

M.S. 1733

DUPLICATE

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21
BURO STAIRÉ MILEATA 1913-21
NO. W.S. 1733

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS.

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 1733.

Witness

SEÁN WALSH,
Clonagh, Tibbradden, Rathfarnham, Co. Dublin,
formerly of Carracastle, Bohola, Claremorris,
Co. Mayo.

Identity.

O/C., 3rd Battalion (Kiltimagh),
East Mayo Brigade,

Subject.

Bohola Company, 3rd Battalion, East Mayo Brigade,
I.R.A. 1914 - Truce.

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.
Nil.

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STATEMENT BY MR. SPAN WALSH

Clonagh, Tibbradden, Rathfarnham, Co. Dublin.

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Carracastle, Bohola, Claremorris, Co. Mayo

I was born in the townland of Carracastle, parish of Bohola, in 1889, and received my education in Carragown National School. The townland of Carracastle adjoins the parish of Straide. My home was about 2½ miles from the village of Bohola. It was a considerable distance from the main road, and this proved to be a boon from 1919 onwards when my home was raided dozens of times by the Black and Tans, and by their successors in 1922-23.

Early in 1914 I was present at a public meeting held in Ballyvary at which a company of the Irish Volunteers was formed. The principal speaker was Professor Frank Fahy, later T.D. and Ceann Comhairle. With about 40 others I joined the company. We were drilled by a man named Berry who was on the reserve of the British army. The training consisted mainly of foot drill and route marches. On the outbreak of the first World War, Berry was called up for military service.

Some time after the company was started in Ballyvary, a section of Volunteers was formed in Bohola. I was transferred to the Bohola section as it was nearer my home and much more convenient for me. As I had received some training in the Ballyvary company, I was appointed to take charge of the Bohola section.

Soon after the outbreak of the war, Mr. John E. Redmond, who was leader of the Irish Parliamentary Party, supported the campaign for recruiting to the British army and appealed

to the Volunteers and young men of Ireland to join the British army to "fight for the freedom of small nations". This split the Volunteers throughout the country; the majority sided with Redmond. There was no split in our section - it simply faded away.

In 1917, Sean Corcoran called on me and requested me to organise a company of Volunteers and a Sinn Féin Cumann in Bohola. I arranged for a meeting to be held in Staunton's workshop in Bohola. Sean Corcoran attended the meeting and about 40 young men joined the company. I must state here that they were as fine a bunch of lads as could be found anywhere. Two names were proposed for the position of company captain - mine and P.J. Clarke. I was elected by a substantial majority. P.J. Clarke was elected 1st Lieut.; Tom Carroll, 2nd Lieutenant; John Clarke, adjutant and Joe Colgan, quartermaster. A Sinn Féin Cumann was also formed at the meeting and I was elected secretary.

Our company, Bohola, became part of the Swinford Battalion. The battalion officers were:- O/C., Sean Corcoran Vice O/C., Tom Ruane; Adjutant, Bernie Egan; Quartermaster, Vincent Fraie.

At that time, the Co. Mayo was organised as one brigade. The brigade officers were:- O/C. - Joseph McBride; Vice O/C. - Michael McHugh; Adjutant - Dick Walsh; Q.M. - Ml. Kilroy.

The first mobilisation of the Swinford Battalion took place in November 1917, in Kinaffo, to commemorate the Manchester Martyrs. The three companies which formed the Swinford Battalion - Kiltimagh, Bohola and Tullinacurra - were present. The Battalion O/C., Commandant Sean Corcoran, was in charge, and B. Egan, who had replaced Tom Sheehy as battalion adjutant, was also present. The Bohola company was followed to Kinaffo by the B. I. C. men named Peter

During the first weeks of April 1918, the British army in France had been sustaining a heavy attack on a front of 50 miles; reinforcements were badly needed. On 16th April a Bill was passed in the British House of Commons applying conscription to Ireland. Needless to say, when this news reached Ireland, excitement ran very high and it was not the fathers who had sons of military age who suffered the most anguish. On the day conscription was passed I happened to meet a man who had four daughters between the ages of 24 and 17. When conscription was mentioned, the tears came into the man's eyes. There were thousands of Irish fathers who suffered the same anguish though they did not shout it from the housetops.

At this time, the Irish Volunteers were numerically very weak. By an Order in Council, conscription was to come into operation in Ireland on 1st May 1918. It was in this atmosphere that Bernie Egan, Swinford; Johnny Walsh, Kiltimagh, and myself met in Johnny Walsh's workshop a day or two after the Bill had been passed applying conscription to Ireland. This was a meeting of Swinford Battalion Council. Bernie Egan was battalion adjutant. I was O/C. Bohola. Johnny Walsh was O/C. Kiltimagh, but at this time he was acting battalion O/C. as Sean Corcoran, who was battalion O/C., and T. Ruane, who was battalion Vice O/C., were both prisoners in Dundalk Jail. Incidentally, Joe Sheehy, Kiltimagh, was appointed, battalion O/C. early in May. He acted in that capacity till the return of Sean Corcoran from Lincoln Jail in March 1919. The meeting in Walsh's workshop is something that I will always remember, be life long or short. We realised very well what a heavy responsibility rested on our shoulders. If England made the Order in Council bringing conscription into operation in Ireland on 1st May 1918, we felt that the British C.I.C. would, before

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that date, make every effort to occupy certain strategic positions all over the country. It was our job to prevent that happening in our area. At any moment we expected orders from G.H.Q. and we were ready to obey them. In fact, Dick Walsh ordered me to sleep in the open and, very likely, the other two men got the same order.

In Bohola we had to depend entirely on shotguns and whatever pikes the local blacksmiths - Watt Durcan and Tommy Roache - were able to make. We managed to get an old mould that had been used in the old days. It was a bit defective; still, it served its purpose, and a quantity of pellets were made.

