

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21
BURO STAIRÉ MILÉATA 1913-21
No. W.S. 1,652

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.
STATEMENT BY WITNESS.
DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 1652.

Witness

Chief Supt. Henry O'Mara, B.A.,
Garda Síochána H.Q.,
Phoenix Park,
Dublin.

Identity.

Comdt., 6th Battn., East Clare Bgde.,
I.R.A.

Subject.

Murder of Mrs. Malachy Quinn, Gort, 1st Nov. 1920,
and Loughnane Bros. of Shanaglish, Co. Galway,
on 26th November, 1920.

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

• Nil.

File No S. 329.

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STATEMENT BY CHIEF SUPERINTENDENT HENRY O'MARA,

Garda Síochána Headquarters,
Phoenix Park, Dublin.

A mile beyond Ardrahan on the main Galway-Gort road a sharp turn to the right makes the traveller go warily, and, about a quarter of a mile further on, another blind corner calls, in its turn, for continuance of caution. In such slow-motion advance one gets an opportunity of noticing a school, parish hall, presbytery and church - all four, with their gardens of flowers, kept in neat order, thanks to the good taste and enthusiasm of the parish priest, the Very Reverend J. Canon Considine, who takes a very deep interest in this model Galway village of Labane.

Since his ordination he has spent his years ministering to the spiritual needs of the people of this countryside. Being one of them, he has always been with them, especially in days of trial and terror which, alas, were not few when he was a young priest.

In 1920, he was a curate in Gort and the grim happenings in the locality made such an impression on him that he made up his mind to build, when the opportunity offered, a memorial that would perpetuate the memory of three who were murdered in the neighbourhood in a most brutal fashion by British Forces. His appointment as Parish Priest of Ardrahan offered him that opportunity. He availed himself of it by building a fine parochial hall which he called the Quinn-Loughmane Memorial Hall. I propose giving in detail an idea of the significance of the building and of its name.

The time-worn terrorist maxim of applying the most merciless pressure wherever local encouragement is forthcoming was, in 1920, still a first principle of British strategy. In County Galway encouragement amounting to incitement was freely given in the pages

of a local newspaper and, although the bitterly anti-Irish views expressed were admittedly only those of the editor and a small, sheltered group, the paper, nevertheless, was, to some degree, responsible for the intensity of the campaign of terror pursued by the Crown.

The Labane Hall commemorates the memory of a young Irish woman who was murdered with a callousness designed to strike terror into the hearts of women and children throughout the land, and of two young men, brothers, who, whilst being held as prisoners, died as a result of torture, the maniacal ferociousness of which beggars description.

On the feast of All Saints, 1920 (the day Kevin Barry was hanged in Dublin), Mrs. Malachy Quinn, with her three children, the youngest, not yet a year old, in her arms, was sitting on the wall outside her house when, at about a quarter to three, a lorry of British forces, flying a large Union Jack (an unusual thing), came from the Gort direction. It slackened speed and a shot was fired. Then one man knelt down, steadied his rifle, and taking every precaution, so as not to miss, fired deliberately at Mrs. Quinn and mortally wounded her. As she fell the lorry was driven quickly away and all the occupants of it, save one, cheered the dastardly deed. A second lorry followed, another shot was fired, and there was more cheering.

Father Considine and Dr. Sandys were sent for. They came immediately to the house and attended the dying woman. Dr. Sandys called in Dr. Foley for consultation but their united and unceasing efforts were in vain. She died in eight hours. In her last moments she had the heavenly happiness of receiving our Divine Lord in the Blessed Viaticum.

A court of inquiry, consisting of three military officers, was held at Gort barracks the following Thursday, to investigate the

shooting. One of the R.I.C. witnesses made the extraordinary statement that "when passing any suspicious-looking places, like a wood we would fire our rifles in the air but wouldn't fire near a house or near decent looking civilians." When her husband was called (he had been away from the house at the time of the shooting) the president of the court addressed to him these words: "Malachy Quinn, you have our deepest sympathy. This is a dreadful affair." The other two members of the court associated themselves with the president's remarks. The findings of the court were never made public.

Sir Hamar Greenwood (Chief Secretary for Ireland), in the House of Commons, in reply to a question put down by Commander Kenworthy, M.P., said that he was informed by the police (R.I.C.) authorities that two police lorries were passing at the time and it might be that the shooting took place in anticipation of an attack. Commander Kenworthy then asked would there be any difficulty in tracing the lorry involved and would urgent and drastic steps be taken to punish those who had taken potshots at an innocent woman. Greenwood protested at such a statement.

