the Peterswell July fair, 1920, two R.I.C. were disarmed by Captain John Fahy,

afterwards O/C Gort Battalion, and members of the Peterswell Company. Two revolvers were taken from the R.I.C. Commandant McInerney and I, with three Volunteers, were waiting to disarm the same two R.I.C. nearer to Kilchreest. We held them up with revolvers but they said they had already been disarmed. We searched them and found they had no arms. Neither that nor the previous disarming of two R.I.C. which I have already mentioned were reported to brigade in view of the orders we had received.

About the end of August or early September, 1920, the Labane Hall and three dwelling houses in the Ardrahan Company area were burned by the R.I.C. The Labane Hall had been erected by Mr. Edward Martyn of Tullyra as a gift to the parish of Ardrahan. Mr. Martyn was a fine Catholic gentleman, a big land owner and one of the founders of Sinn Féin. Of the three dwelling-houses, one was that of Commandant McInerney at Cahermore, one was the home of Captain John Joyce of the Ardrahan Company, while the third belonged to a family named Burke of Ballymaquive who had no member of the family in the Volunteers. All four buildings were burned the same night. Joyce's of Ardrahan was the last to be burned. While burning Joyce's one of the R.I.C. was overheard saying: "Come on, Howley's next". Many people in Ardrahan heard this and were certain that my house would be burned. It was approaching daylight by the time Joyce's had been burned and very likely that is what saved our house from being burned that night.

I remember that very shortly after this Captain Joyce of the Ardrahan Company and I were walking along the road at Cockstown when a Process Server named Whelan from

Ballinderreen came along on a side-car. We stopped and searched him as we knew that he was serving the processes. We took the fifty processes he had in his possession and put him on his knees and made him eat one of them. We then went on the side-car with him as far as Moneen near Roxboro. There we took the horse from the car and took the harness off him. We piled the harness on top of the side-car and set fire to the lot with hay and paraffin oil. We burned all the processes. Some of them were for rent due to Persse of Roxboro and other landlords, while some were for rent due to the Land Commission. Whelan roared with fright when we told him that we would throw him in the fire. We told him to mount the horse and go home by a very roundabout route.

Brigadier Seamus Murphy left Galway about August or September, 1920. As far as I know, no brigade meetings were held after that time and no correspondence came to my battalion from Brigade Headquarters in Galway. We were left to work on our own initiative except that Commandant McInerney was in touch with G.H.Q. in Dublin from then to the truce.

In October, 1920, Commandant McInerney and I learned from the Gort or Kilmacduagh Company that a party of R.I.C. travelled from Boston once a week by the Kilmacduagh road to Gort and back again the same day. I remember that the R.I.C. party usually numbered fourteen but I cannot now remember how they travelled. I think they came on side-cars to take rations from Gort to their barrack in Boston, Co. Clare. We got about thirty Volunteers to lie in ambush for them at Kilmacduagh but they failed to turn up. We went there the night before and took up positions at daybreak.

We remained in position until about noon and then withdrew as the R.I.C. party usually passed Kilmacduagh before 9 a.m. Volunteers from Ardrahan, Peterswell, Gort, Kilmacdaugh, Beagh and Kilbecanty Companies took part. I think that was the last Thursday in October, 1920.

All the Volunteers who assembled at Kilmacduagh were told before they left for their own areas to assemble again on Friday night (the following night) at Capard House in the Peterswell Company area and to be armed.

When I arrived home from Kilmacduagh I sent my brother Michael with a dispatch to the Battalion Adjutant, P.J. Piggot, at Gort. On his way home from Gort after delivering the dispatch a number of R.I.C. and Tans travelling by lorry stopped him and pulled him from his bicycle. They gave him a very severe beating, as a result of which he is still under doctor's care. That night all the officers and men who were at Kilmacduagh came to Capard House as ordered. Some had to be sent home on account of shortage of arms. We remained in Capard House, then unoccupied, until daybreak. The intention of the Battalion Commandant and myself was to attack a party of R.I.C. that sometimes travelled on foot from Kilchreest barrack by Kilchreest Catholic Church to the Sunnagh mountain.

Most of the I.R.A. who were in Capard House that night had travelled long journeys during the two previous days and had very little food that night at Capard House. The distance from Capard House to where we expected the party of R.I.C. would be about seven miles across the mountain. At daybreak we left Capard House and marched across the mountain to Scalp. The men rested there in a wood.