Very soon after April 16th the people became thoroughly roused. New volunteer companies sprang up all over the place. It is safe to say that at this time every parish had its company. Large numbers of recruits rushed in to join the companies that were in existence before the threat of conscription. Some of those were very good lads, but some of them would run from a cross gander; nevertheless, it might have been bad tactics to turn them away, so they were allowed to join up. Very late in April 1918, or very early in May 1918, a meeting of Swinford Battalion Council was held in Mr. O'Rourke's office in Kiltimagh. Mr. O'Rourke was a practising solicitor living in Meelick and, to use a homely phrase, he was a man of the people. He presided at the Battalion Council meeting held in his office. He represented Meelick; Bernie Egan represented Swinford; Johnny Walsh, Kiltimagh; I represented Bohola. There was a representative from Kilkelly at the meeting. Mr. O'Rourke stated that if the battalion was going to be called Swinford Battalion, Meelick would have nothing to do with it. I then suggested that the battalion be called the Gallen Battalion (Barony of Gallen). The young men in Meelick mustn't have any

objection to the name, Swinford Battalion, as I never heard anyone refer to the battalion as the Gallen Battalion.

I understand the objection had its roots in the Parnell split. On 18th April, in Dublin, a conference of representative men, convened by the Lord Mayor, met at the Mansion House. Eamon de Valera and John Dillon were amongst those who attended. This conference drafted an anti-conscription pledge to be taken by the people of Ireland on the following Sunday.

The Pledge

"That we deny the right of the British Government to enforce compulsory service in this country. We pledge ourselves solemnly to one another to resist conscription by the most effective means at our disposal."

On the day the above conference met in Dublin, the Catholic Bishops were holding their annual meeting in Maynooth. The conference sent a deputation to ask the Bishops to issue a public statement sanctioning resistance. The following statement, known as the Bishops' Manifesto, was issued immediately:

"We consider that conscription forced in this way upon Ireland is an oppressive and inhuman law which the Irish people have a right to resist by every means that are consonant with the law of God".

Fifteen hundred delegates from all parts of Ireland came to a Trades Union Congress in Dublin to decide on the form which the protest of organised labour should take. They decided on a general strike of 24 hours. The Women Workers' Union marched through Dublin to the City Hall where they signed a promise to support the men in their resistance. On Sunday, 21st April, the pledge against conscription was signed by nearly all Nationalist Ireland, Catholics signing

outside the church doors. In Bohola, Mr. P.J. Cavagan was the first man to sign. He was a magistrate and the C.D.B. Inspector, Kiltimagh area. April 23rd was the day of the general strike. Everywhere in Ireland, except Belfast, shops and factories were closed; trains and trams were suspended.

The Government prepared to put Ireland under military command. Lord Wimborne was replaced by Field-Marshal Lord French. French was reputed to be a "tough". A large anti-conscription meeting was held in Ballaghaderreen; it was addressed by Eamon de Valera, John Dillon and Fr. O'Flanagan. Over 15,000 people attended; there were no motor cars and very few bicycles. People from different parishes marched to the meeting. Kilkelly sent the strongest contingent; a banner carried in front of this contingent read: "England, we won't have your blood-tax". This banner was held in front of the platform and must have acted as an inspiration to the speakers. Volunteers continued to drill and train and collect arms.

During the conscription crisis, I organised a company of Volunteers in Ballyvary. Father Andy Moran was present at the meeting which was held in Ballyvary Hall, and he was a great help to us. I was satisfied that if there was a fight, Fr. Andy would have been in the midst of it and that was a great consolation to me.

During this time, the work of organising Sinn Féin was of the utmost importance. Ireland was represented in the English Parliament by the Irish Parliamentary Party. A general election was due to be held immediately the World War ended. It was vital that Sinn Féin should win the general election in Ireland by an overwhelming majority. If Ireland

did not get her independence at the Peace Conference, then she would have to fight for it and it was vital that she should have a government to direct the fight.

1918 Election

The 1918 general election must be the most historic election ever fought in Ireland. A World War had just concluded. England and her Allies had fought ostensibly for the freedom of small nations. Ireland was the oldest of the small nations; she was being held in subjection by England. Sinn Fein stood for the absolute independence of Ireland. The Parliamentary Party were willing to accept a milk-and-water Home Rule Bill.

Bohola was in the East Mayo constituency, and, in East Mayo, the position was particularly difficult for Sinn Féin. John Dillon, who was the son of John Blake Dillon, the friend and comrade of Michael Davitt and leader of the Irish Party, was sitting Member of Parliament for East Mayo.

When Eamon de Valera was selected to oppose John Dillon in the constituency, excitement ran very high. John Dillon had the support of the pro-British element. He had a number of trained speakers to assist him; also he had practically all the people with the money on his side so that he was able to hire almost all the motor cars in the area on polling day. De Valera and a large number of prominent republicans were held in English jails during the election; this was England's idea of fair play. De Valera was not allowed to send out his election address. He had very few trained speakers to work for him. Fr. Ml. O'Flanagan, Fr. Michael O'Hara, Fr. Peter O'Callaghan, Fr. Andy Moran, C.C., Ballyvary, and Fr. Denis Gildea, C.C., Foxford, did trojan work. Nearly all the

the senior clergy supported John Dillon. Dean Connington, Swinford, was neutral. Fr. Phil Mulligan, P.P., Carracastle, was an ardent supporter of Sinn Féin. Fr. Gildea had not permission to address a Sinn Féin meeting outside the parish of Swinford and the parish of Carracastle. A pamphlet, "The Two Policies", written by Fr. Gildea, was responsible for converting a number of voters to Sinn Féin. A thorough canvass was made all over the area by the young men in Sinn Féin and the Irish Volunteers. These were young men of the highest honour, with the result that the older men were ready to listen to them. Of course, the great majority of the people who supported John Dillon were decent men, but there was a rough element in areas where Sinn Féin was not strong. In Straide, P.J. Tucky, Ballaghaderreen, who came to address a Sinn Féin meeting there, was set upon and savagely beaten. In Kilmovee Parish, a Sinn Féin speaker was addressing an after Mass meeting when he was set upon and got such a beating that he was months recovering from the effects of it. In the parish of Carracastle the rough element had started to get unruly. All these people were conscious of the fact that the R.I.C. was friendly disposed towards them. Then the Irish Volunteers swung into action and maintained peace all over the area and also at the polling booths.

In East Mayo, the holdings were and are wretchedly uneconomic. During the years 1912-13-14, a number of landlords in the area sold their properties to the Congested Districts Board. On these estates were a number of large farms which the landlords had always let to graziers on the eleven-month system as the C.D.B. suspended all operations during the war years (1914-1918). These farms were to be divided amongst the smallholders after the war ended (Nov. 1918). Then, in October 1918, the British Government

introduced in the House of Commons a "Land for Soldiers Bill"; the object of this Bill was to give grants of land to soldiers who had fought in the World War. Straightaway the Parliamentarians inserted the following notice in the local newspaper circulating in East Mayo:

"Western People", December 14th, 1918, page 8 -

"Save the land for the people.

