

W.S. 1.113

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21
BUREAU STAIRS MILITARY 1913-21
NO. W.S. 1113

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS.

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 1.113.....

Witness

James Brennock,
"Sunville",
Rathcormac,
Co. Cork.

Identity.

Member of Fermoy Battalion Column;
O/C. Rathcormac Company I.R.A.

Subject.

Irish volunteer activities,
Fermoy area Co. Cork, 1916-1921.

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

Nil

File No. S. 2397.....

Form B.S.M. 2

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1919-21
BURO STAIRS MILE 1919-21 1.13
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STATEMENT BY JAMES BRENNOCK

"Sunville", Rathcormac, Co. Cork.

I was born in Doon, Araglin, Kilworth, Co. Cork, on 19th February 1896. My parents were farmers.

I was educated at Araglin National School where I attended until I reached the age of 14 years.

There was a company of the Irish National Volunteers in Araglin in 1914 but I was not a member. This unit faded away following John Redmond's appeal for recruits for the British army to fight for the alleged freedom of small nations.

I joined the Irish Volunteers when they were organised in Araglin towards the end of 1916. The pioneer members were:- Con Leddy, Sean O'Mahoney, William Mulvey. The strength of the unit at this stage was about 60. The first officers were:- O/C. Con Leddy; 1st Lieutenant, Sean O'Mahoney; 2nd Lieutenant, Michael Hynes.

The only type of drilling carried on at this time was foot drill. It was carried out in the fields around the district. I do not recollect that we had any arms in the early stages.

As well as attending parades, all Volunteers were engaged at this time in organising Sinn Fein. As a matter of fact, this organisation was mainly composed of the members of the Volunteers organisation and their families.

Early in 1917 I went to reside with my aunt in the Kilworth district. When Liam Lynch and some of the Volunteers from Fermoy visited this area on an organising tour I joined the new unit. This unit as well as the Araglin Company were independent units of Cork Brigade. There was no battalion organisation at this time.

During the conscription period in the Spring and Summer of 1918 there was a considerable increase in the membership.

Nearly every man in the parish of Araglin joined the Volunteers at this time. There were a number of raids for arms carried out and about 20 shotguns with some ammunition were obtained. The majority of the guns were surrendered voluntarily. In addition to the arms obtained in the raids a number of the Volunteers held shotguns which were their own or their parents' property. In all, I would say that the company had about 35 shotguns. When the threat of conscription had passed the older type of the new recruits faded out and the strength was between 70 and 80. There was no change in officers.

When the Fermoy Battalion was formed in the Spring of 1918, Araglin Company together with units from Fermoy, Ballynoe, Kilworth, Rathcormac, Glenville, Watergrasshill, Bartlemy and Castlelyons formed the new battalion. The battalion officers were:- O/C. Martin O'Keefe; Vice O/C. Mick Fitzgerald; Adjutant, Liam Lynch; Q.M., George Power.

I came to reside in Rathcormac in October 1918 and here I joined the local company. The officers of Rathcormac Coy. at the time were:- O/C. Tim Ring; 1st Lieutenant, William Cotter; 2nd Lieutenant, Tim Riordan.

The usual drills and parades were held in this area while a few raids for arms took place. When I joined Rathcormac Company there were between 60 and 70 members. The arms of the unit consisted of about 30 shotguns with some ammunition for same. This position continued throughout the area in the early portion of 1919.

The first activity of note in the area was the capture of Araglin R.I.C. barracks. This job was carried out by the local company, but I think that the battalion O/C. (Mick Fitzgerald at this time - he had replaced Martin O'Keefe) took part.

Drills and parades continued as usual throughout the

Summer of 1919, but, following the attack on a party of the Shropshire Light Infantry on their way to Church at Fermoy on Sunday, September 7th 1919, there was increased enemy activity in Rathcormac Company area. This was mainly due to the fact that one of the cars used in the raid was owned and driven by Jack Mulvey who was a member of the local company. Parties of military from Fermoy raided several houses in the district. Jack Mulvey was the only Volunteer arrested in the area in connection with this raid. I did not take part in this engagement.

