

W. S. 1,026
ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21
BURO STAIRÉ MILEATA 1913-21
No. W.S. 1026

ROINN  COSANTA

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS.

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 1,026

Witness

James Clarke,
Main Street,
Ballybunion,
Co. Kerry.

Identity.

Member of Irish Volunteers, Ballybunion,
Co. Kerry, 1914 - ;
Intelligence Officer, G.H.Q. 1918 . . .

Subject.

His associations with Austin Stack, Michael
Collins and other leaders in the struggle
for independence 1917 - .

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

Nil

File No. S.2318

Form B.S.M. 2

ORIGINAL

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STATEMENT OF JAMES (JIM) CLARKE,

Main St. Ballybunion, Co. Kerry

I was born on 25th March 1874, at Dowth in the Co. Meath. My mother's maiden name was Keelan and she was a cousin of John Boyle O'Reilly. An uncle of mine - Pat Keelan, an associate of John Boyle O'Reilly, with two other men of the same locality managed to get away in a cattle boat to England and from there to the U.S.A. shortly after the arrest of J.B. O'Reilly. He lived for a time in the Rocky Mountains, but later lived in Navasota, Texas, where he was often visited by J.B. O'Reilly and other exiles after his (O'Reilly's) escape from Van Dieman's Land on an American Whaler called the Catalpa or Gazell. O'Reilly later became editor of "The Boston Pilot".

It was the arrest and transportation of J.B. O'Reilly that stirred the people of the locality to become nationally minded.

I went to school in Slane for a short period. As a young boy I went to serve my time as an apprentice to the grocery trade in Slane. I later worked in Drogheda at the same business. While in Drogheda I became a member of a Gaelic football club.

In the year 1889 I went to work in Dublin for a firm named Reilly Brothers, Grocers and Provision Merchants. Amongst the customers at Reilly's at the time were Michael Cusack, Jim Boland, Patsy Cregan and Peter Maher - later boxing champion. All of these men were extreme Gaels, and Cusack and myself became great friends.

Cusack and myself were instrumental in forming a Gaelic football team which was confined to grocers' assistants only. We called the team "Stars of the West". I represented this team on the Co. Dublin committee of the G.A.A. We had no club rooms but used to meet at Flanagan's of Strand Street.

Flanagan was from Co. Galway, while Cusack was from Co. Clare. Flanagan gave us the use of a room when required. As Flanagan's was a licensed premises it was not considered safe to meet there, so we moved to the Trades Hall, Capel Street, on the invitation of J.J. Clarke, who was connected officially with the Trades Council.

After about four years at Reilly's I left and went to work for Messrs. Miller's, Wholesale Wine Merchants, at Thomas St., where I stayed for about three years. During that time my late brother, Phil, and other associates, mostly Co. Meath men, formed a G.A.A. Club with premises at the rear of Mullett's publichouse in Bridge St., opposite the Brazen Head Hotel. Opposite to the club there was a dance hall which was run by a man named Devine. In this dance hall I was instrumental in starting a boxing club which was run in conjunction with the dancing. The result of all this was that Mullett - later sentenced to penal servitude over the deaths of Cavendish and Burke in the Phoenix Park, - and I became close friends and on busy nights in his pub I always gave him a hand.

Years later when Mullett and Fitzharris, who was known as "Skin the Goat", were released from Maryboro Prison, they arrived at Inchicore railway station on their way into town. They had just left the station when they saw a huge vehicle coming towards them. They became very frightened and thought the end of the world had come. The vehicle was actually an electric tram which they had not seen before.

Mullett, some time after, told me of the circumstances that led to their arrests. He said that about a year after the deaths of Cavendish and Burke a man named John Mallon, who was Chief of Police in Dublin, and who was responsible for the investigations into the deaths, was walking along Dorset St. one night when a heavy shower of rain started.

Mallon took shelter in an open doorway; while there he heard two women scolding one another overhead. One woman said to the other in the course of the rebukes "I am not going to be married to a murderer anyway". Needless to say, he listened to this and conveyed the news to a policeman who was passing a short time afterwards, but did not leave the doorway himself. The policeman returned with help and placed the two women under arrest. They were taken to Mountjoy Police Station where they were questioned separately. One of the women was a sweetheart of Tim Kelly, also connected with the Phoenix Park incident, and was engaged to him. The other woman was named Alice Carroll and was the one who turned Queen's evidence which led to the arrests and sentences. The two women worked at Williams & Woods Jam Factory.