The Threatened New Plantation".

The great Irish Land Settlement is in danger, taking advantage of the dissension introduced by Sinn Féin. The Government has brought forward a New Land Bill which gives it power to sweep at a stroke the whole work of the Land Acts and carry out a new plantation of Ireland. The Government says the Bill is intended to provide land for Irish soldiers. The Bill itself says grants of land may be made to 'any man who has served in any of His Majesty's naval, military or air forces in the present war'. That includes English, Scottish and Welsh soldiers, indeed, soldiers from anywhere who have fought in the British army. Read sub-section 4 of section 1 for yourself. The resumption of any holding or part of a holding by the Land Commission on an estate purchased by them may be authorised for the purposes of this Act under sub-section 6 of section 5 of the Land Law (Ireland) Act 1881, whether the holding is or is not subject to statutory conditions.

Do you know what that means?

If there are no Irish members there to oppose it, the Bill is certain to become law.

What can Sinn Féin do to save you from this?

You can help to beat the Bill by electing a strong Irish Party that will go to Parliament and fight it.

Help to save the land."

To the eternal credit of the small farmers of East Mayo it must be said they did not pay the slightest heed to the above piece of propaganda.

All polling booths in the Kiltimagh-Bohola district were in Kiltimagh town. All the voters in the E.D.s. of Bohola and Toccananagh had to be brought to the polling booths on sidecars as it was mid-winter (14th December) and the distance was long; the job was a big one; nevertheless, all the voters were brought to the booths. Bohola Company, I.V. supplied a number of Volunteers to do police work outside booths in Kiltimagh and also to escort the ballot boxes to Swinford Courthouse. Fr. M. O'Hara, C.C. Bohola, Fr. M. Connolly, Senior Curate, Swinford, Fr. Andy Moran, C.C., Ballyvary, did good work during the election. Mr. T.C. Campbell, solicitor, Swinford, acted as agent for Mr. de Valera and he did his work very well.

One incident which occurred in Straide - a hot-bed of parliamentarianism - is worth recording. A public meeting, held in the village in support of Sinn Féin, was addressed by Cahir Davitt, son of Michael Davitt. This was a stunning blow to the opponents of Sinn Féin.

I was a member of the East Mayo Standing Committee of Sinn Féin, as well as being secretary of the Bohola Sinn Féin Cumann and captain of the Bohola Company, Irish Volunteers. Everything that had to be done to have the Sinn Féin organisation in perfect shape was done well by willing workers. The most difficult job of all was to bring the voters to the polling booths. In those days there were no polling booths in the rural areas and the voters in the parish of Bohola had to go to the town of Kiltimagh, an ^{average} // distance for each voter to travel seven miles to vote. There were very few motor cars in 1918, and we had not even

We had to use side-cars, but it was so well organised that every republican voter in the parish was brought to the poll. In many cases, old people who had not been out of their homes for a considerable period were brought out to vote. In the townland of Tranabontna an old lady was carried from her bed and brought on a side-car to vote. In addition to getting the voters to the polling booths, Bohola Company had to supply Volunteers to act as republican police at the booth.

At the conclusion of the poll, all ballot boxes in the East Mayo constituency were brought to Swinford Courthouse. I escorted the ballot boxes from Kiltimagh to Swinford. The votes were not to be counted for another fortnight so as to give sufficient time for the return of the postal votes. At this time, there was a large number of Irishmen serving in the British army in Britain and on the continent. As the R.I.C. were putting a guard on the ballot boxes day and night, it was decided that the Volunteers should do the same so as to prevent the boxes being interfered with.

In December 1918, there were not many companies of Volunteers in East Mayo. The threat of conscription had passed as the World War had ended. A large number of young men, who had joined the Volunteers when the British Parliament had passed conscription for Ireland, had left the Volunteers when the danger of conscription had passed. Naturally, the work of guarding the ballot boxes fell on the Swinford Battalion. The battalion adjutant, B. Egan (Swinford Town), who was an excellent officer, died in November 1918. His death was a severe loss to the battalion. He was the only active Volunteer in Swinford town up to that time.

There were only four companies in the Swinford Battalio

at this period - Kiltimagh, Bohola, Tullinacurra and Barnalira. These four companies did their part in guarding the ballot boxes during the whole fortnight. I did my share of the work, during both day and night. As captain of the Bohola Company I had to arrange to supply guards from Bohola Company at regular intervals. The Volunteers on night duty had to remain on the whole night; this was a great hardship. It was mid-winter; the old Courthouse was very cold and draughty and there was no chance of getting a warm meal even though we had cycled in from the Bohola district in the sleet and slush, for most of us a distance of about six Irish miles. Then, of course, we had to cycle home in the morning, cold and hungry. The Kiltimagh Volunteers were somewhat more fortunate, as they had Andy Cleary's hackney car to bring them there and home again.

A number of Volunteers had come from Clare to East Mayo for the election. They were excellent young men and gave splendid help; though they knew no fear, they were all men of wonderful tact. I will always remember a night I spent on duty with the famous Maurteen Devitt, who was afterwards killed in the fight for freedom in Co. Clare.

I want to make it perfectly clear that, although there were no Volunteers in Swinford Town in December 1918, this same town later gave some very fine officers to the I.R.A.

Polling in the general election took place on 14th December 1918, and resulted in a sweeping victory for Sinn Féin. Out of a total of 105 seats, Sinn Féin won 73, the Irish Parliamentary Party 6, and the Unionists 26. One of the most notable victories was in our constituency of East Mayo, where Eamon de Valera defeated John Dillon by almost two to one.

Joe Sheehy who, in the absence of Sean Corcoran in

arrangements. Johnny Walsh, Kiltimagh, was in charge of Kiltimagh, and I was in charge of Volunteer and Sinn Féin arrangements in Bohola.

After Dáil Éireann was established in 1919, my company (Bohola) had to do a certain amount of police duties. The Dáil Courts were not established until May 1920, but whenever blackguardism showed itself in the area, the Volunteers dealt with the offenders by courtmartial. This had the desired effect.

