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COSANTA.

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 451

Witness

Captain George Power,
Hebron,
Lower Mounttown,
Dun Laoghaire,
Co. Dublin.
Identity.

Member of Fermoy Company Irish Volunteers, 1917;
Adjutant and Intelligence Officer, Cork Brigade,
1919-1921.

Subject.

- (a) Activities of Cork Brigade, 1917-1921;
- (b) Capture of General Lucas and two other British Officers, March 1920.

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

Nil

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ORIGINAL

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STATEMENT BY CAPTAIN GEORGE POWER,

Hebron, Lower Mounttown, Dunlaoghaire, Dublin.

I joined the Volunteers as a boy when the local Company was re-organised in Fermoy in July 1917. It was a small company of about fifty men and youths, consisting of all the members of the Sinn Fein Club which had already been in existence for a short time.

Shortly after the re-organisation an election of officers was held, and Liam Denn was elected Company Captain, Larry Condon 1st Lieutenant, Liam Lynch 2nd Lieutenant and I was appointed Company Adjutant.

Weekly parades were held, and simple foot drill was practised. In conjunction with the Sinn Fein Club, the local villages were visited occasionally on Sundays, and joint parades took place with the company of the particular village visited. At this time no arms were available, but, in spite of this, the Volunteers were enthusiastic and serious.

Drilling and parades went on until the conscription crisis arrived in 1918. Meanwhile the ranks of our company had swelled to about 100 men. As the crisis developed, an effort was made to collect arms by raids on the houses of loyalists, etc., and about a dozen shotguns were collected and half a dozen revolvers of various calibres. A quantity of gelignite was also got, and some progress was made in the making of crude canister bombs.

At the height of the crisis I went on the run with the other officers of the company, and Liam Tobin arrived in the area from Dublin and was very helpful in organising the collection of arms, etc. A train which was suspected of carrying ammunition between Mallow and Fermoy was held up and some .303 ammunition was obtained.

The conscription crisis passed and on September 9th all the companies adjacent to Fermoy were grouped into a battalion and known as the Fermoy Battalion. It consisted of Fermoy, Kilworth, Araglen, Rathcormack, Watergrasshill, Glenville and Ballynoe companies. Martin O'Keefe, Ballynoe, was appointed O/C. Mick Fitzgerald, who later died on hunger-strike in Cork, was Vice-Commandant. Liam Lynch was Adjutant, and I was Quartermaster. Lynch was the driving force in organising the battalion and in helping to develop the backward companies. Battalion Council meetings were held weekly, and at least one of the companies was visited by a battalion officer each Sunday.

1919.

At this time all Cork consisted of one brigade, but in December it was decided to organise the city and county into three brigades, to be known as Cork I, II and III. Accordingly a meeting of the battalion staffs of Fermoy, Castletownroche, Mallow, Millstreet, Newmarket, Kanturk and Charleville was held at Fermoy on 6th January 1919. The meeting was presided over by Tomas MacCurtain. Lynch was unanimously elected Brigade O/C., Dan Hegarty of Mallow as Vice-Commandant, E. Murphy of Lombardstown as Adjutant, and I was elected Q.M. Shortly afterwards, I exchanged positions with the brigade adjutant and I also carried on the duties of Intelligence officer.

The area of the Brigade was from the Cork-Waterford border on the east, to the Kerry border at Rathmore on the west, and from Milford in the north to near Donoughmore in the south.

At this time the strength of the brigade would be about 2,500 men, and the armament would be roughly a dozen rifles, two dozen revolvers and about 200 shotguns. The British strength consisted of the elements of two Infantry brigades,

with the headquarters of one brigade at Fermoy and the other at Ballyvonare. Fermoy was our Brigade headquarters, which was not an ideal arrangement, as Fermoy was situated at the extreme eastern end of the area. Organisation of the brigade, however, proceeded under difficulties for the ensuing nine months, as Sundays only were available for visiting battalions. Brigade Council meetings were held monthly in Mallow, and a brigade staff officer visited the battalions also once each month.

The first important operation of the Brigade was initiated by the Fermoy battalion, when permission of the brigade was sought to capture Araglin police barracks. Plans were submitted to the brigade, and on a Sunday late in March, Lynch and I made an inspection of the locality surrounding the barracks. Plans were approved for this attack, and on April 4th the barracks was rushed by a small party of picked Volunteers from the Fermoy battalion led by Mick Fitzgerald. Six rifles, a few revolvers, ammunition and grenades were captured, and the barracks destroyed.