Some time after starting my first boxing club I, on the invitation of Patsy Cregan, John O'Hanlon and others, decided to open a gymnasium at the European Hotel which had been closed for some time. We occupied the back portion of the hotel and had it converted into a first class gymnasium. A man named Pat Dowling, a Dublin man, who was at one time lightweight champion of Ireland, acted as boxing instructor.

We had a very big membership of the younger generation. Apart from the boxing exercises, Cusack and other Gaels gave lectures on Gaelic matters and historical talks in connection with Ireland's struggle for freedom in previous years. A man named Jack Nowlan, who had been sentenced to life imprisonment in Canada for an attempt to blow up a bridge connecting Canada and the U.S.A., was associated with this club. At this time a detective sergeant named Stafford was very busy watching this club and other clubs dotted around the city centre. All of these clubs were of a nationalist type and were run as football or hurling clubs. They were frequented by men of Gaelic tendencies.

In the year 1897 I paid my first visit to Ballybunion with a man named Mick Timmons who was training for a boxing match at the time. Apart from the sport of boxing, I also became interested in coursing and horse racing and soon after became a bookmaker. It was at a coursing meeting - I am not sure of the place - that I first met Austin Stack. He was then only about 15 years of age. I saw a boy this day trying to see the progress of the dogs over the heads of people much taller than himself. I lifted him up on to a stand so that he could see the race. One of my friends then informed me that his name was Austin Stack, son of Moore Stack.

Some years later Austin injured his knee in a football match. It was I who took him to Dublin to Surgeon Thomas Myles - a great sportsman. While in Dublin I took Stack to Flanagan's, Jim Mullett's, and to meet George Roche, captain of the Young Ireland Football Club, and others.

According to Dinny Callaghan - a harness maker and native of Kenmare, who was in charge of the Volunteers during the fighting in the North King St. area in Easter Week 1916 - he arrested Sir Thomas Myles in the area. Myles protested, saying he was an army surgeon. Dinny's reply, according to himself, was "Whoever or whatever you are, you are my prisoner now". By the way, Myles was very good to the prisoners at that time who were around the Richmond Hospital. He gave them all the protection possible.

In 1901, I came here to Ballybunion to live. Stack was then the leading light in extreme Gaelic matters in the area, having taken his father's place in such things.

I continued my bookmaking career through the years up to 1914 and saw the growth of the G.A.A., Gaelic League, Sinn Fein and I.R.B. In the I.R.B. I was the courier of confidential letters between the various centres at the time. Some of those men were Tom Kenny of Craughwell, Co. Galway,

Cæthal Brugha, and a Galway man named Flanagan who had a publichouse in Dublin. This publichouse was much frequented by Gaelic speakers, among them my friend Cusack.

In 1914, the Volunteers were formed in Ballybunion. I joined at the first meeting. They only lasted about twelve months and ceased to exist after a speech by John Redmond pledging the support of the Irish Volunteers in the defence of Ireland in the war which was then in progress.

In the year 1915, the adherents of the Sinn Fein movement increased considerably. Those of us who were bookmakers decided among ourselves to do what we could to help the cause. Among other things we supported the manufacture and sale of Irish matches, the manufacture and printing of betting tickets and other accessories used for betting in Ireland, all of which had previously been manufactured in England.

A brother of mine, Phil, who was a few years younger than me, was killed in action at Stephen's Green, Dublin, on Easter Monday 1916. He was a co-founder member of the Irish Citizen Army and a friend of James Connolly. He was also prominent in the labour movement in Dublin. He left a wife and nine orphans, the eldest 15 years and the youngest 5 months. The eldest boy went out with him with a rifle in Easter Week, but was sent home on Easter Monday.

Joe McGrath and myself were appointed executors to look after the family. Needless to say, there was very little money in the funds to help give them a weekly allowance. Some time later Joe McGrath was arrested and sent to Lincoln Prison. The man appointed in his place as executor was a Father Ryan of Meath St., Dublin. These nephews of mine were later sent to St. Enda's. Joe McGrath was afterwards very good to them and in later years gave them good appointments in the Hospitals Sweep. These appointments they carried out very well.