The facts, however, were only too plain. Those police, whose badge was the harp and the crown, were put out on errands of murder. (In the first lorry there was one who, by refraining from joining in the cheers, did not show full and active approval of the shooting. For this he received swift and sharp punishment, but he lived to tell the tale.) The deliberate and cold-blooded killing of the young expectant mother of twenty-three years was just one further step in the campaign of frightfulness that had been planned at high level and which had the support of the Chief Secretary for Ireland and of the British Prime Minister (Lloyd George). But the huge attendance at the funeral showed that Galway men and women were staunch and fearless.

For generations the snug farm opposite Shanaglish church had been in the Loughnane family whose roots were deep in the county of Galway. There lived there in 1920 Mrs. Loughnane, the widowed mother of three sons and three daughters. Pat, the eldest, and Harry, the youngest, worked on the farm; two daughters, Nora and Kate, were teachers in North Galway; one son and one daughter were in the United States; and Hugh, now in the old home, was then in England.

Pat was tall, handsome and powerfully built, as fine a hurler as could be found in Galway or Clare, and of such a winning personality that he was unanimously selected as the leader of every activity in the parish. Harry was of a gentle, quiet and retiring disposition, studious and fond of reading; ill-health forced him to give up temporarily the idea of becoming a national teacher. He was the efficient secretary of the local Sinn Féin club.

Friday, 26th November, 1920, was a dry, crisp day, seasonable and well suited for threshing operations. Robert and Peter Glynn brought brought their threshing outfit to Mrs. Loughnane's farm and fourteen neighbours gathered there to help with the work. Everything went merrily until the afternoon. Robert Glynn has all-too-vivid memories of what happened then and with feeling he tells us that:

"About 3 p.m. Pat Loughnane was anxious that the men should have a break for half an hour, but his mother, a sensible hard-working woman, said that it would be better to continue on finish early, and, then, all could enjoy themselves in comfort. Everyone of us agreed with her and on went the work. Shortly afterwards, a lorryload of Auxiliaries drove up and made straight for us. I had heard and read of the capture and murder of the boys in Scariff and elsewhere and, in a flash, I decided to run for my life. The 'Auxies' had the place surrounded and I ran into two at the first fence but they couldn't stop me. They got down on their knees and fired at me. I heard a

sharp whistle now and again and I thought it was the Auxiliaries were whistling after me to come back, but I was told later that it was bullets that were whistling by my ears. I was then in my prime; I had always been a fair runner and, as luck would have it, I had my light shoes on that day. With light shoes and with mortal terror in my heart I don't believe the wind itself could catch up on me! I ran into four more of them at another ditch. I tore through them and, though they fired after me, I got away without a scratch."

"I am still of the opinion that if we had stopped for the rest we would have heard the lorry coming, and would all have a chance of escaping but I am sure Pat Loughnane would have stood his ground, for he had refused often before to leave home at night and go 'on the run'.

"At nightfall, when I knew it was safe, I doubled back to Loughnane's for my gansey and coat. (My brother Pete and I covered up the engine and thresher and they remained there idle for six weeks.) Pete told me I was the only one who ran. He said: 'They lined us all up against the wall and a policeman, L___, who had been stationed in Tubber, went round us with the Auxies and picked out Pat and Harry Loughnane. The Auxies took them away and one said to Pat: "Bring with you the rifle you had at Castledaly." (There had been an ambush at Castledaly in which two policemen lost their lives and a number was disarmed). Once they had them they didn't bother with the rest of us and never went into the house. They took them away in the lorry.' The next time I saw them was in their coffins in Shanaglish church - just charred skeletons. It was a sight that I'll never forget the longest day I live."

The Auxiliaries took them to Gort R.I.C. Barracks. They went by Tubber, where they arrested Michael Carroll, who continues the story for us:

"I was arrested on November 26th, 1920, between 4 p.m. and 5 p.m. in the evening. I was stripping a horse when a lorry stopped about 30 yards away. There were several Auxiliaries and two prisoners on the lorry. I recognised the two prisoners as Pat and Harry Loughnane. The Auxies rushed up and caught me. They asked me several questions and struck me repeatedly about the head and arms with their revolvers whilst searching me. I was refused time to change my coat and was held on the lorry while they searched the house. When they came out some who had remained on the lorry told me to jump off and run away. I refused to jump and just as the lorry started two of them caught me and swung me over the side on to the road.