Normal training activities continued to the end of the year but, at this time, the prisoners taken in connection with the attack on the Shropshire Light Infantry referred to in the previous paragraph were taken to Fermoy Courthouse from Cork Gaol at regular intervals for remand. The enemy authorities usually arranged that 3 members of the R.I.C. from Rathcormac would proceed to Fermoy on those days to strengthen the local garrison. Some members of the local company (Dan Daly, Paddy Canavan and James Brennock, Rathcormac, with Tom Connors, Dave Cotter, Jerh. Ahern (Watergrasshill Company) decided to ambush this party and disarm them. The proposal was notified to a member of the brigade staff (Geo. Power, I think) who immediately issued instructions to cancel the plans as a more important engagement (the attack on Aghern R.I.C. Barrack) was being arranged. As a result of this order, the attempt to disarm the R.I.C. party was not proceeded with. This would be about mid-January 1920.

On 31st January 1920, arrangements were made to carry out an attack on Aghern R.I.C. Barracks. Some members of the Rathcormac Company were detailed to capture a patrol of three R.I.C. men who usually left the barrack about 7.30 p.m. With Dan Daly, Paddy Canavan, Wm. Cotter, Ed. Cotter, Batt. Mahoney and Michael Condon I proceeded to Ballyvolane Cross about 2½ miles from Aghern. We had already posted a scout

to advise us of the enemy movements, but when we arrived at the Cross he reported that the patrol had not passed up to that time. It was then about 8 p.m. I moved down the road in the direction of Aghern but had only gone about 30 yards when I heard somebody approaching. I immediately jumped across the roadside fence and in a short time I saw that the R.I.C. party were on their way. I returned to the Cross where the other members of the party were and I had only reached them when the enemy patrol put in an appearance. We immediately rushed them, ordering 'Hands up'. They put up no resistance and were disarmed and taken prisoners. We were later informed that the attack on Aghern barracks was not to be proceeded with as it was discovered that a large party of military in several lorries were operating in the area. We were, however, told to hold our prisoners for about four hours and then to release them. The prisoners were detained until about 1 a.m. on 1st February 1920. We captured two long Webley revolvers, a repeating shotgun and two hand-grenades together with about 50 rounds of ammunition.

On 16th February 1920, representatives from Fermoy, Glenville, Watergrasshill, Bartlemy, Rathcormac, Araglin and Ballynoe companies were assembled with some members of the brigade and battalion staffs for another attempt to attack Aghern R.I.C. Barracks. Parties were detailed for road-blocking and outpost duty while parties of riflemen were covering off the front and rear of the building. There was also a party detailed to lay a charge of gelignite at the gable-end of the barracks which was a detached building standing on high ground about 5 ft. above road level. The barracks was about 10 yards from the road. The party of riflemen covering the front of the building were in position behind the fence on the opposite side of the road. This party numbered about twelve and were all armed with rifles

while a similar party covering the rear were armed - six with rifles and the remainder with shotguns.

I was with the party of nine men carrying crowbars and sledges who were to lay a charge of gelignite in the gable of the building. I was in charge of a stock of revolvers and hand grenades which were to be distributed to this party immediately the gable wall was breached and we were to dash through the opening made by the charge of explosives.

When fire was opened on the barracks about 10 p.m. by the parties at the front and rear, our party set about laying the charge of gelignite. We had only been operating about 10 minutes when grenades were dropped through loopholes in the gable-end by the besieged R.I.C. These grenades were dropped through loopholes which could not be observed from the outside as they were hidden by the thick covering of ivy which covered the wall. One of our party, Michael Condon, was seriously wounded, while a couple of others received slight wounds. Having regard to this unforeseen development we were unable to lay the explosive charge as arranged and had to withdraw. The attack was continued for about 20 minutes when all the attackers withdrew as there was no hope of capturing the barracks when our party were unable to breach the gable end of the building.

This engagement was in charge of Geo. Power and, as far as I can recollect, others who took part were Paddy Egan, Jack Egan, Martin Condon (Bartlemy), Tim Ring, Maurice Regan, Dan Daly, Paddy Canavan, Wm. Cotter, Ned Cotter, Batt Mahoney, Michael Condon, Jim Brennock (witness), Lar Condon, Paddy Ahern, Mick Mansfield, Dan Cronin and several others whose names I cannot now remember.