Shortly after Easter Week 1916, I was appointed collector for the 1916 Dependants' Fund. I started at Galway Races and later collected at all the other racecourses in Ireland. I ^{with others} was instrumental at this time in having a special race meeting run at Baldoyle for the benefit of the fund. It was called the White Cross meeting. The total sum collected for the fund at the meeting ran into several hundred pounds.

I have in my possession a letter dated 2nd April 1917, from Austin Stack while a prisoner in Lewes Prison after his arrest in 1916 - copy attached - see Appendix A. I had obtained a pass to call and see him there, but met with an accident and was not allowed to travel by my doctor. I sent the pass to Mick Flavin the M.P. for Kerry at the time. Mick Flavin went in on my pass and saw Stack.

I have also in my possession a copy of a letter signed by a Mr. Findlay of the British Legation in Norway. It is as follows:-

"British Legation,
Christiania,
Norway.

"On behalf of the British Government I promised that if through information given through Alder Christenson, Sir Roger Casement be captured either with or without his companions the said Alder Christenson is to receive from the British Government the sum of £5,000 to be paid as he may desire.

"Alder Christenson is also to enjoy personal immunity and to be given a passage to the United States should he desire it.

Signed: Findlay
H.B.M. Minister"

This copy of the original letter is, I understand, one of several in existence. As well as I can remember, it was Austin Stack who gave it to me as a souvenir.

When the Volunteers were reorganised in Ballybunion in 1917 I immediately joined up. We had in all about 100 men in the company. A man named Ted Houlihan became the first company captain. Moss Beazley was 1st Lieutenant, and a man named John Stack became 2nd Lieutenant. I took part in the usual parades and drills that year.

I continued at my occupation as a bookmaker and, in 1917 when Cathal Brugha visited Ballybunion in connection with the reorganisation of the Volunteers in Kerry, he was sent to me. Brugha - as Charles Burgess - was champion rope climber of the British Isles at the time.

It was early in 1918 when I was asked by Collins and Stack to keep a lookout for revolvers, rifles and ammunition in my travels throughout the country. It so happened that a bookmaker of my acquaintance at the time, named Charlie Scott, and a man named Jim Fitzpatrick, asked me one day if I wanted any "stuff". I said: "Yes, can you get me any?" I was staying at the Clarence Hotel at the time. A few mornings after the query by Scott and Fitzpatrick, I saw a cab pull up outside the hotel. The jarvey stepped out followed by Scott and Fitzpatrick; they took from the cab a very large hold-all which the three men proceeded to carry into the hotel. In a loud voice Scott asked for me. The porter came up to my room and told me that a gentleman below had some "stuff" for me. I told the porter to take it up. When the hold-all was opened it was found to contain about four revolvers and a large quantity of ammunition. I contacted Collins at once and, in half an hour, it was taken away. A half hour later Stack called and informed me that the "stuff" had been put safely away.

Scott, a bookmaker, had no religion and was from north Co. Down - he was the first man to introduce bananas to Dublin, having first started in Dublin selling them from a handcart in the streets.

Stack about this time was in Belfast Prison. I visited him several times and took in messages from Mick Collins and Harry Boland. He was allowed to receive writing pads and other things such as papers which I took into him. Among the men in Belfast Prison at the time with Stack were Jim Crowley, Tadhg Brosnan, Fionan Lynch and Jack McKenna,

a Listowel man. In Belfast Prison at this time was a friendly warder - Rooney, I think, was his name, whose wife was a Kerry woman to whom on one occasion I took a message from Stack. Rooney had at the time been suspended. A son of his was later sentenced to death.

After Stack's release from Belfast Jail, he and I lived for a short time at Mrs. Gordon's at Lansdowne Terrace, Dublin. She was widow of a District Inspector Gordon, R. I. C. Cathal Brugha, Lord Mounteagle, Dr. Cassidy and others often visited Mrs. Gordon's. Lord Mounteagle's family name was Spring Rice. His daughter Miss Spring Rice was closely associated with Mrs. Gordon in the furtherance of the Irish Cause. Dr. Cassidy was a brother of Mrs. Gordon and was Master of the Coombe Hospital. He was killed in a hunting accident some time later.