The first raid on my home took place in September 1919. Three R.I.C. men - Constables McMahon, McHugh and Peter O'Connor from Bohola Barracks - took part in it. Willie Moran an officer in the Bohola Company, had conacre oats in a farm near Bohola village and I was helping him to cart home the oats. It was a fine day. Two of the R.I.C. - O'Connor and McHugh - crossed the fields to my home, and McMahon cycled down the Foxford road. He met me when I was going for a load, but he made no effort to stop me. He continued on until he met O'Connor and McHugh returning from my home where they had been looking for me. The three of them then took up an ambush position in bushes that were growing on the side of the byroad on Flannery's land. When I was returning with the load of oats, I was told that the R.I.C. were waiting in the bushes for me. Just then, an old man, Jimmy Corcoran, carrying an empty creel on his back, came along. I told him the police were waiting for me up the byroad. I asked him if he would take the load of oats to Moran's for me. I will always remember the way he squared his shoulders and flung down the creel as he answered: "That's what I will, lad" and he did.

Burning of Bohola Barracks, May, 1920.

In April 1920, there were a few hundred vacated R.I.C. barracks in Ireland. These were the smaller barracks vacated by the R.I.C. for tactical reasons when the fight for independence started to get hot. In April 1920, G.H.Q. issued an order to the different units all over Ireland to destroy vacated R.I.C. barracks. The first order was misunderstood in some areas, as it was not taken to apply to barracks where the sergeant's wife and family were left in residence after the R.I.C. men had left. G.H.Q. issued a second order in May to have all such barracks destroyed. Needless to say, the burning of these barracks was in itself a simple enough operation. What shook the British was the outstanding fact that, although all the vacated barracks were burned on a particular night in April, and all barracks occupied by policemen's wives and their families were burned on a particular night in May, and though all officers, N.C.O.s. and Volunteers in the different districts all over Ireland where the barracks were located had advance information about the operation, not a whisper reached the enemy agents or the Castle until they read in their newspapers that all their barracks had gone up in smoke.

With regard to the burning of Bohola Barracks, when the hay which had been put into the barracks in preparation for the burning had been sprinkled with petrol, somebody walked in with a hurricane lamp. Immediately the place went up in flames. The late P.J. Carney, who was an N.C.O. in the Bohola Company, was inside the window in the dayroom of the barracks, where he had just finished sprinkling petrol, when the fire started. Surrounded by flames, he was unable either to reach the door or get through the barred window. Some Volunteers, having obtained a cart axle from Staunton's workshop, situated about 20 yards away, prised out the bars from

the window. Carney, so badly burned as to be unrecognisable, was brought to his home, where he was visited by a Swinford doctor who gave it as his opinion that he could not possibly live. The late Dr. Ferran was then called in and, as a result of his treatment, Carney made an almost complete recovery. A day or two after the burning of the barracks, the I.R.A. received information that Carney's house would be raided on a particular night. A party of I.R.A. in charge of Pa Dunleavy had to carry him out on a mattress to a shelter until the raid passed. As Carney had not completely recovered, he received permission in the late autumn to cross to England for medical treatment. On arrival in Rochdale he joined the I.R.A. company which existed there at that time. Captain of the company was Ned Ruane of Straide, and other prominent members were Carney, Ludden of Breaffy and Brennan of Swinford and Bohola district.

I would like to record here that P.J. Carney, while in Rochdale, was a most active member of that company. He took part in the burning of Balderstone Mills (cotton factory) and the destruction of the water main leading to the mills. In October 1920, he was one of the party which attempted to prevent Ellis, the hangman, who was a barber in Rochdale, from crossing to Ireland for the execution of Kevin Barry. Ned Ruane was in charge; the other members of the party were: P.J. Carney, John Ludden and ... Deasy. This operation took place on the way to Rochdale railway station. Unfortunately, Ludden opened fire too soon and the detectives accompanying Ellis returned the fire. The I.R.A. party succeeded in making good their escape. He was in charge of the guard of honour for Archbishop Mannix on the occasion of his (Archbishop Mannix) public appearance in Rochdale.

At a commemoration held at the graves of the Manchester

Martyrs in Moston Cemetery, outside Manchester, a firing party fired three volleys over the graves. Ned Ruane was one of the firing party and Carney with seven other men took up positions in the graveyard to cover off the firing party,

Late in December 1920, an Irishman in the English police approached Carney and told him to get out as fast as he could, that he was to be arrested that night. The result was that when the police arrived at his digs they found the bird flown. His then landlady, Mrs. McNally, 26 Whitehall Street, in a letter to Carney years afterwards, gave a graphic description of what happened during the raid.

After this narrow escape, he left Rochdale and joined Wigan Company under a man named Mannion, who was an ex-British army man. While in Wigan he took part in most of the operations carried out by the Wigan company, as was later verified by Captain Mannion.

Brigade Commandant Sean Corcoran, Martin Mooney, both of Kiltimagh; Tommie Kelly, Altinea; John Clarke, Tooromeen, also received severe burns during the burning of Bohola R.I.C. Barracks.

Capture of Ballyvary Barracks - 22nd August 1920.

In the old days, there was always a pattern in Lough-keeran on Garland Sunday, the last Sunday in July. The usual pattern took place on Garland Sunday 1920. An I.R.A. officer Eamon Corbett, and a Volunteer named Billy Brown, attached to Aughaliska Company, I.R.A., were at the pattern together and contacted an R.I.C. man named Breen who was also at the pattern. In the course of the conversation, he professed to be friendly to the I.R.A. He was asked what assistance he could give in the capture of Ballyvary Barracks. He stated

he was not going to resign from the R.I.C. as he was due for promotion and would not do anything that might endanger this. In the course of further conversation, he suggested that the best time to attempt capture of the barracks was during late Mass on Sunday, as most of the garrison went to this Mass. He said that he would do his utmost to have the back door of the barracks unbarred and that if news of the attack leaked out and enabled the military to take up positions in the barracks the previous night, that he would try to give a signal from the dormitory window.