About three weeks after the attack on Aghern, six members of the Rathcormac Company were arrested. Within a day or two I received word from the Battalion I.O. (Paddy

Ahern) to go 'on the run' as I was to be arrested with Wm. Ryan and Richard Cotter. I received this message about 4 p.m. and did not sleep at home that night. The enemy raided for me as the message from I.O. stated. Wm. Ryan and Ned Colbert were arrested (it will be noted that the name given in the I.O.'s. message was Richard Cotter - this was apparently an error and, as a result, Colbert was not advised of the impending raid. Wm. Ryan was not available when word was sent to him). This would be about the first week in March 1920.

On instructions from Brigade H.Q. ^{witness} (Jim Brennock) with Dan Daly lay in ambush outside the R.I.C. Barracks, Rathcormac with the intention of shooting Sergeant Burns, R.I.C. who had given the Condon family a bad time as a result of the wounding of Mick Condon in the attack on Aghern Barracks. This was about St. Patrick's Day 1920.

At the end of March 1920 I returned to Araglin where I took part in the destruction of the evacuated R.I.C. post at Easter.

About this time I went to Clonmel where I attended a course in motor driving and running repairs at the O'Gorman School of Motoring. My name while in Clonmel was James O'Mahoney.

I returned to Rathcormac in June 1920 where I went to work at Mulvey's. The usual parades and drills were being carried out while there were occasional raids for arms and on the mails. These raids were usually carried out by men selected according to the area in which the mails were to be taken and nearly all members of the company were engaged on these raids at one time or another. When the mails had been censored by the company officers they were usually returned to the back door of the Post Office in Rathcormac. These were the only activities in the area during the summer of 1920.

On September 18th, 1920, I reported with Maurice Cotter and Paddy Canavan to the home of Dan Daly at Bushey Park, Rathcormac. The brigade column was billeted in the area at the time and we were placed on guard duty. I was called off duty at 6 a.m. on September 19th and instructed to report to Liam Lynch, Brigade O/C. He instructed me to proceed to Moulane on the Glenville-Rathcormac road and to cut the telegraph wires. This action was taken in the hope that, as was usual, a patrol of R.I.C. would be sent to investigate and could then be ambushed by the column. I cut the wires as instructed and then took up a position with the column at Moulane about 8 a.m. We remained in the position until about 5 p.m. but the expected enemy patrol did not turn up.

Within a day or two the brigade column left the area and I returned to my job at Mulvey's where I continued to work as usual until about mid-October when I was sent by my employer to assist at threshing work for a neighbour. At this time I was company O/C. as Tim Ring had joined the column. While at the threshing it was found necessary to stop the machine for some repairs. While the machine was held up I noticed a large party of military with fixed bayonets coming into the haggard and with them my employer (Frank Mulvey) - a prisoner. I asked the man who was repairing the ~~threshing~~ set inside the machine to exchange places with me. I took his place inside the machine and the trap door which enabled me to get into the position was put in place. I then remained there until the enemy party had left the haggard.

When work restarted in the haggard I withdrew and returned to the vicinity of Rathcormac with the intention of ensuring that my employer's premises was locked up and secured, as I was sure that he had been taken away as a prisoner. About 7.30 p.m. I approached the rear entrance to his premises and, to my surprise, I found that he had been

released and was free to carry on his business. He informed me that he had been advised by his next-door-neighbour (Constable Kilbride, a member of the R.I.C.) to tell me to clear out as it was not proposed to arrest me. I was to be shot at sight.

Following this incident I went on the run and spent several nights sleeping out in haysheds. I was then informed that the nucleus of a column had been formed in the battalion and I linked up with same. The members of this unit were:- Wm. Buckley (Bronco); Michael Mansfield; Dan Cronin (Castlelyons); Paddy Egan; Jack Egan; Martin Condon (Bartlemy); Tim Ring; Maurice Regan and Witness (Rathcormac). All these members were drawn from the companies in the southern end of the battalion area. We lay in ambush on several occasions during November 1920 for small enemy patrols, but we never made contact with the enemy. This unit was under the joint control of Paddy Egan (Bartlemy) and Wm. Buckley (Castlelyons).

A somewhat similar unit, drawn from Fermoy, Kilworth and Araglin companies, was formed in the northern end of the battalion area and engaged in like activities about this time with similar results. The members of the unit were:- Con Leddy, Sean O'Mahoney, Michael Hynes, John O'Donovan, Owen McCarthy, Tom Brennock, John Doherty, Maurice Hyland, Batt Joyce and Denis O'Brien. Con Leddy was O/C.