In July of the same year, Lynch and I discussed the possibility of attacking and disarming a party of British soldiers in Fermoy. G.H.Q. was approached for approval and, after some correspondence, permission was secured, on the understanding that casualties to either side should be avoided. Finally, it was decided to attack a church party of soldiers who went to the Wesleyan Church on each Sunday for Service. This church was situated at the extreme eastern end of the town about half a mile from the New Barracks (there were two military barracks in Fermoy, known as the old and the new barracks; also an aerodrome).

On Sunday, September 7th, thirty Volunteers, armed with six revolvers, the remainder having short thick clubs,

mobilised; also two motor cars were employed to cut off the party from the rear and to remove captured rifles. I was in charge of one of the cars and Lynch was in charge of the other. Larry Condon was in charge of the main attacking party, consisting of himself and five Volunteers, including Mick Fitzgerald and J. Fanning, O/C. Fermoy Company. Scouts signalled the approach of the church party and, at a pre-arranged signal, the six Volunteers proceeded on the footpath in the direction from which the soldiers were coming. The church party was rushed and eighteen rifles captured after a short struggle. The casualties were one British soldier killed and six wounded. Lynch was the only casualty in the Volunteers, receiving a flesh wound in the shoulder.

The reaction of the British to this attack was to run riot in the town on the same evening, smashing windows and looting a number of shops. The British unit engaged was the East Kent Regiment, known as "The Buffs".

With Lynch on the run and able to devote himself whole time to the brigade organisation, the efficiency of the brigade developed. Brigade headquarters was now established at Glenville, about nine miles south-west of Fermoy, although all correspondence still came to me in Fermoy, but I visited the O/C. two or three times per week for discussions, etc.

It was about this time that the Brigade Vice-Commandant, Hegarty, became ill, and I succeeded him as Brigade Vice-Commandant. Maurice Twomey, the Adjutant of the Fermoy Battalion, succeeded me as Brigade Adjutant.

Early in March Aghern police barracks was attacked, but as the explosives were unsatisfactory, this attack proved unsuccessful.

It was during this month that the British received information connecting me with the Fermoy attack, and for

about four weeks I went partly on the run by not sleeping at home. On April 1st, I was surprised on a visit to my parents' house, and arrested by combined forces of police and military. Receiving permission from the officer in charge to go upstairs to collect some clothes, I slipped into a corner bedroom, locked the door from inside and jumped out a side window and got clear away. I immediately joined Lynch and we set up Brigade headquarters at Burnfort, near Mallow. From here, as a result of enemy activity, we moved to Lombardstown, six miles west of Mallow, about a month later.

At this time, Michael Fitzgerald, who was now O/C. of the Fermoy Battalion, was in Cork jail, having been arrested for his connection with the Fermoy attack. He was on hunger-strike as a protest against his detention without trial for many weeks. Realising that Fitzgerald would probably die as a result of this hunger-strike, the brigade decided to capture the most senior of the British officers in Fermoy and to hold him as a hostage for Fitzgerald. A close watch was kept on the movements of the senior officers of the British garrison in Fermoy by the local Volunteer Intelligence officers. Daily, and even more frequently, Intelligence reports were made to the Brigade by these officers. Eventually a report was received that the O/C. of Fermoy, General Lucas, with two other officers, had left the barracks one morning in June for a day's fishing on the River Blackwater, east of the town, with only the General's personal servant as escort. We appreciated the opportunity thus offered, and plans were immediately made to carry out the capture of these officers.

Liam Lynch, Sean Moylan, Patrick Clancy and I proceeded by car from brigade headquarters to a place called Kilbarry on the banks of the Blackwater, three miles east of Fermoy,

where, it had been learned, that the British officers had arrived earlier that day. The fishing hut was quietly occupied, and the General's personal servant was arrested and handed over to a few of the local Volunteers who had been mobilised for the purpose of keeping the place under observation. We then proceeded to search for General Lucas and the other two officers who were known to have accompanied him. One of the British officers was encountered a short distance from the fishing lodge. Taken completely by surprise he offered no resistance and was led back a prisoner. Shortly afterwards, the second officer was found just as he had tied up after the day's fishing, and was treated likewise.