Shortly after this, it was decided to go ahead with a plan to capture the barracks. Brigadier Sean Corcoran, Eamon Corbett, Sean Walsh^(myself), Willie Moran and Pat Cogger were in charge of the planning. At that time, G.H.Q. had made an order that the plans for an attack on enemy forces or barracks should be submitted to the brigade for approval before the attack was made. I met Michael McHugh and Dick Walsh, O/C. and a djutant respectively of the Mayo Brigade, who were at that time officiating at a brigade courtmartial in Kiltimagh, and got the plan ratified. On the night before the attack, the Bohola Company mobilised in Carragovan School, where the plan was explained and members informed of their positions. Quartermaster Pat Colgan and Volunteer Pat Cogger of Ballyvary, who was a member of the Swinford Company, were detailed to keep the barracks under observation on Saturday night. They were to be relieved early on Sunday morning by Pat Durcan and Tom Murray, who were to remain at their posts until the main body arrived and then join them. The Aughaliske Company, under Captain Mick Browne, were to barricade the Kellogues and Castlebar Roads and man these positions.

On Sunday morning, 22nd August 1920, the Bohola Company

attended early Mass and mobilised at Lisgorman Crossroads immediately afterwards. The main body were armed with shotguns and eight men of the rushing party had revolvers. On the way to Ballyvary, they detoured by the Grallagh road and came out on the Foxford-Ballyvary road at Boherglass. They continued towards Ballyvary till they reached McMun's house, where they parked their bicycles. They were joined by Brigadier Sean Corcoran who had arrived from Kiltimagh by car, and, a short while later, by a few more from Kiltimagh. The party left the road and moved for the cover of the rear wall. From here the two sections of the advance party rushed through a breach in the wall almost simultaneously and entered the barracks by the back door. Some of the main body, led by Pa Dunleavy, followed them with the least possible delay. The occupants were taken completely by surprise and offered no resistance. In a few minutes the barrack was cleared of arms and ammunition.

Shortly after the I.R.A. had left the mobilisation point at Lisgorman Cross on their way for Ballyvary, two British military lorries travelling from Swinford to Castlebar had an accident at Carragowan gates, and, but for this accident, it is probable that these lorries would have come up from behind on the I.R.A. party before it turned off at Grallagh. As it was, the lorries were turning the corner at the A.O.H. Hall when the I.R.A. party was actually inside the barracks. The distance from the hall to the barracks was about 200 yards. At this minute, a hostile woman, who was standing at Cafferty's shop, on seeing the military lorries, shouted "There are raiders in the barracks". She was seized and bundled into Cafferty's by Pat Colgan, who had remained in Ballyvary after he was relieved from his watch on the barracks. At this moment, the I.R.A. were ready to withdraw. On leaving the

barracks, they had to cross a large open field to reach the road. Had the British known of their presence and taken up positions along the wall, the I.R.A. would have been completely exposed to their fire.

The men who were manning the barricade on the Turlough road were more or less taken by surprise by the lorries coming from the Ballyvary direction, as they had been watching in the Castlebar direction. After an exchange of shots, they escaped across the hills.

A few hours after the raid, the British military carried out an elaborate raid in Carracastle, Carragowan and Lisgorman in the Bohola area. The shotguns used by the I.R.A. in the raid were dumped in Colgan's orchard in Carragowan. The arms and ammunition taken in the raid were dumped in Knockranny. None of these was found in the raid. During the course of the raiding the military came into Colgan's orchard. Colgan's had a number of beehives in the orchard and, at the time the military arrived, Colgan, who was suitably attired for the job, was actually removing the sections of honey from the hives. The military were heading straight for the dump when they were attacked by the bees and made a hasty retreat. The night after the raid, the hall in Ballyvary was burned by enemy forces. Shortly afterwards, a party of I.R.A., under Matt Durcan of Bohola, burned the barracks, which had been evacuated after the raid. Officer in charge was Eamon Corbett, who was attached to a South Galway Brigade and 'on the run' in the Bohola district, but held no rank there. Senior officer present was Brigadier Sean Corcoran. Rushing party No. 1 section: Eamon Corbett, Willie Moran, Tom Byrne and Jim Kelly. No. 2 section: Brigadier Sean Corcoran, Sean Walsh (myself), John Clarke and Mick Roche.

Dr. Pat Colgan accompanied the brigade to give first aid if necessary. Pat Lyons was in charge of the main body outside the barrack wall.

Ballymiles stabbing case.

In 1920, Dail Éireann established arbitration courts to undermine the authority of the British courts. The I.R.A. were charged with the operation of these, and, even though they risked severe punishment from the Tans if they were caught holding these courts, they eventually rendered the British courts ineffective. The support given by the people to the republican courts and their obstruction of the Black and Tans and disregard for the established courts was, in a large measure, responsible for this success.

A murder was committed in the Bohola-Ballymiles district in October 1920. The body of a young man named Kilgallon, who had been stabbed to death, was found on the roadside. Officers of the Bohola I.R.A. immediately started to make investigation. They visited the home of the dead boy and, while there, a party of R.I.C. men under D.J. McGarry, Swinford, in Crossloy cars, came to the area to conduct investigations. When they got as far as O'Connor Hill, being obstructed by an ass and cart, the driver sounded the horn. This was the first warning the I.R.A. had of danger, but it was sufficient in which to make good their escape. The R.I.C., having procured the shirt of the dead man, left the area.

Early in their investigations, the I.R.A. discovered that a group of boys, including young Kilgallon, had congregated outside Connor's publichouse where they indulged in some horseplay. No drink had been taken. These boys stated that Kilgallon had left for home before they did, but that was all they knew. Some of the I.R.A. officers

present inclined to the view that young Kilgallon had been stabbed by the British military. Then the late Dr. Ferran was called in to examine the body of the dead boy.

Immediately after examining the body, Dr. Ferran met me in the house of Fr. O'Hara, C.C., Bohola, and told me that young Kilgallon did not die as a result of a bayonet wound, but was stabbed with a pocket knife in a fight. (See Dr. Ferran's evidence as reported in "Mayo Man" 1920).