On 7th December 1920, the members of both sections assembled at Desart House, Castlelyons. We moved that night to Scartbarry within about one mile of a proposed ambush site at Blackstone Bridge on the Cork-Fermoy road within about three miles of Rathcormac on the Cork side. We billeted that night in the Scartbarry area at Connor's and Ahearne's. On the morning of 8th December at 7 a.m. or so

the column, under Moss Twomey (brigade adjutant), took up positions at Blackstone Bridge. The members of the column were all armed with rifles taken in the Wesleyan raid (a raid on a church party of the Shropshire Light Infantry at Fermoy on 7th September 1919), or in the capture of Araglin R.I.C. Barracks. The ambush party also included about 30 shotgun men drawn from Castlelyons, Bartlemy, Watergrasshill and Fermoy units.

The members of the column and the shotgun men were divided into two sections. Each section contained a number of shotgun men. One section took up a position behind a stone-faced fence about 100 yards from the road on the north west side, while the second section took up a similar position to the south east side across the road. Both sections were on high ground overlooking the road. As Blackstone Bridge, which was midway between the two sections, could not (owing to the layout of the ground) be effectively covered, it was necessary to position four members of the latter party in an exposed position on the side of the hill. The four men selected had to dig themselves into shallow trenches on the side of the hill. They were Maurice Regan and Wm. Buckley in one trench, while Martin Condon and Mick Keane were in the second.

It was approaching dusk about 4 p.m. when the approach of an enemy convoy from Fermoy direction was signalled by our scouts. Just at this time a large funeral party in 30 to 40 horses and traps entered the ambush position. As the funeral party reached Blackstone Bridge the first enemy lorry appeared inside the ambush position and, as to open fire on the convoy would lead to the slaughter of many of the funeral party, the order to open fire was not given. The enemy party were allowed to pass through and the signal to withdraw was given.

The shotgun men from the local companies withdrew to their home areas as did Moss Twomey and the men from Fermoy. The remainder of the column billeted that night at Barry's (2), and Troy's, Monanig, and Leary's, Bartlemy.

On the morning of 9th December 1920, Con' Leddy O/C. proceeded to Waterpark on the Tallow-Fermoy road to select a site for an ambush of a military convoy which travelled this road at regular intervals. The remainder of the column moved that evening to Ballyard where we billeted at O'Connell's, Cronin's and Drumney's, Firmount. We remained in Ballyard area that night.

We assembled about 7 a.m. on the morning of the 10th and set out to move across the country to Waterpark (10 miles where we were to pick up the O/C., Con Leddy. On our way we sighted an enemy lorry on the Rathcormac-Aghern road. We were at the time about three-quarters of a mile distant from its position. The lorry was approaching Leary's Cross which was actually the junction of five crossroads, and we had to decide to get into position to ambush the party should they travel on any of the two roads going west.

With Mick Mansfield and Martin Condon, I took up a position on ^{LANE'S} Louis Hill south west of Leary's Cross between the two roads (Leary's Cross-Fort Richard, and Leary's Cross, Ballinterry). The lorry, after stopping at Leary's Cross, travelled on the Ballinterry road. From our position we opened fire at a distance of about 300 yards in order to hold the party until the remainder of the column, who had been endeavouring to cover the other roads, were able to get into a suitable position. When we opened fire the lorry stopped and the enemy party detrucked. They took cover behind the roadside fences and replied to our fire, but in the meantime - it was only a matter of a few minutes - the other members of the column were in position. The inter-

change of fire continued for about 20 minutes at which stage our party (Martin Condon, Mick Mansfield and Jim Brennock (witness) were joined by Wm. Buckley. As it was obvious that we should get into a position so that we could enfilade the road if we were to win this fight, we divided into two parties. Wm. Buckley and Mick Mansfield moved off to get into a position to enfilade the party on the road from the Leary's Cross side (eastern), while with Martin Condon I made my way towards an enfilading position on the western side.

When we reached the pre-arranged positions we called on the enemy to surrender. One member of the military party behind the roadside fence opened fire. He was killed in an exchange of fire and the others on the road surrendered. We then set about collecting our booty, but we suddenly discovered that there were still some soldiers taking cover in the lorry. When called on to surrender they were not inclined to do so, but a shot or two and a threat to bomb them out had the desired effect and they dismounted with their hands up. The enemy casualties were one killed, two wounded and six taken prisoner. We captured nine rifles and some hundreds of rounds of .303 ammunition. We had no casualties. A ^{map} ~~rough sketch~~ of the area is attached for information.