"As I was falling my coat got caught on a hook at the corner and I was dragged along suspended from the lorry for a distance of twenty yards. My feet were touching the road. I was then caught and dragged back into the lorry. I was beaten on the head with revolvers. After about half a mile they pulled up to light a cigarette and one of them suggested giving me another dressing. I was then beaten about the body and knocked down on the floor of the lorry and in this position I got several kicks. The other two prisoners were also beaten. In fact, all the time we were going they kept beating us and prodding us with their rifles. At this time I was bleeding from wounds on the face and felt very sore. My nose was also bleeding and my ear was cut and painful. The lorry stopped at Crossford and they went in to search Flaherty's and Nelly's.

They came out after about a quarter of an hour and seemed very disappointed and were ^{more} violent than ever with us. They jumped into the lorry and beat us again as we started. I was at this time very ill and haven't a clear recollection of how I got to Gort Barracks. I must have fainted. I remember coming off the lorry and going into the barracks. The police were at the door and as we passed in, one of them struck me and I fell under the table. I got a kick into the back as I lay on the floor. The two Loughnanes were then beaten and knocked down where I lay.

"We were dragged to our feet and searched and knocked down again. They were beating me for at least 15 minutes. The blood from the cuts on my ear and head was all about my face and was going into my eyes. I was dragged into the lock-up and thrown on the floor with the Loughnanes. About a half an hour later we were taken out to the day-room and further questioned. I was again beaten and put back into the cell. That was the last I saw of the Loughnanes. I was taken to Galway next morning and put into Earl's Island where there were several prisoners, one of whom dressed my wounds and washed them. I was later transferred to the Town Hall and from there to Ballykinlar and released after 13 months."

Fourteen stalwarts stripped to singlets, trousers and rubber shoes beat the Loughnanes for over an hour. A young R.I.C. constable named Doherty, who knew them, interceded for them but without effect. He told Pat and Harry that they would be murdered. Pat thanked him and turning to Harry, said, "We'll say our rosary. Let them." Doherty suffered later for his interest in them.

After the beating they were handed back to the Auxiliaries, who set out with them for their headquarters, Drumharsna Castle, situated about six miles to the north of Gort in that lonely countryside which

lies between Kinvara and Ardrahan. On their way out they stopped at Martin Coen's shop and took away with them thirty-three yards of rope. That evening, Pat Linnane was going home from the mill with his mother. Both of them saw the lorry on the roadside at the Crann Mór. Auxiliaries were all around. Two men, covered with blood, but alive, were stretched on their backs on the road behind the lorry with their heads towards the back of it. Ropes were tied firmly around their chests, under their arms and on to the tailpiece. Having made their prisoners run, at the point of the bayonet, before the lorry until they were exhausted, the Auxiliaries were then set and ready to drag them behind it along the road to Drumharsna Castle. Pat Linane and his mother still live at Chessy. They can't forget what they saw at the Crann Mór on 26th November, 1920. There were others who actually saw them being dragged along behind the lorries.

On the following Monday night, November 29th, a party of Auxiliaries from Drumharsna called on Mrs. Loughmane with the familiar story, which by then was known to augur evil, that her sons had escaped from them. All their friends became very anxious about their fate and their sister Nora, who is now a member of a religious community, came home to make a search for their bodies. Hers was not an easy task, for terror was stalking the country and some local people, who had seen a lot, were keeping their silence because they feared, not without good cause, that if they disclosed any of the movements of the Auxiliaries, they themselves would be the next victims. But Nora persisted. She went from the military to the police. From neither did she get help or sympathy. Back then she went to the people again. They could not continue to resist the appeal of such a pathetic figure; discretion and fear were cast aside; the silence was broken and bit by bit this story was unfolded.

At 11 p.m. on November 26th, the day of their arrest, Pat and Harry were taken from the Castle to Moy O'Hynes' wood, to the spot just off the public road which is now marked by a cross in their memory. Four shots were heard. The following (Saturday) morning the bodies were seen there and the information that Harry was still alive and moaning is reliable. On Sunday night, the Auxiliaries came again to the wood and took the bodies to Umbriste, about two miles nearer to Ardahan. There they set fire to them. Since they didn't burn to their satisfaction, they tried hurriedly to bury the remains, but on account of the rocky surface of the earth, they failed in that attempt also, and so they threw them into a muddy pond close by where they couldn't be easily discovered. To make discovery more difficult they threw dirty oil on the water.