I usually stayed at the Clarence Hotel when in Dublin, but about this time went to live with a man named Danny Garry near Cabinteely. Garry was a Co. Clare man who had spent some time in the U. S. A. and had made a lot of money there. He had a lodge for a season or two in Ballybunion. He was on the standing committee of the Irish Coursing Club. As he was lonely he asked me to live with him instead of at the Clarence. While living with Garry I was instrumental in introducing to him, at his request, Austin Stack, Harry Boland, Michael Collins and others. Garry invited all of these men to live with him. He had special keys made and gave one to each man so as they could come and go as they pleased. Garry was educated at Castleknock College, and about this time invited Stack, Collins, Boland and others to a dinner on a Sunday evening which he had arranged. The invitations were for the purpose of introducing the President of the college, a visiting bishop to the college, and others to the leaders of the I. R. A.

On the Friday night before the Dinner Garry, who was a moody man, cancelled the dinner. This caused some upset to Collins, Stack and the other leaders, as they had cancelled an Army Convention which had been called for the same day so that they could meet the people concerned. Some time after this incident Garry became hostile to the leaders. I am not sure how it developed, but it appears that a local Parish Priest in whom he confided, had something to do with it. The leaders, however, ceased to call at the house afterwards.

Some time this year I boarded a train one day at the Broadstone for the purpose of attending a point-to-point races at Longford. On this particular morning I saw a large group of R.I.C. on the platform; in the centre of ~~the~~ group was a young man who was being taken into one of the carriages accompanied by a ~~number~~ member of the R.I.C. When the train arrived in Mullingar I got a glimpse of the prisoner and discovered to my surprise, that it was the redoubtable Mick Collins. The train split at Mullingar, my portion as well as the prisoner's portion going on to Longford. At Longford I was the last passenger out of carriage and saluted Collins as he stood in the centre of his R.I.C. guard. I asked him if he was hungry or could he do with his breakfast. I went to the hotel near the Courthouse and arranged with the manageress to have breakfast sent into Collins at the Courthouse. A boy who had been sent with the breakfast came back and told me he would not be allowed into the Courthouse. I went out and asked for the Inspector in charge and met the County Inspector who knew me as a bookmaker. He immediately gave permission for the breakfast to be taken into Collins. I took the boy with the breakfast into the Courthouse, a table was provided and I sat down and chatted with Collins while he ate the breakfast. Collins was being tried for a "seditious speech" he had made some time earlier at Granard, Co. Longford.

Shortly after this incident I wanted to attend a meeting in Tralee. I applied for the necessary permit to the military authorities in Tralee. The following is a copy of the reply:

The stamp is not legible now.

No. 1

Mr. J. Clarke,
Ballybunion;
Co. Kerry.

The Commandant regrets that he cannot grant you a pass to enter Tralee Special Military area.

Signed: Geo. P. Aingin ?
for Commandant,
Tralee Special Military Area
Tralee 3.8.1918.

My clients on the racecourse around this time included Stack, Collins, Joe O'Reilly, Joe McGrath, Dan Breen, Tom Cullen, Joe Reilly and a Colonel Fullerton. The last-named was son of James Fullerton of Ramelton, Co. Donegal, a well-known coursing figure. Colonel Fullerton was a great friend of mine and was attached to Marlborough Barracks - now McKee Barracks - on the North Circular Road, near the Cattle Market. He, from time to time, in the course of conversation often mentioned impending events which I passed direct to Stack, or often through Tom Cullen or Joe Reilly, attached to I.R.A. intelligence in Dublin, to Mick Collins. Tom Cullen was a Wicklow man and was drowned later at Lough Conn. Other clients of mine were associated with the Castle, Vice-regal Lodge and the heads of the R.I.C. From these people I collected some very important information in my travels through the country; this information I passed principally to Stack, Collins or Boland, or to Cullen or Reilly. In fact, I became Intelligence Officer for G.H.Q. at the time.

At the time of the hunger strike in Mountjoy Prison in the year 1919 I was staying in the Gresham Hotel. On one of these days I had a visit from James McMahon - later

Sir James - who was then, I think, Chief Secretary of Ireland. He was accompanied by Cardinal McRory. He introduced me to the Cardinal saying at the same time: "We want you to contact Stack so that the hunger strike may be called off". I protested that I did not know where to locate Stack, but said I might be able to find him. Eventually I found Stack and told him the story; he was not very pleased. Next day Stack came to the Gresham and met McMahon and the Cardinal. I was not present at the interview, but later the same night, to the best of my recollection, I was told by McMahon that Stack, much as he would like to do so, could give no assurance that the strike would be called off. I had previously met McMahon through his brother, Joseph, who was a school inspector.