The members of the column who took part in this engagement were:- Wm. Buckley, Tom Brennock, Paddy Egan, Jim Brennock, Dan Daly, Mick Mansfield, Martin Condon, Sean O'Mahoney, John Egan, Dan Cronin, Mick Hynes, John Doherty, Maurice Hyland, John Donovan and Batt Joyce.

The wounded soldiers were moved to Walsh's cottage beside the ambush position, while the prisoners were taken to Crowley's house some short distance away where they were searched. They were later marched by Tom Brennock and Wm. Buckley to Leary's Cross where they were released.

The column then retired to Ballyard area where they billeted at Dooley's, O'Connell's and Cronin's. They remained in Ballyard until after midnight when they moved with the captured rifles to Clonmult where they spent the night of December 10th, 1920. We moved back next day to Barrafohona in our own area where we billeted at Tom Scanlon's and Pad Regan's.

In a day or two the men on the column from the Araglin area (Con Leddy, Sean O'Mahoney, Mick Hynes, John O'Donovan, Owen McCarthy, Tom Brennock, John Doherty, Maurice Hyland and Batt Joyce) returned to their home district, as it was approaching Christmas. The men from the southern section remained in their home area.

A few days before Christmas a large force of military from Fermoy carried out a big round-up in the Castlelyons-Rathcormac area. Amongst those taken prisoner was Mick Mansfield - a member of the column. Dan Daly went home some days before Christmas and Martin Condon went to Bartlemy. Both were captured some days after Christmas 1920. I was then left with Wm. Buckley (Bronco) and, about December 22nd I went home to Araglin, leaving Wm. Buckley on his own.

I returned to Rathcormac area on, I think, 29th December 1920, where I contacted Wm. Buckley (Bronco) at Ballyard. We were moving round the area and contacting the other members of the column until about mid-January, when the battalion column was reformed. All the members reported except Mick Mansfield, who had been arrested.

About this time there was a change of officers in the battalion. I think that, following a meeting at which Liam Lynch was present, the following officers were appointed:-
O/C. Con Leddy, Araglin; Vice O/C. Wm. Buckley, Castlelyons;
Adjutant, Michael Keane, Castlelyons; Q.M. Mick O'Connell, Bartlemy.

The following column officers were also appointed at this time:- O/C. Sean O'Mahoney, Araglin; Adjutant, Paddy Egan, Bartlemy; Q.M., Jim Brennock, Rathcormac. The column was also strengthened at this time by the recruitment of several new members including Paddy Canavan, Pat Daly, Pat Condon (Rathcormac); Denis Hegarty, Dan Leary, Matt Mulcahy (Glenville); Sean Cronin, John Flynn (Watergrass hill); John Egan, Mick O'Connell (Bartlemy); Mick Barrett, Michael Barrett, 'Pa' Colbert (Ballynoe); Jackie Bolster, Dick Willis and Joe Curry (Mallow Battalion); Sean Casey, Wm. Desmond, Thomas Cavanagh, Paddy Casey (Fermoy).

There was considerable enemy activity in the area in the Spring of 1921 and the column was continuously moving round. It is doubtful whether any week passed at this period in which the column did not take up ambush positions on more than one occasion, but we never succeeded in contacting the enemy. This was the position up to the first week in March 1921, when the column moved into the Mocollop area within $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles of Ballyduff, Co. Waterford.

The full column which, about this time numbered 36, took up a position on the north side of the Fermoy-Lismore road. They were extended on high ground over a distance of about 400 yards. The enemy patrol of six R.I.C. and Tans moved into the ambush position from the east. They had only just entered the eastern end of the position when fire was opened by some members of the column. One of the Tans was killed by the opening fire, but the others immediately took cover behind the fence on the opposite side of the road and replied to our fire. The engagement continued for about 15 minutes, but at this stage our scouts reported that enemy forces were on their way from Fermoy (7 miles away) and we were forced to withdraw. As a matter of fact, enemy planes were sweeping over the area before we moved out of our

position. There were no I.R.A. casualties.

When withdrawing from this engagement we were forced to make a big detour in order to avoid the enemy forces which were endeavouring in strength to surround us. We first withdrew in a north easterly direction towards Ballysaggart and then turned northwest over the mountain to Ballyheaphy, Araglin. We remained that night in Doon, Araglin, and moved next day across the river Blackwater to Castlelyons.