Michael (Tally) Loughnane, a first cousin (now in U.S.A.) was very much attached to the brothers and all during these days he searched for their bodies. Saturday, night, December 4, he dreamt that he saw them in a pond at Umbriste from which he had once taken water for an engine when he was working in the locality. Next morning, he went to Mass in Gort and then sought two brothers, Michael and Willie Hynes. Both of them were Volunteers, natives of Kinvara, but were now on the run and slept at night in a tent at Boherbue. Willie is now in America but Michael lives in the old home in Kinvara. He well remembers the day:

"I thought Tally was daft but I told him to go and have a look in the pond and then come back to us. He was back in quick time, with a frightened look in his eyes, to tell us that some things like burnt bodies, were there under the water which was covered with filthy oil. We went to the pond with him and, right enough, the burnt bodies were there. We went into Kinvara and borrowed an old horse-van from Pat Healebert. My father drove the

van out and we brought the remains of the two boys, God rest them, back to Kinvara in it. The Kinvara Volunteers marched behind the van."

"Our house, out-offices, hay and straw had been burnt the Monday night previous but a barn had escaped. It was about a mile from the house and to it we took the bodies and laid them out on sheets on the floor. Canon Fahy, God rest his soul, was P.P. here then. He came down to the barn and stayed with us all the time at the wake. Once there was a scare that the Tans were coming and those of us who were on the run were about to make off, but Canon Fahy told us to stand our ground and that if they came he'd talk to them. They didn't come.

"Dr. Connolly examined the remains carefully. They were badly burnt and what appears to be the letters 'I.V.' were cut in the charred flesh in several places. Two of Harry's fingers were missing and his right arm, broken completely across at the shoulder, was hanging off. Both Pat's wrists and legs were broken. The doctor said that it looked to him that hand grenades had been put into their mouths and exploded. I couldn't recognise either of them."

"Sonny Mullins and Mattie Shaughnessy, Church Street, Gort, brought the two coffins from town but we had to keep the bodies until their sister Nora came to identify them. When she did arrive, the scene was dreadful. However, she soon became calm and said that they had suffered and died for their principles. She was wonderful.

"Volunteer officers held an inquest and the verdict was inscribed on the breast plates of the coffins:

PADRAIG O LOCNÁIN

A gabhadh, a marbhuigeadh agus a
dhoigeadh ag na Sasanacaibh

Mí Samhna, 1920,

in aois a naoi mbliadhain is fiche.

Dia le n-a anam.

ANRAOI O LOCNÁIN

A gabhadh, a marbhuigeadh agus a
dhoigeadh ag na Sasanacaibh

Mí Samhna, 1920,

in aois a trí mbliadhain is fiche.

Dia le n-a anam.

"Tomás O hEighin, an Irish teacher, took a photograph of the coffins and of the bodies in them. I have a copy. You can see that they show them just as they were.

"At midnight we brought them to Kinvara Church. Canon Fahy said prayers all the way. Next day, after Mass, the funeral left for Shanaglish. We escorted it for a distance.

"Two nights afterwards the barn was burned by the Auxiliaries. Tommy Quinn composed a ballad which we thought was good. If you call to see him he might give it to you".

The crowds who joined the funeral between Kinvara and Shanaglish were unaware of the barbarous cruelty which had been dealt out to the Loughnanes without the semblance of a trial, courtmartial or official inquiry. The Very Rev. John Nagle, parish priest of Shanaglish, who had served as a chaplain with the British forces and was proud of that, was determined that the heinous crime should be fully exposed. When he had done all he could to console the distracted mother, he

crossed the road to the church, on the approach of the cortege, to receive the remains and, having recited the prescribed prayers for the dead, he turned to his people and recounted the details of the revolting murder. As he told how these two young men who, ten days before, had been, in mind and body, models of what he would wish all young men to be, had been beaten, tortured, murdered and how, when dead, their bodies had been burned and then thrown into a stagnant pool, tears filled the eyes of strong men and frail women alike.

He, who had experienced such war horrors and who had a belief in and admiration for what is called British justice, was coerced by these brutal excesses of British forces to renounce his former allegiance, and condemned with all the vehemence of which he was capable, the guilty administration in London and in Dublin Castle which permitted them.

After Mass and before the funeral the next day, December 7, four members of the R.I.C., two military officers and a doctor arrived at Shanaglish church. The coffins were opened and the doctor made an examination of the remains. During the examination, Father Nagle, in the presence of the congregation, asked the officers to look at the remains in the coffins and to say what they thought of such a happening in the twentieth century. The officers hung their heads in silence. When leaving the church, one of the R.I.C. sergeants turned and said: "We, who are here, had nothing to do with this dreadful business, Father, and we dislike it, too."