Some time in the year 1919 I went to Paris for a holiday. Sean T. O'Kelly was there at the time and Austin Stack had arranged for me to meet him there. Sean T. was very kind to me. We spent a long time together seeing the sights. I had previously met Sean T. at some of the Sinn Fein meetings.

Among the patrons of the Gresham during my stay there were a number of Bishops and Clergy as well as Cardinal McRory and James McMahon. McMahon was a very good Catholic and was very intimate with all the clergy who visited the hotel. Into the hotel there came one day an Englishman named Cope or Coup. He had been sent over by the British Cabinet to contact the Cardinal and Bishops as well as McMahon to try and settle the Irish question.

Cope attended race meetings occasionally and I got to know him very well. He particularly wanted to contact Collins or Stack. He probably did contact some of the clergy as well as McMahon, but, as far as I am aware, he never succeeded in contacting Stack or Collins. In fact, on one occasion Collins visited the hotel and saluted both of us

as we stood at the entrance. Collins eventually got to know Cope well, but I don't think he ever spoke to him. Cope stayed at the hotel for a period of about six months.

A short time after his appointment as Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, Lord Wimbourne contacted a great friend of mine named Phil Sullivan who was President of the Irish Coursing Club at the time. Sullivan lived in Limerick and was solicitor to the Limerick Co. Council as well as being solicitor to the then Bishop of Limerick.

When Wimbourne met Sullivan, he told him (Sullivan), who informed me, that he (Wimbourne) was told by certain Cabinet Ministers in England that if he was to become acquainted with the Irish people he should contact the coursing fraternity of Ireland. This was Wimbourne's reason for contacting Sullivan.

To initiate Wimbourne into Coursing circles, a special meeting was organised in his honour at which the Wimbourne Cup was put up. Subsequently Wimbourne nominated most of the dogs in Ireland at the principal Coursing meetings which he attended. He was received very favourably by the people as a sportsman. Tremendous crowds attended these meetings as a result of Wimbourne's presence. He usually stayed at Lord Adare's and attended meetings on horseback.

Sullivan, as I have said, was a particular friend of mine and on his many visits to Ballybunion always visited my premises. While at the bar one day in company with Johnny Fitzgibbon, a Justice of the Peace, farmer and merchant of Askeaton, Co. Limerick, my wife got on to him and said: "With all your influence with the Lord Lieutenant you can't get Stack out of Lincoln Jail where he is rotting away". Sullivan there and then agreed to do what he could and next morning went to Dublin by train, hired a cab at Kingsbridge Station and went straight to the Viceregal Lodge, being held up about ten times on the way. Eventually he got there and was immediately received by the Lord Lieutenant.

Sullivan explained his mission and thereupon Wimbourne said "Yes, provided Stack goes to Australia or one of the other dominions, I will have him out in a fortnight". Sullivan returned next day to Limerick where I met him by appointment. He told me the result of the interview which I was to have conveyed to Stack. I had a good laugh, but conveyed the news to P.J. Cahill, a director of the "Kerry Champion", Tralee, and Brigade O/C., North Kerry. Needless to say, Stack was not told, but some time later, after his escape, he thanked Sullivan for his trouble.

After Stack's escape, he went to stay at the home of Batt O'Connor, No. 1 Brendan Road, Donnybrook, Dublin. This house was much frequented by the leaders at the time. On occasions I called there with messages from one or other of the I.R.A. officers in the country. I had a particular message from Paddy Cahill, Brigade O/C., North Kerry, to deliver to Stack there one night - it was a night or two after Stack's escape. When I got there it was near 8 o'clock and curfew was on at the time. I had to stay there for the night as the "boys" would not let me return to my hotel in case I would be arrested.

Some time later my friend Sullivan told me how Lord Wimbourne had expressed a desire to see the County Kerry and wanted to know if it would be safe for him to do so. I told Stack and the "boys" and it appears they gave it the O.K. Wimbourne, accompanied by Sullivan, later visited the convents and a bacon factory at Tralee, returning to Limerick by Castleisland.