There was still no trace of General Lucas, and, as it was getting late in the afternoon, it was decided that Paddy Clancy and I would proceed, one up and the other down, the river in search of the missing officer. Coming through a small wood I ran unexpectedly into General Lucas as he was making his way back to the lodge. After a moment's mutual scrutiny, I gave the order "Hands up". The British General hesitated for a moment, but, dropping his fishing rod, he complied. He allowed himself to be disarmed and marched back to the lodge.

At this stage we were not quite sure of the identity of the first two prisoners, so I named the I.R.A. officers to General Lucas and asked if he had any objection to naming his two comrades, to which he replied: "None". Thereupon General Lucas pointed out Colonel Danford of the Royal Artillery, and Colonel Tyrrell of the Royal Engineers, adding: "What do you propose to do with us?" He was informed that the three were to be held prisoners pending further instructions from I.R.A. headquarters. In the meantime, facilities would be accorded him to communicate with his relatives.

The first part of the plan, having been brought to a successful conclusion, it was necessary to remove the captured officers well away from the Fermoy area without delay as it was realised that the reactions to this incident might be swift and far-reaching. Accordingly, it was decided to use, as well as the Ford car in which we had travelled, the British officers' large touring car, for which a Volunteer driver was quickly found. The arrangement now made was that Sean Moylan and I would drive with Colonel Tyrrell in the Ford car, and Liam Lynch with Paddy Clancy would accompany Lucas and Danford in the other car, the Ford to travel 50 to 100 yards ahead of the other car, but to keep in touch as far as possible. Making a detour south of Fermoy, we set off on the journey west.

For a time all went well. The Ford maintained the appointed distance, while we kept a watchful eye on the following car. We were now approaching the main Fermoy-Cork road near the village of Rathcormac and the Ford had temporarily lost contact with the second car at a wide sweeping bend of the road. By this time the British officers had begun to realise their position, and their instinct led them to make a bid for freedom. Lucas and Danford held a brief conversation in a strange language, subsequently discovered to be Arabic, and, at a pre-arranged signal between them, they sprang simultaneously on Lynch and Clancy. The attack was so sudden that the I.R.A. officers were at first taken at a disadvantage and almost disarmed before they realised what had happened. In the melee the driver lost control of the car, crashed into the ditch and rendered himself unconscious. It was, therefore, an even fight between the two British and the two I.R.A. officers. The struggle between Lynch and Lucas was particularly severe, as both were strong-built, well-trained men, about six feet in height. In the first onslaught Lucas had got on top of Lynch, making

frantic efforts to wrench the gun from him, and had all but succeeded when the door of the touring car gave way. They both rolled on to the roadway, still struggling, until finally Lynch wore down his opponent and the General shouted: "I surrender".

Meanwhile, Colonel Danford and Paddy Clancy were fighting desperately, with Colonel Danford on top; he had almost succeeded in throttling the I.R.A. officer, when Lynch, turning round, took in the situation at a glance, shouted to the British officer: "Surrender or I shoot", but Danford ignored the command and maintained his grip on Clancy's throat, whereupon Lynch fired and hit Danford on the face, making him collapse over his opponent.

Meanwhile, we had proceeded in the Ford car some distance, oblivious to the fact that a life and death struggle had taken place in the other car, and it was some minutes before we realised that something was amiss and decided to turn back. On rounding the bend of the road, we saw the big touring car lying almost in the ditch with the driver still unconscious at the wheel. Nearby, on the grass verge, Colonel Danford was lying in a pool of blood, with General Lucas bending over him rendering first-aid, while Lynch was attending to Paddy Clancy, who seemed to be badly shaken.

A hurried conference was held on the roadside, at which it was decided to release Colonel Tyrrell in order to attend to his comrade, and to send the Volunteer driver of the wrecked car for a doctor in the nearby village of Rathcormack. It was further decided that Lynch, Moylan and Clancy would drive in the Ford car with General Lucas as prisoner to brigade headqrs. and that I should remain and make my way to Dublin as well as I could, to personally report to G.H.Q.

I narrowly escaped capture that night, as I made the mistake of staying in a house too near the scene of Lucas's attempted escape, and only got away as a result of noise made by two dogs when the raiding party was surrounding the house.

However, I travelled by train to Dublin next day, where I stayed for a week. I met Michael Collins and Cathal Brugha, who questioned me closely about the position in North Cork, etc.