At two o'clock in the afternoon, the two coffins were taken down the road to the cemetery and laid side by side in a separate plot. As soon as the last sods had been placed in position six local Volunteers stepped forward and fired three volleys. By paying that

final tribute the local Volunteers told the crown forces that England's bloodiest efforts would only stiffen resistance.

The following day, a military inquiry was held in Gort barracks. The evidence of two doctors was that the two bodies were so charred as to be unrecognisable, that the skulls were greatly fractured, and that no trace of bullet wounds was to be seen. A military officer, who said he was in command of the Auxiliaries at Drumharsna Castle, swore that he received on the morning of Saturday, November 27, a report that two brothers named Loughnane had been arrested the previous day; that when surrounded by his men they had tried to escape but that, after the discharge of several shots, they had been arrested; that, the same night, they had escaped from custody and that, as soon as possible after receiving news of their escape, he had assembled a party to go to their native district to carry out a search which proved fruitless. An Auxiliary cadet gave evidence of their arrest near their home, their attempt to escape and their subsequent successful effort to escape from Drumharsna Castle. The Auxiliary, who was on sentry-go that Friday night, swore that the two men were imprisoned on the ground floor; that about 11 p.m. one of them asked to be allowed to go outside; that just then he imagined that he heard voices in a barn nearby, and thinking that they might be the voices of some of their comrades coming to rescue them, he went outside to investigate leaving the brothers behind; that he found no trace of anyone, and that when he returned, the prisoners had gone.

Father Nagle made his desire to give evidence known, but he was refused admission. There was no condemnation of the outrage this time nor was there any expression of sympathy with the relatives of the murdered men. Yet the findings in this case also were never made known - it must have been realised that the attempt to acquit themselves of guilt was very feeble and would do nothing more, even

in the eyes of those who were favourably disposed, than add the sin of perjury to that of murder.

It was poor consolation for the heartbroken mother. Alone and desolate, she sat in the kitchen of her home in which she had so often awaited the return of Pat and Harry from school, from play, from céilidhe. She tried hard to keep that picture of those happy days always in her mind.

Poor grief-stricken soul! Even that passing pleasure of the imagination could never again be hers. Every time she thought of her sons, try as she would, she couldn't help looking at the church across the road. Then she saw again the ineffable scene she saw on the first Tuesday in December, 1920. That picture came into her mind many times each day until death released her on November 10th, 1936.

May her soul and theirs rest in peace.

Mrs. Loughnane was one of those gentle Irish mothers who had inspired her children from their earliest days with that combination of simple, unwavering faith and a burning love of country which had sustained us as a nation during the long seven hundred years of British butchery. She typified, too, the mothers of her time (that awful Black and Tan period) whose devotion to Faith and Fatherland added lustre to our country's history and noble traditions. Throughout those terrible years there were in every street of every town and in every townland of every parish, mothers like her who had reared families whose loyalty to God and Ireland proved that there was in us an indomitable spirit that would never be cowed.

It was those sufferings that made our country's history. The details of the events of this century should, therefore, be recorded while eye and ear witnesses still live. It is for the purpose "of

the record" then that this article has been written. God forbid that our intention in writing such should be to foster hatred or stir up strife. For, whilst asserting boldly that the past is for remembrance and pride, and whilst we know only too well that no small nation has suffered more at the hands of a brutal tyrant than has Ireland, we gladly grant that we always had good friends even amongst non-Catholic English statesmen; such as Drummond, Wyndham, Kenworthy, and that British Army officers, like those who conducted an official inquiry into the murder of Mrs. Quinn, acted as a rule like gentlemen and soldiers of honour. It is conceded, too, that the attitude of those two classes represent that of the British people generally, who, if they knew the truth of our treatment at the hands of successive British Governments, would be sympathetic. They would like to hear the truth and the telling of it is bound to lead to a better mutual understanding.

The beautiful Celtic cross over the grave of the Loughmane brothers in Shanaglish graveyard; the modest cross at Moy O'Hynes' wood and the hall at Labane are a permanent memorial of noble Irish people and a lasting reminder of days that are gone. Let us hope they will prove an inspiration to Irish youth in the days that are to come.

Go ndéanaidh Dia trócaire orta súd agus orainn go léir agus do dtugaidh Sé cabhair, congnamh agus misneach do'n aos óg.

I express my best thanks to Miss Kate Loughnane, Hugh Loughnane, Robert Glynn and his wife, Michael Hynes and above all, to Mr. Joe Flanagan of Hollywood.

SIGNED: *Henry J. J. J.*DATE: *22/4/54.*WITNESS: *Pear Brennan Lieut.-Col.*