In the National Bank at Castleisland at the time was a manager named Connolly. Connolly, for some time previously, had been in trouble with the Directors of the Bank over his political affiliations. On my suggestion, Sullivan asked Connolly, who was a greyhound owner, if he would let the

Lord Lieutenant nominate one of his dogs in the Cork Cup, to which Connolly agreed. Subsequently, this particular visit and nomination got great prominence in the English Press. Connolly immediately after received an increase in salary together with an apology from the Directors. His staff also received increases in salary.

Shortly after the above incident Sullivan met Stack, McDonagh and Dan Breen at a coursing meeting for the Irish Cup. He took them around and showed them the coursing ground and a nearby wood into which the hares escaped. The Lord Lieutenant was present at the meeting accompanied by Lady Nora Hastings. She had previously informed Sullivan that the "assassins" had come to the meeting and had warned the Lord Lieutenant that he should be careful. Sullivan told her that there was no cause for alarm, that the "boys" were all decent fellows and that they did not want to cause any trouble. When passing Lady Nora and the Lord Lieutenant accompanied by the "boys", Sullivan said to her: "These are the "boys", all decent fellows".

Incidentally I named one of my own dogs after Stack's convict number which was Q.224. This dog won the Tipperary Cup, a 64 dog stake, among other prizes.

The burning of Kilmorna House and the execution of the owner, Sir Arthur Vickers by the I.R.A. early in 1921, caused a great sensation in the area at the time. Vickers was married to a sister of Pierce Mahony, who was an M.P. at one time and resided about six miles from Listowel. Parnell at one time used visit Pierce Mahony; they were great friends.

When Stack later married Mrs. Gordon he spent his honeymoon at my mother's house in Monknewtown, Co. Meath. My mother had left Dowth by this time.

Stack and his wife visited Monasterboice, Tara, Hill of Slane, St. Columbkille's birthplace at Kells, Dowth - where J.B. O'Reilly should have been buried - and other places.

My mother was over 90 years of age at the time.

In Austin Stack's Will he left me his gold cuff links presented to him by Mrs. Gordon when he married her.

Signed: _____

James Clarke
(James Clarke)

Date: _____

18 Oct 54

18 Oct.54.

Witness: _____

John J. Daly

(John J. Daly)

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Appendix "A"

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21	
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A3.12. In lieu of a visit.

In replying to this letter, please write on the envelope:-

NUMBER Q 224 NAME A. Stack,
Lewes PRISON.

The following regulations as to communications, by Visit or Letter, between prisoners and their friends, are notified for the information of their correspondents.

.....

The permission to write and receive Letters, is given to prisoners for the purpose of enabling them to keep up a connection with their respectable friends and not that they may be kept informed of public events.

All Letters are read by the Prison Authorities. They must be legibly written and not crossed. Any which are of an objectionable tendency, either to or from prisoners, or containing slang, or improper expressions, will be suppressed.

Prisoners are permitted to receive and to write a letter at intervals, which depend on the rules of the stage they attain by industry and good conduct; but matters of special importance to a prisoner may be communicated at any time by Letter (prepaid) to the Governor who will inform the prisoner thereof if expedient.

In case of misconduct, the privilege of receiving and writing a Letter may be forfeited for a time.

Money, Books, Postage Stamps, Tobacco, Clothes, &c., should not be sent to Prisoners, for their use in prison, as nothing is allowed to be received at the Prison for that purpose.

Persons attempting to clandestinely communicate with, or to introduce any article to or for prisoners, are liable to fine and imprisonment, and any prisoner concerned in such practices is liable to be severely punished.

Prisoners' friends are sometimes applied to by unauthorised persons, to send Money, &c., to them privately, under pretence that they can apply it for the benefit of the prisoners, and under such fraudulent pretence, such persons endeavour to obtain money for themselves. Any Letter containing such application, received by the friends of a prisoner should be, at once, forwarded by them to the Governor.

Prisoners are allowed to receive Visits from their friends, according to rules, at intervals which depend on their stage.

When Visits are due to prisoners notification will be sent to the friends whom they desire to visit them.

No. 243.

(8254)

.....

2. 4. 1917.