During my visit to Dublin I stayed at a house in Heytesbury St. (Moloney's, I think) and I slept several times at Vaughan's Hotel with M. Collins, G. O'Sullivan, L. Tobin and T. Cullen. I discovered later that Tobin and Cullen had been detailed to look after me as they accompanied me everywhere. We had lunch every day at the Wicklow Hotel which seemed to be a sort of midday rendezvous for a number of the G.H.Q. people. Vaughan's seemed to be a meeting place at night or after dark. In my interview with Mulcahy I was closely questioned about organisation, methods of recruiting, etc., whereas Brugha concerned himself with morale and necessity of developing the fighting in the brigade. He was also anxious to know if the Volunteers co-operated with and took an interest in Sinn Fein and the political side. Both Collins and Brugha were pleased at the capture of Lucas - the former instructed me that Lucas was to be held pending instruction from G.H.Q.

While in Dublin somebody told me that Collins was trying to arrange an exchange with the enemy of Barton (who was in jail at the time) and Lucas. This was being done through O'Neill, Lord Mayor of Dublin.

On my return from Dublin, again by train, I had to change at Mallow to wait for a small train to get me to Mourne Abbey. While waiting on the platform I had the misfortune to be

recognised by Lucas's personal servant and was forced to take to the fields from Mallow Station by entering the train I had just left and leaving from the opposite side as the train was moving out from the platform.

The reaction of the British to Lucas's capture was again to smash up the town of Fermoy and to loot a number of shops.

At this time plans were afoot for the formation of a brigade flying column which would also be a sort of officers' training camp; but delays occurred, first in July when the officer appointed to be column O/C., Paddy Clancy, was killed when trying to escape from a house that was surrounded, and in August, Lynch himself was arrested at a meeting in the City Hall in Cork, at which Terence McSwiney was also arrested. Lynch was released after a few days, owing to the fact that the British failed to identify him. After that experience he never again went unarmed and instructed "wanted" officers in the brigade to do likewise.

Finally, plans for the formation of the brigade column were completed and, in September, a small column of fourteen officers, all of whom were on the run, with Ernie O'Malley as O/C. and myself and Lynch, assembled at Glenville. Intensive training, including a brief musketry course, was carried out, supervised by Ernie O'Malley. It had been planned that this column would train and fight in each battalion area successively, being reinforced by men in whichever battalion area any operation would be attempted.

Two ambushes were laid in the Fermoy battalion area, one near Rathcormac and the other near Glenville, but neither materialised.

During our stay in Glenville, I visited Fermoy to investigate a report that a shopkeeper named Longhurst, who

was English, was a paid spy. On being satisfied that there were some grounds for this report, I had the man arrested and brought to brigade headquarters at Glenville with the column. A courtmartial, presided over by Ernie O'Malley, tried this man. I was prosecuting officer. It was proved that a number of British officers had disguised themselves in Longhurst's house and proceeded to the houses of two of our supporters - Geoffrey Rice of Straw Hall, and L. Fant of Glenarousk - threatened to shoot the owners if they did not disclose whereabouts. Rice's house was set on fire, but total destruction was prevented with the help of neighbours. Longhurst was sentenced to banishment from Ireland for life, which he promptly obeyed.

Brigade headquarters now moved with the brigade column and the battalions were informed accordingly, as weekly reports had to be submitted by them, or even more frequently when necessary.

As Intelligence officer, I had the principal post offices in the area organised and received copies of military and police cypher telegrams regularly, the keys of which were furnished by G.H.Q. We also had contacts in Buttevant, Ballyvonaire and both military barracks in Fermoy. It was our contact in the New Barracks, Fermoy that gave us the information regarding Lucas.

The Brigade column next moved into the Mallow Battalion area and went into billets at Mourne Abbey. Shortly after our arrival in Mallow, the Battalion O/C., Tadhg Byrne, suggested the possibility of capturing the military barracks in Mallow. This suggestion was examined and found to be feasible in view of the information supplied by two Volunteers who were working in the barracks at the time as civilian painters. Their names were R. Willis and J. Bolster. This

was a small barracks, garrisoned by one officer and fifty men of the 12th Lancers. Our plan was to arm the two Volunteers with revolvers, with which they would hold up the guard at a precise day and moment when the sentry on the front gate would be held up from outside.