The I.R.A. then arrested all the young men, with the exception of O'Malley, who had been with Kilgallon outside Connor's publichouse on the night in question, and removed them to a derelict house in Ardacarra. Eamon Corbett was in charge of the party who made the arrests. On arrival at this old house, they made a full confession of all that happened on the night in question. Brigadier Sean Corcoran then ordered the arrest of O'Malley. This arrest was carried out by Volunteers Pat Durcan and Carroll, Bohola Company. The pocket knife which had been used was found on the dresser in the home of O'Malley. The prisoner was tried by a military court with the least possible delay. Brigadier Sean Corcoran was President of the court, Eamon Corbett and Dr. Comber were the members. It was held in a house in Carravard, Bohola. The I.R.A. company from Bohola was responsible for the protection of the court, which was a very serious undertaking at the time when the Tans and Auxiliaries were on the warpath. The I.R.A. scouts were posted at vantage points within a radius of a mile of the house in which the trial was being held. The military court was held in the same house and on the same night on which the Coroner's court was held. The same I.R.A. officers were in charge in both courts. I represented the State in the Coroner's court, and acted as prosecutor in the military court. Seamus Rowley, Swinford

Battalion, defended the prisoner when it was ascertained that the lawyer whom he had engaged for his defence would not attend. The findings of the court were that the prisoner be deported for life and that his father would pay the father of the dead boy £300 - £100 first instalment, and the remainder in four half-yearly instalments of £50. Half the £300 was paid, and the remainder was not demanded. The editor and proprietor of the "Mayo Man" attended the trial on behalf of his paper.

The "Mayo Man" did not carry a report of the military court; if it had done so it would have been immediately put out of circulation. The local I.R.A. had to obtain confirmation of the findings of the military court from G.H.Q. in Dublin. A period of six weeks elapsed from date of trial before confirmation reached the local I.R.A. The document confirming the findings was brought from Dublin by the late Joe Shoochy. The prisoner had to be kept in custody during the six weeks. The fact that the prisoner, who was detained in different parts of the battalion area, was able to work openly in the fields with his guards, and that no information reached the R.I.C., was clear proof of the loyal way the people co-operated with the I.R.A.

The first instalment was given to me and I paid it to the father of the dead boy in the presence of Hugh Carey, Bohola, and Michael King of Shraheens.

Carrarodger Farm.

A landowner named William Evans owned, in addition to his home farm at Ballylahan, a farm at Cornamoff containing about 100 acres. He also owned a farm of about 45 acres in the townland of Carrarodger adjoining the Cornamoff farm. As there were a number of uneconomic holdings near the

Carrarodger farm, the C.D.B., the British body then dealing with acquisition and division of land, set out to acquire the Carrarodger farm for division among local smallholders. When the case came into the British Land Court, this body fixed compensation at £1,000. Evans, being dissatisfied, appealed against the decision. After a few years, as the appeal was not being heard, the tenants began to get very impatient. The secretary of Bohola Sinn Féin, who knew all the circumstances of this case, made a proposition at East Mayo Comhairle Ceannairí Sinn Féin that a republican court be formed to deal with the case and all other cases which would arise. The court was set up in May 1920, having as its President Fr. Connolly, who was then senior curate of Swinford parish. Both Evans and the tenants agreed to have this case submitted to this court. H.C. Burke, solicitor, Ballina, represented Evans, and Conor Maguire - present Chief Justice - represented the tenants. Mr. Boland, auctioneer, Ballina, gave evidence of value on behalf of Evans. Compensation was fixed at £1,000, i.e., Evans' appeal was disallowed. The farm had then to be divided, and, as some of the tenants were entitled to more land than others and a new road had to be made, this represented a serious problem, only that Mr. Gavigan, B.E., the very efficient C.D.B. Inspector, stepped into the breach, made the road and divided the farm to the absolute satisfaction of everybody.

Incidentally, it is claimed that the first republican court in Ireland was set up in Ballinrobe; but, in all probability, it was preceded by the above-mentioned East Mayo Court.

My home was raided by an English murder gang in November 1920. This gang was led by a spy who knew the district well.

They came up the byroad at Moran's shop. Some of them were carrying parcels. They left the byroad at Hurtagh's land and crossed the fields to my home. One of them entered the house, revolver in hand, and tip-toed to my bedroom. Of course, I was not there; if I were, I would not be alive today to give this account. Actually, my father was on his knees in the kitchen saying his rosary when the would-be murderer entered the house.

During the summer of 1920, Tom Ruane, Vice O/C. of the battalion, and Johnny Walsh, captain of the Kiltimagh Company, seized a barrel of petrol at Kiltimagh railway station. When Sean Corcoran, battalion commandant, heard about it, he ordered them to return the petrol immediately. This they refused to do. The commandant suspended them and, in August 1920, they were tried by courtmartial for the offence. The court was held in Kiltimagh. The Brigade O/C., Michael McHugh, was President of the court, and Dick Walsh, brigade adjutant, was a member. The accused were found guilty and were ordered to hand back the petrol and to apologise to the Battalion O/C., Sean Corcoran. This they never did, with the result that neither Ruane nor Johnny Walsh had any further connection with the I.R.A..

Johnny Walsh was replaced as O/C. Kiltimagh Company by Tim Kolley, who held that appointment until March 1921, when he left the area. He was replaced by Pat Hyland, who remained O/C. until the truce. Patrick Dunleavy was subsequently appointed Vice O/C. of the newly-formed East Mayo Brigade and held that appointment until almost the Truce, when he was arrested by Black and Tans.

During the remainder of the Black and Tan war both Ruane and Walsh were completely outside the I.R.A. and this is quite

clear from the fact that when the brigade was reorganised the following month, September 1920, neither of the two held any rank or appointment in the brigade.

As I have already mentioned, the County Mayo was organised as one brigade until September 1920, when it was divided into four separate brigades. They were, north, south, east and west. Our area became part of the East Mayo Brigade. The following were the brigade officers:-

O/C. - Sean Corcoran; Vice O/C. - Patrick Dunleavy; Adjutant - Andy Flaherty; Q.M. - Joe Sheehy. Four battalions formed the East Mayo Brigade. They were:- 1st Battalion, Swinford; 2nd Battalion, Ballaghaderreen; 3rd Battalion, Kiltimagh; 4th Battalion, Ballyhaunis. I was appointed O/C. of the 3rd (Kiltimagh) Battalion. The other officers of the battalion were:- V/Comdt. - Paddy Cronnan, Kilkelly; Adjutant - Tom Sheehy; Q.M. - Vincent Fraine.

The following companies were in my battalion:- Kiltimagh Bohola, Kilkelly, Ballinamore; Aughaliska and Freenegleragh. Tim Molloy was O/C. Kiltimagh Coy. until March 1921, when he was replaced by Pat Ryland. Pat Lyons was O/C. Bohola until January 1921, when he resigned; he was succeeded by Willie Moran. Casey was O/C. Kilkelly until shortly before the truce, when he was arrested, and T.P. Johnston succeeded him. John Carroll was O/C. Ballinamore, and Mick Browne, O/C. Aughaliska for the whole period to the truce. Harry Mac Nicholas was O/C. Freenegleragh; he was later appointed brigade Q.M.