While they were resting, Commandant McInerney, Volunteer Slattery and I went to the school teacher's residence to get whatever refreshments we could procure for ourselves and the men. The teacher's name was Mr. Crean. He commenced to get what he could for us by way of refreshments.

Commandant McInerney and I were standing on the road in front of Mr. Crean's house when I saw R.I.C. on bicycles on the main Loughrea-Gort road going in the direction of Gort. The Battalion O/C and I concluded that they were going to Peterswell and returning from there in a short while, maybe after having some refreshments in the village. We decided to attack them on their return. Our difficulty was that we did not know whether they would return by the main road by which they went, or by the Eserkelly road. I knew the locality intimately and that we could contact <sup>them</sup> on either road on their return. *RH*

We sent Volunteer Martin Dooley on a bicycle to follow the R.I.C. We gave him instructions to remain near Fitzgerald's house, where he had a clear view of Peterswell crossroads, until the R.I.C. reached the crossroads on the return journey. He was then to report immediately to us whether they were coming by the main road by which they went or by the Eserkelly road. To make quite sure of the return route by the R.I.C., we told Dooley to wait in the vicinity of Fitzgerald's house until the second R.I.C. man had turned into whichever of the two roads they returned by. Dooley reported to us that they were returning by the main road. Even though Volunteer Dooley was a good cyclist, there was little time left to get the men into position as the R.I.C. were also cycling.

We then got the main body of the Volunteers, numbering about thirty, to line the wall of the road opposite Castledaly

Church. That was the nearest and most suitable place for the attack in the circumstances. We put Captain Coen of Kilbecanty Company and Volunteer Slattery, then attached to Gort Company, behind the pillars of the gate leading to Castledaly House with instructions to open fire on the R.I.C. when the last of the five passed their position. We gave them definite instructions to count the police as they passed. Whether due to an accident or not, they fired after the fourth man had passed.

The R.I.C. came into our positions in single file about seven paces apart. The R.I.C. man thus left outside the ambush position escaped across the fields with his rifle. Of the remaining four, one was killed and one wounded. The other two escaped through the church grounds, leaving their rifles and bicycles behind them. In fact, except in the case of the man who did not come within the ambush position, the rifles were not detached from the clips on the bicycles. In other words, the R.I.C. ran away, leaving their arms behind them. We took five bicycles and four rifles, and one revolver belonging to the man who was killed. That was Saturday, the 30th October, 1920.

We left the scene of the ambush in groups according to our different destinations. That (Saturday) night R.I.C. from Kilchreest and Galway City burned four dwelling-houses in the neighbourhood, including my own house at Limepark. Two Volunteers from Castledaly were arrested and tried in Dublin in connection with the ambush. They were found not guilty of the charges brought against them and released. Their names were Peter Moylan and Michael Callanan. At the end of November, 1920, Lieutenant Patrick Loughnan and his brother, Volunteer Harry Loughnan,

were taken prisoners by R.I.C. in their own home at Shanaglish. They were most brutally done to death while in the hands of the R.I.C. Their very badly mutilated bodies were found in the Kinvara Company area early in December. The two Loughnan brothers belonged to Beagh Company.

Sometime in the month of December, 1920, Captain Joyce of Ardrahan Company and I, with a few Volunteers from Ardrahan and Kilmacduagh Companies, broke all the installations in the Kinvara Post Office on orders from Commandant McInerney. I do not know the reason for this except that the Postmaster was hostile to the I.R.A.

After the Castledaly ambush I was a more "wanted" man than ever before. Continuous raids were being made in the Ardrahan, Peterswell and Kilchreest areas to capture me and my brothers. My sister lived in the daytime under a corrugated iron lean-to near our burned out house to look after the farm stock. She was visited by R.I.C. on several occasions, during which she was questioned as to my whereabouts. They always referred to me on those visits as her murderer brother. On one occasion they came at nightfall and threatened her that if they found her there again they would shoot her on sight. Finally she was compelled to leave the district and go to live with friends in Co. Sligo, where she remained until the Truce. All my brothers likewise had to leave the district. Notices were posted up on our land by the R.I.C. that anybody seen on the land would be shot on sight. All stock had to be sold by the neighbours and the land was left derelict. The R.I.C. broke our threshing machine and other farmyard machinery with sledges. In these circumstances I went "on the run" to East Galway area where the I.R.A. was poorly

organised. I worked in the Loughrea and Ballinasloe Battalion areas organising I.R.A. in these two areas.