Within a week or so some members of the column moved into Fermoy to carry out reprisals against military personnel in view of the execution of I.R.A. prisoners in Dublin. This was a general order and we had instructions to shoot all military officers on sight. Only two soldiers were seen by the members of the column. Both were fired on and wounded. The members of the column on the job were, as far as I can recollect:- Con Liddy, Mick Keane, Jim Brennock (witness), Tom Brennock, Jim O'Mahony, Mick Hynes, Owen McCarthy, Pat Daly, Pat Canavan, Denis Hegarty, William Buckley and Bill Twomey.

We then retired across the country to Ballynoe and then on to Kilcronat where we met Dan Breen who was on his way to Mourneabbey area where, I think, Liam Lynch had Brigade H.Q. at the time. Breen was escorted through the area to Mourneabbey by some members of the column, but I do not recollect who made up the party.

Towards the end of March 1921, and early in April the column were engaged in building a dugout at Barrafohana. The making of this dugout involved a lot of work as an area about 22ft. x 18ft. had to be dug out of the centre of the mountain to a depth of about 11'6" or so. The clay had to be removed a considerable distance by horse and cart and then distributed in such a way as not to attract attention. The area which had been dug out was then floored. The sides

were lined with galvanised iron and sheeting boards. The roof, which was laid flat on suitable stanchions, was similarly constructed and was then covered with clay and turf mould to a depth of about $1\frac{1}{2}$ ft. The top sods, which had been stripped off when the digging began, were then replaced and, as the sods still carried a natural covering of mountain heath and furze, there was nothing to indicate that there was a dugout underground. A trapdoor 2'6" square was built into the centre of the roof. This door could be opened as required to let in the air. The exit from the dugout was through a hinged trapdoor covered, as in the case of the roof, at the end of a short stairway dug out of the mountain from one end of the underground room.

This dugout was supplied with beds and bedding taken from Wright's, Kilcor, a loyalist family who had evacuated their home and gone to England leaving a caretaker in charge.

During the last week in April 1921, the whole column was engaged on guard duty for two days and two nights at Hickey's, Tubbereenmire, where a meeting of officers from the southern brigades of the I.R.A. was being held. It was at this meeting that it was arranged to form the 1st Southern Division. Following this meeting I accompanied Wm. Buckley (Bronco) as escort with Dan Breen and Con Moloney on their journey to Tipperary Brigade area. We were rowed across the river Blackwater at Kilbarry by Pat O'Brien. We billeted that night at Lenehan's, Kilmurray, and moved next day through Araglin to Ballyporeen area where we parted with Breen and Moloney. We then returned to my old home in Araglin where we had been instructed to rest for a few days. However, when we arrived at my home we found that Ernie O'Malley had just reached there before us. As he desired to travel on to Glenville without delay, we immediately set out in his company to retrace our steps. When we reached the Blackwater at

Kilmurray there was no boat available at our side of the river and we had to call in a fisherman and his ghillie, who were using a boat on the river. The fisherman happened to be English and when we had crossed the river, Ernie O'Malley took the Englishman's name and also that of his ghillie. He informed them that if anything happened to our party they would be held responsible. It was later learned that the English visitor, who had only arrived from England that morning, returned to England that night. Having crossed the river, we took Ernie O'Malley to Cork I Brigade area in the vicinity of Glenville.

During May 1921, the column lay in ambush on several occasions but the expected enemy patrols or convoys did not arrive. We were also engaged about this time in helping members of the local companies to build dugouts; demolish bridges, blocking roads and cutting communications in the area. In the latter connection we gave up the idea of cutting wires and, instead, we cut telegraph poles over a distance of 3 to 4 miles at a stretch. We found that this was much more effective, as it was not as easy for the enemy to erect new poles as it was to string along a stretch of wire.