In January 1921, the Black and Tans stationed in Kilmovee, Ballaghaderreen, R.I.C. barracks received information that I was staying in the house of a man named William Burke, Grallagh, Straide. The garrison of Kilmovee Barracks

was composed of Black and Tans and R.I.C. Among the latter were two constables - McMahon, a Clareman, and O'Hanlon from Armagh - who had been stationed in Bohola until 1919 when Bohola barracks was vacated. Both of them knew me well. When they were about to set out for the raid, the Black and Tan in charge of the party told McMahon that he (McMahon) would enter the house first and that I was to be shot at sight. McMahon refused to accompany the party on these conditions and, thereupon, the Tans set on him and gave him a terrible beating, but he still refused. Constable O'Hanlon, who witnessed the beating, was then called on to go and he consented. The party set out and, on the way, billeted in Carragovan National School. They left the school after midnight and proceeded by the road to the house of Pat Gallagher, Grallagh, Straide. They made Gallagher get out of bed, light his hurricane lamp and lead them to Burko's. They made Gallagher knock on the door and ask for me. I was not there; actually, I had never slept there, although the owners of the house were very good friends of mine. Afterwards, hard things were said about Gallagher. I believe he was not a spy; that his action was due to human weakness, being threatened to do it at the point of the gun.

Eamon Corbett, whom I have already mentioned, was an officer attached to a Galway brigade. He was out in the Rising with Mellows in Galway in 1916. He was interned in Lincoln Jail with Sean Corcoran and others from May 1918, until the late Spring of 1919, when there was a general release of all prisoners held in connection with the alleged German Plot.

In the end of March 1920, he was travelling to Sligo by train. He felt that he was being shadowed by an R.I.C. spotter, so he got out at Kiltimagh and called on Sean

Corcoran and asked him if he could stay in the Kiltimagh area for a few weeks. Sean asked me if I could make him safe in the Bohola area. I said I would make him safe and that I would post sentries during his stay in Bohola. I met Corbett by arrangement in Lismirrane School on Easter Sunday night, 1920, and brought him to my home in Carracastle. At the time this may have been considered to be a mistake by some people, as my home had already been raided, but I had my reasons for bringing him to my home. First of all, I was an only child, so there was more room in our house than in other houses; secondly, the people in the district were almost all solidly behind the I.R.A. and could be relied on to give warning of enemy forces coming to raid my home in daylight. Sentries were posted at night. On one occasion, Comdt. Henry, Swinford, saw the enemy forces lining up outside the Swinford Town Hall. He discovered that they were getting ready for a raid on my place. He immediately got a car and reached Carracastle in time to warn everybody concerned.

Eamon Corbett took part in all I.R.A. activities in the Bohola area. In May he ceased sleeping in our house for safety reasons, as things were getting very hot by this time. We slept in different houses in the district, but wherever we slept, sentries were always posted, no matter how bad the night. The sentries were drawn exclusively from the Bohola and Aughaliska Companies, I.R.A. Sentries continued to be posted every night from Easter Sunday 1920, to March 1921; from then on we slept in the open. The sentries did their work cheerfully and efficiently, with never a grumble no matter how bad the weather.

During the Christmas of 1920, four or five of us were billeted in Roache's, Knockranny. A number of people in the Bohola district sent in a whole lot of dainties to the billet.

National Archives Act, 1986, Regulations, 1988

ABSTRACTION OF PART(S) PURSUANT TO REGULATION 8

**Form to be completed and inserted in the original record
in place of each part abstracted**

- (i) Reference number of the separate cover under which the abstracted part has been filed: WS 1733 /A
- (ii) How many documents have been abstracted: 1p
- (iii) The date of each such document: 11/7/58
- (iv) The description of each document:
US 1733 petition statement Jean Malick p 28

(Where appropriate, a composite description may be entered in respect of two or more related documents).

- (v) Reason(s) why the part has been abstracted for retention:
(c) Would or might cause distress or danger to living persons on the ground that they contain information about individuals, or would or might be likely to lead to an action for damages for defamation.

(These will be the reasons given on the certificate under Section 8(4).)



Name: (J. Moloney.)

Grade: Col.

Department/Office/Court:

Date: 7 March 2003.

We were invited to tea in Colgan's, Carragowan, on one of the Christmas holidays. On the way to Colgan's, accused of looting his haversack. I got rather annoyed that such a charge should be made against a Volunteer and I said so. A few nights afterwards, there was a dance in Shraheen School. When coming down the hill from the dance, I was walking with Willie Moran, 1st Lieutenant, Bohola Company. Suddenly confronted us, revolver in hand, with the hammer at 'full cock'. Addressing me, he said, "do you?". I didn't wait for any more. I caught his gun hand with my left hand and caught him by the throat with my right hand, put him on his back and disarmed him. I reported the incident to the Brigade O/C., Sean Corcoran. Fr. Michael O'Hara, who was C.C. in Bohola at the time and a great friend of the I.R.A., asked me not to have courtmartialled and that he would send for Fr. , who was C.C. in at the time, and that Fr. would get to go back to his own area and that everything would be all right. Fr. did come to Bohola, but refused to go back to his own area. He remained in our brigade area until shortly after the truce, when two officers from G.H.Q. and - came down and ordered him to return to his own area in

At this stage, Bohola Company had about 80 members. Pat Lyons, who, at this particular time, was O/C. Bohola Coy., and four other members of the company took sides with The other 76 remained in the company. In January 1921, Lyons resigned, and in February 1921, went to England. The other four men - Tom Murtagh, Mick Roach, H. Burt and Tom Ryan - severed their connection with Bohola,

In January 1921, a meeting of my Battalion Council was held in Michael Carney's house, Kiltimagh. Brigadier Sean Corcoran attended this meeting and announced that he intended forming a flying column composed of a section from each of the four battalions, and that I would be O/C. of the 3rd Battalion section and that the Battalion Vice O/C. would take charge of the battalion in my absence. The arrangement was that the column would strike in Ballyhaunis area and then fall back on Kiltimagh.