I remember attending a meeting of officers of the Ballinasloe and Loughrea Battalions at Leitrim Parish Church in the early spring of 1921. Arrangements were discussed at that meeting for an attack on the R.I.C. near Woodford. There was a scarcity of arms except for shotguns. I told the assembled officers that I would get a few rifles from Derrybrien belonging to my own battalion. They were very pleased. Bernard Geoghegan, one of the officers, had a motor-cycle and he was appointed to arrange for getting the rifles from Derrybrien. This meeting was on a Sunday and the attack was planned for the following Tuesday morning. The plan was to raid the mail-car that usually went from Woodford to Loughrea at a place called Ballinagar in the Ballinakill Company area, in the hope that the R.I.C. would come there from Woodford to investigate the raid.

Three rifles were brought from Derrybrien by Captain Paddy Flynn and Lieutenant John Burke, both of Derrybrien Company. The mail-car was held up at 7 a.m. on the Tuesday morning and the mails taken off it. The driver of the mail-car (side-car) was ordered back to Woodford. As we only allowed two men to be seen by the driver of the mail-car, it was hoped that the R.I.C. in Woodford would not be afraid to come out to Ballinagar when he went back to Woodford and reported the raid. As far as I remember, the strength of the garrison at that time was at least fifteen. We remained in position until noon, but the R.I.C. did not come out as expected. There were between twenty and thirty officers and men in position, of whom all were armed with shotguns except three who had rifles lent by my battalion. Captain Joyce of Ardahan Company had one of



these rifles, my brother William had another and I myself had the third.

We examined the captured mails, giving particular attention to the correspondence for the R.I.C. barracks in Loughrea. We found no valuable information. Amongst the correspondence for the barracks in Loughrea was a copy of the Hue and Cry. It contained descriptions of four officers from Galway as well as descriptions of many officers and Volunteers from other counties. The four Galway officers were: Eamon Corbett, afterwards member of Dáil Éireann; Padraig Fahy of Ballycahalan, Brigade I/O; "Baby" Duggan, Battalion Staff Officer, Castlegar Battalion, and myself. It stated that I was wanted for the murder of Constable Timothy Horan and the wounding of Constable Maurice Keane and the attempted murder of three other R.I.C. at Castledaly. I heard afterwards that there was a reward of £1,000 offered by the British for information leading to my arrest.

Between then and May, 1921, I continued organising the Ballinasloe and Loughrea Battalions, which were poorly organised and had no arms of any account. I had no home to come to in my own area but I kept in close touch with Thomas McInerney, my Battalion Commandant, and visited him in his camp in Kilmaáduagh Company area roughly once a fortnight. About March, 1921, I made arrangements with Rev. Fr. O'Meara, C.C., Killoran, to go to Athenry and contact John Broderick, Brigade Q/M, and ask him to send as many rifles as possible to Commandant's camp at Kilmacduagh for the purpose of attacking the Auxiliaries then stationed at Drimhasnagh Castle. Fr. O'Meara, a native of Flagmount, Co. Clare, went to Athenry by train from Ballinasloe, saw John Broderick, who promised to send the rifles but they

never arrived. About the end of April or beginning of May, 1921, I had organised a small flying column of ten to twelve men from the Ballinasloe and Loughrea Battalions. They were armed with shotguns with a plentiful supply of cartridges. They included Martin O'Regan, Battalion Adjutant, Loughrea Battalion; his brother, Patrick O'Regan, 1st Lt., Loughrea Company; Seamus Reilly, Captain of Tynagh Company, afterwards Vice Commandant, South East Brigade; Thomas Pender, Commandant, Ballinasloe Battalion; Martin Daly of Mullagh Company whose rank I forget; Patrick Carty, Lieutenant of Cappatagle Company; James Coen, Captain of Clontuskert Company, Ballinasloe Battalion, and some others whose names I now forget. This small column had only been formed a day or two and we were on our way to my own battalion area where I expected the rifles from Athenry, when I got a dispatch from Commandant McInerney instructing me to make arrangements for a meeting of all officers from Gort and Athenry areas.