Plans were completed, and in the early hours of the morning of September 28th, the brigade column quietly entered Mallow and took possession of the Town Hall. About two hundred men of the Mallow battalion, in charge of Sean Moylan, were employed on road blocking, scouting, etc.

Half the garrison of the barracks left at about 8.30 to exercise their horses. Precisely at 9 o'clock on the date mentioned, Ernie O'Malley presented a letter to the sentry at the front gate and, while the soldier on guard read the address, O'Malley disarmed him. At the same time, the two Volunteers inside the barracks held up the guardroom and, as the sergeant in charge attempted to resist, he was shot and killed. The disarming of the sentry was followed by a rush into the barracks by Lynch and six men. I led the remainder of the column into the barracks and rounded up the garrison, which offered little resistance.

Our booty consisted of two Hotchkiss guns, 25 rifles, several thousand rounds of .303 ammunition, with swords, lances and miscellaneous equipment.

Having set fire to the barracks, the column retreated on foot to billets at Mourne Abbey. The reaction of the British was, as happened at Fermoy, to shoot-up the town of Mallow.

We next moved into the Newmarket battalion area. Here a report was received that every day British troops travelled, mostly in two lorries, regularly between the military post in Kenturk and the outpost in Newmarket. It was decided to attack this party.

On the morning of October 6th, the column, reinforced by about fifty men of the Newmarket battalion, led by Sean Moylan, lay in close ambush on the roadside about two miles north-west of Kanturk. At about 10 a.m. scouts signalled only one lorry coming from Kanturk. A farmcart was immediately pushed out from a gateway to serve as a road-block, but this was not necessary, as the driver was hit in the first volley as he entered the ambush position. Although the British de-trucked and attempted to put up resistance, the fight was over in a few minutes and the ten occupants of the lorry surrendered. The British unit was a machine gun company.

Immediately after this, Ernie O'Malley was recalled to G.H.Q. and Paddy O'Brien was appointed Column O/C., but brigade headquarters still remained with the column.

Fearing reprisals by the British on the civil population, as had happened in Fermoy and Mallow, we moved into Kanturk with the column for three successive nights, but in this instance the British did not retaliate.

We next moved with the column into the Charleville battalion area and laid one ambush which did not materialise.

The Millstreet battalion was now our objective, in order to round up four bank robbers. We had been requested to do this by G.H.Q. as these men had got away with £18,000 and there was a suspicion that the robbery was carried out by the I.R.A. In the space of a few days, the four robbers were rounded up and most of the money was recovered and sent on to G.H.Q. While the column was in the Millstreet area, I took a few men into the town where we had an encounter with the Black and Tans. Here the column suffered its first and only casualty when Paddy McCarthy of the Newmarket battalion was killed in a brief street fight.

In November, we decided to break up the brigade column

and to form an A.S.U. in each battalion. This was now possible with the number of rifles that had been captured since the formation of the brigade, together with a consignment of sixteen which had been sent on by G.H.Q. recently. A number of rifles had been captured as well in minor actions not mentioned in this statement. The numerical strength of the battalion columns varied more or less with the number of rifles available although some battalions had men armed with shotguns besides the riflemen. The average strength of a battalion would be about 24 with the battalion O/C. in almost every instance as column commander.

The responsibility for carrying on the fight within the brigade was not left entirely to the battalions, however, as will be seen later in this statement. When opportunity offered for the undertaking of larger operations, a number of battalion columns were grouped into a brigade unit.

At the end of November, the hardships of the previous six months began to tell on me personally, and on December 2nd I was compelled to go into hospital at Fermoy, where I spent the whole month recuperating from a septic wound and an all-round low condition of health.

During my stay in Fermoy Hospital it was twice raided by military, but thanks to the loyalty and resourcefulness of the nuns, I escaped detection, although the enemy seemed to have been informed of my presence there. Later on, during the Truce, when I was an I.R.A. Liaison Officer, the British Brigade Major at Fermoy referred to these raids in the course of a conversation I had with him.

On December 10th, a section of the newly-formed Fermoy battalion column brought off a successful ambush on a British party in a lorry at a place called Leary's Cross near Castlelyons. This column had laid two unsuccessful ambushes in the course of a week, after which the column commander had decided

to rest his men. A section of ten men were retiring across the fields to a safe billeting area south of Fermoy, when they saw a lorry-load of British troops approaching Leary's Cross. Anticipating the route the lorry would take, they arrived at a bend of the road almost simultaneously with the lorry. As there was no time to make dispositions they attacked at once. At the first volley the driver was hit and crashed his lorry. The occupants, although outnumbering the Volunteers by nearly two to one, scattered through the fields on the opposite side of the road. In the ensuing chase, nine British soldiers surrendered and were disarmed.