With the exception of the rifles captured in the Ballyvary Barracks, there were very few rifles in the East Mayo Brigade area; so, shortly after the meeting in Carney's, Sean decided to try and capture Ballaghaderreen R.I.C. Barracks. This attack was elaborately planned; rifles were borrowed from West Mayo; a mine was constructed; all roads leading to Ballaghaderreen were blocked within a radius of ten miles of the town. The attack was planned to take place on a night in February 1921. A section of the South Sligo Brigade was to hold a position opposite the barracks. The South Sligo men were not in their allotted position when the East Mayo men arrived. The attack failed. It is right to say that the Sligo men arrived later in the night.

After the failure of the attack on Ballaghaderreen Barracks, Sean decided to strike in the Ballyhaunis area. He went to the Ballyhaunis area the last week in March 1921, to make the necessary arrangements, accompanied by Maurice Mullin, brigade adjutant. He was leaving Curley's house, Crossard, on the morning of 1st April 1921, when he ran into a raiding party of Tans. He pulled his gun to fight his way through, but he was shot from behind by a Black and Tan and fell mortally wounded. May God rest his soul.

I would like here to give a brief outline of his career and to pay humble tribute to the memory of a gallant Irishman. Sean Corcoran was born in Kiltimagh and received his education in the local national school. His parents owned a grocery and spirit business in the town. After leaving school, Sean entered the business of D.J. Murtagh and Son. Early in 1916, he took over premises and carried out some renovations, with the intention of starting in business himself. Immediately after the Rising of 1916, he was arrested and interned. He was released in the autumn of that year, and immediately threw himself into the work of reorganising the Irish Volunteers. He was elected first captain of the Kiltimagh Company, his capacity for leadership being recognised from the outset. In 1917, he was elected commandant of the Swinford Battalion and held that appointment until 1919 when he was appointed O/C. of the newly-formed Kiltimagh Battalion, which position he held until Sept. 1920, when he was appointed brigadier of the newly-formed East Mayo Brigade. He was arrested early in 1918 and brought to Sligo Jail. He demanded political treatment and, when his demand was refused, he went on hunger-strike and was released unconditionally. He was again arrested in the Spring of 1918 tried for a political offence and sentenced to a term of imprisonment. This time he was sent to Dundalk Jail where he received political treatment. Before his sentence had expired, he was transferred to Lincoln Prison, the allegation being that he was implicated in the famous German Plot. With his fellow prisoners, he was released in the Spring of 1919. He immediately resumed command of his battalion and threw himself into the work of training and organising the I.R.A. Dáil Éireann, having been established in January 1919 the Irish Volunteers became subject to it and so became the Irish Republican Army. He took a leading part in the plannin

and capture of Ballyvaughan R.I.C. barracks and he received very severe burns at the burning of Bohola R.I.C. Barracks. It is only true to say of Sean Corcoran that he was everything that an I.R.A. commandant should be.

I knew him intimately and I will always be proud of the honour of having served under him. He was deeply religious, a member of the Pioneer Total Abstinence Association, a fearless soldier and a loyal comrade. He was loved and respected by all his comrades, with the exception of the few whom he considered it his duty to have courtmartialled. May the sod rest lightly o'er him! Faddy Mullins replaced Sean Corcoran as Brigade O/C.

In June 1921, the West Mayo Flying Column came into the Aughaliske Company area (3rd Battalion area). Captain Mick Brown, O/C. Aughaliske Company, arranged for billets and reported their arrival. I visited them and arranged that they would spend a night in the Grallagh-Carracastle district. During the stay of the column in this district Volunteer Lambert became very ill with rheumatic fever. This was a serious problem. Bohola Company arranged with Dr. (now Surgeon) MacCarthy, M.O., Swinford Hospital, that Volunteer Lambert would be removed from the Grallagh-Carracastle district to the house of James Cummins, Carragolta which was much nearer to Swinford. Dr. MacCarthy came to Cummins's house and brought Volunteer Lambert to Swinford Hospital, where he was put into a secret ward and nursed back to health by Sister Eithne MacCarrick. Volunteer Lambert was brought on a sidecar from the Grallagh-Carracastle district by Volunteers Pat Durcan and James Murray, Bohola Company. When Dr. MacCarthy was getting Volunteer Lambert past the British sentries at Swinford, he described Lambert as a Mr. Roache from the Bohermore area.

Ambush of military at Bohola.

An incident that happened in the Bohola area in June 1921, shows the length to which the British were prepared to go to enable their courts to function. The British Quarter Sessions were due to be held in Swinford in June 1921. It was vital, from the British viewpoint, that Ryan, the Registrar of the Court, who lived in Castlebar, and Coolican, the Clerk of the Court, who lived in Ballina, would be in attendance at the court. I received an order from the Brigade Adjutant, Joe Sheehy, that, if at all possible, Ryan and Coolican should be prevented from reaching Swinford Courthouse. The court was to open in Swinford on a Monday. On the Sunday, with members of the Bohola Company, I occupied an ambush position on the Bohola-Ballyvary road, but Ryan did not come. It was then assumed that he would travel early on the following morning. It was then arranged that on Monday morning members of Bohola and Aughaliske Companies would occupy an ambush position on the Bohola road, and that a section of the Bohola Company, under Captain Willie Moran, would proceed to Callow to intercept Coolican. The Quarter Sessions were due to start at 11 a.m. and, as Ryan had not appeared, it was decided about noon to withdraw from the ambush position. About half an hour after the I.R.A. had withdrawn, Ryan, accompanied by seventeen lorries of Auxies and Tans, came along. They came with such care that, when they came in view of a place that would give cover to an ambushing party, some of them left their lorries and reconnoitred the position before they attempted to pass. A small building, known as "The Pidgeon House" in a clump of trees on raised ground, about 50 yards from the road, came in for very special attention.

Captain Moran intercepted Coolican and seized his papers.

The fact that the British sent seventeen lorries to escort their Court Registrar to Swinford shows how anxious they were that their courts should function.

It was subsequently discovered that the Volunteers had been observed while they lay in ambush on Sunday afternoon, and their position was reported to the military in Castlebar.

In June 1921, a few members of the Kilkelly Company, under the command of Mick Moffett, who later became Vice O/C. Brigade, carried out a sniping attack on Kilmovee R.I.C. Barracks and, as a result, the barrack was evacuated. One Black and Tan was wounded in this attack.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Witness: _____

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