I dismissed the column at Shangarry, which place we had reached when I got the dispatch, and arranged the meeting for Limepark House. Commandant McInerney informed me in the dispatch that the officers from the Gort and Athenry areas were being called together to meet Brigade Commandant Michael Brennan, East Clare Brigade, his brother, Patrick Brennan, and Seamus Hogan, now Professor in U.C.C., who were travelling through Galway reorganising the area on the orders of G.H.Q. in Dublin. The meeting was held in Limepark House and resulted, as far as the Gort Battalion was concerned, in the division of that battalion, which up to that time had consisted of ten companies.

Commandant Brennan divided the Gort Battalion into two battalions of five companies each, and named them the

Gort and Ardrahan Battalions. These two battalions, together with the Athenry Battalion, then comprised the newly organised South Galway Brigade. I was appointed Vice Commandant of the newly formed Ardrahan Battalion, which consisted of Ardrahan, Ballinderreen, Kiltartan, Kinvara and Kilmacduagh Companies. I shall give a list of officers, as far as I remember them, at the end of this statement.

From this time (about the beginning of May, 1921) to the truce I did not return to East Galway but remained in my own area. In that time there was no engagement in the Ardrahan Battalion area. There were routine raids on mails and on one occasion the cutting of telegraph wires at Ardrahan and the disruption of the railway line between Ardrahan and Craughwell in connection with, as far as I can remember, some operation carried out by the I.R.A. in Clare. These jobs were carried out on the orders of Commandant McInerney.

In June, 1921, the British carried out a very big encircling movement in which they used aeroplanes, infantry, cavalry and a large number of R.I.C. to identify any wanted I.R.A. men encircled. They combed the Peterswell, Kilbecanty and Derrybrien Company areas of the Gort Battalion but captured no active Volunteer in those areas. My brother, Michael, who had previously been badly beaten by the R.I.C. and Black and Tans, had a very narrow escape on this occasion. He was in the house of a man named Murray in Sunnagh mountain when he heard the cavalry approach the house. He ran from the house without either his boots or jacket. He was seen by the cavalry, who could not follow in the rough mountainous country, but after some time the infantry closed in on him. Knowing

every inch of the ground, he eluded that particular party of infantry only to run into another party of mixed infantry and cavalry at Derrybrien. He was called on to halt by a cavalryman but kept going across the Derrybrien mountain in the Clare direction. Rifle and machine-gun fire was brought to bear on him whenever he was sighted by the infantry. When they lost him a plane spotted him and brought the cavalry in pursuit of him. He finally escaped after having been pursued across country for eleven miles. He then contacted John Broderick and Michael Lillis of Commandant Michael Brennan's Flying Column. At some places he was fired at at a range of little over two hundred yards and it seemed that the British tried to capture him alive. My brother, Michael, related this incident to me a few days after the round-up. The late Mr. Eoin Moynihan, national teacher at Derrybrien, also told me of the wonderful escape my brother made. Mr. Moynihan had been a witness to it at Derrybrien.

During the truce period the R.I.C. made several attempts on my life. One day Martin Madden of Moneen and I passed by Kilchreest R.I.C. barrack on our way to Loughrea. I did not return that night but on Martin's way home he was stopped by four armed and masked R.I.C. at <sup>the</sup> Fishpond, about a mile from Kilchreest on the way to Gort. Had I been coming home that night I would have had to pass by the Fishpond. The R.I.C. questioned Martin Madden as to where Howley, "the murderer" was, and warned him that if he were ever again seen in my company we would both be shot at sight.

A few days later I travelled the same way with Volunteer James Stanford. We both were on bicycles. I did not return that way but on Stanford's return he was fired

on at Roxboro. He told me later that four or five R.I.C. called on him to halt and when he kept going they fired three or four shots, none of which hit him. James Stanford is still alive and can verify this. Several other attempts were made by the R.I.C. to shoot me during the truce period. The matter was reported to Divisional Commandant David Reynolds and he ordered that I should always be accompanied by an armed escort of four Volunteers, two before and two behind me.

During the truce period and a short time before the R.I.C. were due to leave Woodlawn R.I.C. barrack I met Commandant Burns of Ballinasloe Battalion in Ballinasloe. He told me that they were planning a raid for arms on Woodlawn R.I.C. barrack. He told me that one of the garrisons there was friendly and that he would help by opening the door to them. He gave me full details of the plan but told me that they had no revolvers for the job. He asked me for my assistance and for the loan of revolvers. I knew from experience of East Galway area that the I.R.A. there were very poorly armed and, for that reason, I agreed to help in the raid.