By the end of 1920 our Intelligence System had improved considerably, and all the battalions had something to report two or even three times in each week. These reports were forwarded mostly by cyclist dispatch riders, but in the Fermoy area, horsemen had to be employed, in 1921 especially, owing to the intensive patrolling of the British from the Fermoy garrison, who employed artillery horses as cavalry. The enemy appeared to depend on information supplied by loyalists who were organised in some area with a view to reporting movements of armed or wellknown wanted men. For instance, in January 1921, a number of houses in the area south-west of Fermoy were raided by small enemy parties on the day following that on which the brigade O/C. had stayed in a particular house.

The manner in which these loyalists were organised came to light early in 1921, when a British officer from the Fermoy garrison was captured near Watergrasshill disguised as an ordinary tramp. In his possession was found a notebook containing a list of known loyalists in the area that it was proposed to contact. The capture of this officer, whose name was Lieutenant Vincent, was reported to the brigade, and I left immediately for the Fermoy battalion area to interview

him. On arrival, however, I found that the British officer had been killed. He had made a desperate attempt to escape during an enemy round-up in the Glenville area on the morning following his capture.

In the Charleville area the British sent out soldiers who posed as deserters and these, after staying in a few friendly houses, disappeared, only to re-appear with British raiding parties some days later, pointing out the houses in which they had stayed. The brigade decided to take strong measures against these tactics, but it was only when half a dozen of these so-called deserters had been executed that the practice ceased.

In January, I took up duty at Brigade headquarters at Mourne Abbey. Shortly afterwards, the Brigadé O/C., Liam Lynch, left for the Fermoy area, and on January 11th he represented the brigade at a meeting held in Glanworth, which was presided over by Seamus Robinson, and at which the Cork, Tipperary and Waterford brigades were represented. This meeting was called for the purpose of having an inter-change of views on the position in the south and, arising out of it, proposals were submitted to G.H.Q. suggesting the formation of two southern divisions under G.H.Q. officers.

On January 26th, the Newmarket battalion under Moylan brought off an ambush at Toureengariff on two large touring cars containing R.I.C. officers, one of whom was Divisional Commissioner Holmes; one other was also a high-ranking officer whose name I cannot remember. Both R.I.C. officers were killed and several wounded. A complete capture was effected by the I.R.A.

On February 11th the Millstreet column of 26 men, armed with 6 rifles and 20 shotguns, brought off a successful ambush west of Rathcool on a party of military travelling by rail

between Mallow and Killarney. One N.C.O. killed and six soldiers wounded among the enemy. I.R.A. had no casualties.

On February 15th, Mallow battalion column was surrounded by a large force of British while in ambush position at Mourne Abbey, and extricated themselves after a severe fight in which they lost eight men killed and eight taken prisoners. The British casualties were unknown. Several minor operations took place also during this month, including an attack by the Castletownroche battalion on military near Doneraile, when the enemy admitted four casualties.

On March 3rd, the Fermoy battalion column attacked a police patrol between Ballyduff and Fermoy, which surrendered after a loss of one killed and one wounded.

It was in this month that the report reached brigade headquarters that the British brigade commanders at Fermoy and Ballyvonaire respectively were to undertake inspection tours in their areas. I proceeded to the eastern end of the brigade to arrange for the Castletownroche battalion to lay an ambush on the Cork-Fermoy road through Ballyhooley, and for the Fermoy battalion to lay an ambush on the Cork-Fermoy road near Glenville, but both these ambushes proved abortive. The interception of the Brigade O/C. at Ballyvonaire, however, was more successful, and a brigade unit, consisting of one Hotchkiss gun and 65 riflemen, of whom 25 men came from Kerry No. 1 Brigade, laid a successful ambush at Clonbannon. This action took place on March 6th, and in the ensuing fight which lasted about one hour, the British Brigadé O/C. at Ballyvonaire - General Cummings - was killed. Sixteen soldiers were also killed and an unascertainable number wounded. This fight is fully reported in my article on Liam Lynch in the Cosantoir of September 1945, Vol. V, No. 9.