My dear Jim & Mrs. Clarke,

I should feel glad to address you this letter only for the sad news, which I received a few days ago, of your child's death. Nicholas told me, in a couple of his letters, of its having come into the world, of its baptismal name, and repeated that Mrs. Clarke and the little one were both doing well. I was not prepared to learn that the wee girl had been taken from you. But such it appears was the Will of the Almighty. He has given and He has taken away. There is no need for such as me to dwell on the Goodness of Him who is Mercy itself, when writing to devout Christians such as yourselves. I know the first thing both of you did was to thank God for all He has left to you of the Gifts which He has already bestowed; and who knows, of us poor mortals, what further blessing He may have in store for you, deservedly in my judgment. And, if my poor prayers be heard, you, who are so happy and prosperous, will be even more so

during the rest of your lives, and may same be very very long.
As to the dear babe its eternal happiness is assured.

I trust the health of both of you my friends is very good, and I shall be in expectation as to this, so, if it be not too much trouble, you will write me very soon after receipt of this.

I daresay Nicholas lets you know from time to time how I am going along - or rather I suppose he repeats occasionally - "Q 224 still strong in wind limb & mind" for such has been the case ever since I came to "reside" in the land of Sasanac. The early sensations were not pleasant I must admit. For instance the feeling I experienced when the gates closed behind me on entering Dartmoor "for life" was the opposite to warm. But I gradually settled down to the conditions of Prison existence, and it is my opinion, given fairly good health, the human animal can accustom itself to anything. I would have been able to do my full time - in Dartmoor even - if God so will it. You may not know that "life" convicts have a chance of getting out, after twenty years; that is what I mean by "full time". The words bore a slightly different meaning in the old footballing days, but I can truly state that I was prouder when I received my sentence than after any victory Kerry ever won in the Gaelic Athletic arena, and I should have felt prouder still had they considered me worthy of the extreme penalty. I have been getting away from what I wished to state, which is that I am in the very best of health and spirits. In fact I would advise the majority of those men, young & middleaged, who go to Ballybunion for holidays to recruit health and incidentally to drink Mrs. O'Sullivan's much diluted whiskey, and eat his indigestable dinners, to come to one of the English resorts, Dartmoor, Portland or Lewes, for a "short stay": and, if they take my gratuitious (being as I am I cannot charge the usual 6/8d) advice,

one trip over here will do them more benefit than many summers inhaling Ballybunion ozone and imbibing and consuming that fair "citys" liquors and many course dinners. Of course they would have to read such fiction as can be got in Prison libraries instead of listening to recitals of the same from the lips of William; but perhaps they might not be the worse off morally for this in the long run. How is William by the way? and Mrs. O'Sullivan, and Nellie Quill (as I shall still call her) not forgetting the redoubtable Mary? Remember me to all of them if you don't mind. You must tell me when you write how your brother Phil's family are getting on. He had a very large number of children had he not? I trust they will be well provided for, though nothing which could be done in this way could compensate for the loss of a parent. They have a grander legacy, however, than anyone of us has had. If patriotism in itself be a virtue, and Cardinal Mercier says it is, what greater proof of its existence in a man than the fact that he died for his native countrys cause. And so also with poor Dick. And with Paddy Shortis. One of my fellow prisoners knew Paddy and I am told he died along with The O'Rahilly. May God grant their Souls Eternal Rest and Peace as He surely will to those of all who have died in the performance of Acts of Virtue. I only hope their friends will not have sorrow overmuch at the passing away of such men from our midst. They are with God & are to-day praying for us & for our Cause.

Did you get a short note which I sent you some months ago? I asked you to tell Dr. Costello that Gerard Crofts wished to be remembered to him. Gerard is a fine chap & he is quite well. Give my regards also to the Doctor. Ask him to convey my compliments to Wm. FitzMaurice & family.

I was near forgetting to inquire about my namesake. I was told about his success at Kilsheelan. Had he any other outing last season?

I have little room I find for more. Give my love to Peggy, Rosy, Tommy &c., I hope they are all in the very best of health. Is Kathleen still Miss Lavery? She should not be so cold to admirers. Respects to her. To yourselves I would wish to send more than I can put into mere words. Accept at least my warmest wishes for health & happiness in your family.

Very sincerely yours,

(Signed) AUSTIN STACK.

Write me the longest letter ever sent out of Ballybunion as soon as you find time.