I went back to Ardrahan Battalion area and picked five Volunteers. I armed them with revolvers and sent them by side-car to Woodlawn. I myself got there before them as I travelled by motor-car. When I arrived in Woodlawn I learned from Commandant Burns that the friendly R.I.C. man was off duty for the night. I then went to Kilconnell, five miles away, and arrested an R.I.C. man who, I was told, was home on leave. I brought him in the car to Woodlawn. In the meantime Commandant Burns had arrested another R.I.C. man when on his way back to barracks in Woodlawn. I spoke to the two R.I.C., telling them that we

were about to take the arms from the barrack, and forced them at the point of the revolver to enter the barrack in front of Commandant Burns, four others and myself. The R.I.C. whom we had captured told us that the arms were kept in the room occupied by the two Sergeants and advised us to be very careful as every man inside would fight if he got the slightest break. We surprised them completely and took thirty-five rifles, the same number of revolvers, two Winchester repeating shotguns, eight double-barrelled shotguns and a large supply of ammunition. All the arms and ammunition were taken away to the Ballinasloe Battalion. There was never a question raised by anybody about this raid as far as I am aware.

During the war the local people were very good. They did everything in their power to help, especially in regard to food and shelter. No spy was tried or executed in the Gort or Ardahan Battalion areas. I can remember only one friendly R.I.C. man. He was the Sergeant in charge of the party of R.I.C. protecting Captain Persse of Roxboro House. He was a native of Connemara and I have already referred to him in the course of this statement.

The principal leaders I remember in Easter Week, 1916, are Captain Liam Mellowes, Captain Alf Monaghan, Rev. Fr. Feeney, Rev. Fr. O'Meehan, Eamon Corbett, afterwards a member of Dáil Éireann, Larry Lardner of Athenry, Thomas Kenny of Craughwell, Martin Niland of Kilcolgan, afterwards member of Dáil Éireann, Rev. Fr. Fahy, Rev. Fr. Thomas Burke, native of Castlegar, Stephen Jordan of Athenry, afterwards member of Dáil Éireann, Seán Broderick of Athenry, afterwards member of Dáil Éireann, and Padraig Fahy of Ballycahalan.

At the time of the reorganisation of the Volunteers in 1917 Seamus Murphy was sent by G.H.Q. in Dublin as Brigade Commandant, Galway Brigade. The brigade area then consisted of the whole of Co. Galway. The other brigade officers were, as far as I remember, Brigade Vice Commandant: either Larry Lardner or Eamon Corbett; Adjutant: Martin Niland; Q/M: Seán Broderick of Athenry; I/O: Padraig Fahy of Ballycahalan.

There was no change in brigade personnel from 1917 to about September, 1920, as far as I can remember. As far as I know and remember, Seamus Murphy left Galway about September, 1920, and the Galway Brigade ceased to function as from that date.

The Gort Battalion was formed in 1917 and the officers were:

Battalion Commandant - Thomas McInerney  
Battalion Vice Commandant - Peter Howley (myself)  
Battalion Adjutant - P.J. Piggott  
Battalion Q/M - William Thompson  
Battalion I/O - Patrick Shaughnessy.

The company officers, as far as I can remember, were:

Ardrahan Company - John Joyce  
Peterswell Coy. - John Fahy to May, 1921.  
Thomas Fahy from May, 1921.  
Derrybrien Coy. - Patrick Flynn  
Kilbecanty Coy. - John Coen  
Gort Company - John Hayes to 1920.  
Jos. Stanford from 1920  
to May, 1921.  
Do not know from that on,  
as it was outside my bn. area  
Beagh Coy. - John Flaherty to May, 1921.  
Kilmacdaugh Coy. - Either Peter Grealish or  
John McLaughlin.  
Kinvara Company - John Burke all the time  
from 1916 to the truce.  
Ballinderreen Coy. - Thomas Gibbons all the time.  
Kiltartan Coy. - This company could not agree  
on a captain and it remained  
all the time with a Lt. in  
charge of each half company.  
The two lieutenants were  
Patrick Cahill and Martin  
Nolan.

Witness: B. Moynihan  
(Investigator)

Signed:

Date:

Peter Howley { PETER  
HOWLEY  
22 March 1956