Meanwhile, brigade headquarters had moved on to Lombardstown, but enemy activity in this area compelled us to move further west, until eventually we sought the protection of the Kanturk battalion column, which at the time was located at a place called Nadd, south of Banteer.

On March 13th, a special Intelligence report from the Mallow battalion reached us at brigade headquarters, indicating that preparations were on foot by the British at Ballyvonaire and Buttevant for a large round-up operation. As a result of this information, the Charleville battalion was detailed to cut a number of roads in the area on the same night. The morning of March 14th broke with such driving rain that outposts from the column at Nadd had been compelled to draw in to outhouses for shelter. Meanwhile, troops from the enemy posts in Cork, Ballincollig, Ballyvonaire and Buttevant, who had been on the move since the previous night, de-trucked three to four miles from Nadd, and gradually closed in on their objective. By 7 a.m. a number of the Kanturk column were surrounded in their billets; three were killed and two wounded; the remainder of the column scattered and got away.

In the confusion, it was not until an hour later that word reached brigade headquarters of the situation, allowing little time to pack files and documents. As Lynch and I, with the assistant brigade Q.M., M. Lynch, and the son of the owner of the house were leaving the house, we exchanged shots with the British who had been closing in on the house. We were able to make good our escape as a result of the trenches which had been cut the previous night by the Charleville battalion, as this had delayed the enemy.

Information which led to this round-up was supplied by a member of the column, a British ex-soldier named Shiels,

who had deserted to the enemy at Ballyvonaire a few days previously. This fact had not, however, been reported to the brigade.

After this round-up the brigade moved further west to the Millstreet area.

In April the battalion columns continued the offensive, and on April 10th the Castletownroche battalion brought off a successful attack on a police patrol at Kildorrery, resulting in two R.I.C. being killed. The same battalion also captured a lorry of British soldiers between Fermoy and Glenworth, a British officer being killed and several wounded.

Arising out of the recommendations put forward to G.H.Q. the previous January, a meeting was held, on G.H.Q. instructions, on April 26th at Kippagh near Millstreet, for the formation of the 1st Southern Division. Lynch was appointed Divisional O/C. and immediately approached me regarding the vacant command of Cork 2 Brigade. I pointed out, however, that I was too young and inexperienced for such an important position, and, after a discussion, it was agreed that Sean Moylan, who was now attached to the brigade as well as being O/C. of Newmarket battalion, would be a more obvious choice. Moylan accepted the position, but was captured in less than a month, to be precise, on May 16th, during a large-scale enemy round-up. I then agreed to take over command of the brigade, and was formally appointed by Lynch, with Paddy O'Brien as brigade vice-commandant, and Dan Shinnick as brigade adjutant.

Several minor engagements took place during this month, including an unsuccessful ambush near Kildorrery, and the disarming of small parties of British soldiers at Ballyvonaire and at Effin.

On June 16th, another brigade operation under the brigade vice commandant, Paddy O'Brien, took place near Rathcool, when a party of Auxiliaries from Mount Leader, Millstreet, were ambushed. For this action, 61 riflemen, 50 shotgun men, and a Hotchkiss gun were mobilised from the western battalions, viz: Millstreet, Kanturk, Newmarket and Charleville. Seven mines were laid and these worked fairly successfully. Two of the four lorries were disabled, and after a fight lasting nearly one hour, our men had to break off the engagement owing to shortage of ammunition. The enemy casualties in this fight were unknown. It had now been decided to divide Cork II into two brigades, to be known as Cork II and Cork IV. Cork II was to consist of Fermoy, Castletownroche, Mitchelstown and Lismore (Co. Waterford) Battalions. Cork IV was to consist of Mallow, Kanturk, Millstreet, Newmarket and Charleville Battalions under Paddy O'Brien.

The splitting up of the old Cork II Brigade was notified to the battalions at a brigade meeting held in Lombardstown on July 10th, when the units were also advised regarding the Truce, which had been arranged for the following day.

On July 10th the last action in Cork II was carried out by the Castletownroche battalion column, when a party of British soldiers was attacked at Mitchelstown with the loss of two killed and a number wounded.

The numerical strength of the brigade at the Truce was over five thousand active Volunteers.

Signed: _____

George Power

Witnessed: _____

William J. Smyth

Date: _____

Nov 22nd 1950

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21
BURO STAIRE MILEATA 1913-21
No. W.S. 451