Towards the end of May or early in June 1921, Liam Lynch came into the area. He ordered the mobilisation of all available members of Rathcormac, Bartlemy and Castlelyons companies, as well as the battalion column. The assembled party - the locals armed with shotguns and hand grenades, the columns with rifles - took up position inside the roadside fence on the main Fermoy-Rathcormac road about one mile from the latter village. This was about 11 p.m. Four men were then sent to stage an attack on Rathcormac R.I.C. barracks with a view to inducing the military in Fermoy to send a party to the assistance of the garrison. Although

the attack on the barracks was continued for about 20 minutes the fire being replied to and Verey lights being sent up by the R.I.C. garrison - the military did not come from Fermoy as anticipated. The I.R.A. party withdrew from their position about midnight. The locals returned to their homes and the column to billets in Castlelyons area.

It was about this time also that, with two members of the local company, I was sent to commandeer petrol supplies from Michael O'Donovan, Main St., Rathcormac, and also from Dr. Barry, Rathcormac. This petrol was required for the burning of loyalist houses in the area as reprisals but, owing to the receipt of a countermanding order from Brigade H.Q., the destruction of the selected houses was not proceeded with.

Sometime in mid-June or so when, with other members of the column including Dick Willis and Jackie Bolster, I was in the dugout at Barrafohana, George Power (Brigade O/C.) arrived. He stated that he had been seen by a certain man during the course of the day when travelling by horse and trap in the area. The man who had seen him was named Willie Ginn. He was a Protestant. The Brigade O/C. was very suspicious of this individual and expressed the opinion that there was a possibility that the houses of the girls who accompanied him in the horse and trap that day might be raided. It was then agreed that, should the houses be raided, Ginn would be arrested and tried as a spy.

The Brigade O/C's. suspicions appear to have been well founded, as the houses in question were raided that night. Arrangements were then made to take Ginn prisoner and I was deputed to act as scout for Dick Willis and Jackie Bolster who were to do the job, but who did not know Ginn or the district too well. We left the dugout that night for Castlelyons, but we failed to locate our man (Ginn), so we returned to the dugout empty handed. We returned to Castle-

lyons next night when I saw Ginn walking along the road with an old man. I pointed him out to Dick and Jackie who immediately approached him and placed him under arrest. They threatened the old man with the direst penalties if he mentioned the arrest to anyone and he swore not to mention a word about the whole business. We brought Ginn along to Egan's, Desart, where he was later tried. He denied that he was a spy and said that, if he had given any information to the enemy at any time, he had done so unintentionally. He was given the benefit of the doubt by the Brigade O/C. and, instead of the death sentence, he was ordered to leave the country. He was driven to Cobh next day and was deported from there.

On 28th June 1921, the column proceeded to Rathcormac area where it billeted. The local company was mobilised to block the main Rathcormac-Fermoy road. These steps were taken with a view to carrying out an attack on the R.I.C. in Rathcormac and especially to shoot an R.I.C. man who had fired at a civilian a few days previously. It was known that this particular R.I.C. man usually attended service each Sunday and Holyday about 12 noon. With Dan Daly I entered Rathcormac village about 3 a.m. on the morning of 29th June. We took up a position at a window in a hayloft in Mulvey's yard. From our position we controlled the front door of the R.I.C. barracks at a distance of about 50 yards. The remainder of the column had taken up various positions along the street with a view to being in a position to open fire on our R.I.C. friend or friends immediately he appeared on the street. However, all our arrangements were in vain as no enemy forces appeared on the street and our party withdrew about 1 p.m.

At this time the column was continually harassed by large forces of the enemy in endeavours to round it up, but

with the co-operation of the friendly members of the public, it managed to evade capture on numerous occasions. The members took up ambush positions on various roads throughout the area on a number of occasions, but failed to contact the enemy. These activities continued up to the Truce and there was hardly a week in which positions were not occupied on at least three occasions - very often at extreme ends of the battalion area within the week.

On the night of 10th July 1921, the column took up a position at Staples Cross, Castlelyons, about 11 p.m. to await a cycle patrol of 40/50 military which was reported to have travelled the Fermoy-Castlelyons road on two nights in the previous week. Although the column remained in position until 6 a.m. on 11th July, the enemy party did not put in an appearance. We withdrew from our position that morning to Fort Richard where we billeted until the Truce at 12 noon, when I returned home.

My rank at the Truce was O/C. Rathcormac Company.
The strength of the company was about 70.

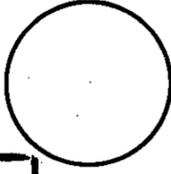
Signed: James Brennock
(James Brennock)
Date: 9¹⁵ March 1955.

Witness: P. O'Donnell
(P. O'Donnell)
Investigator

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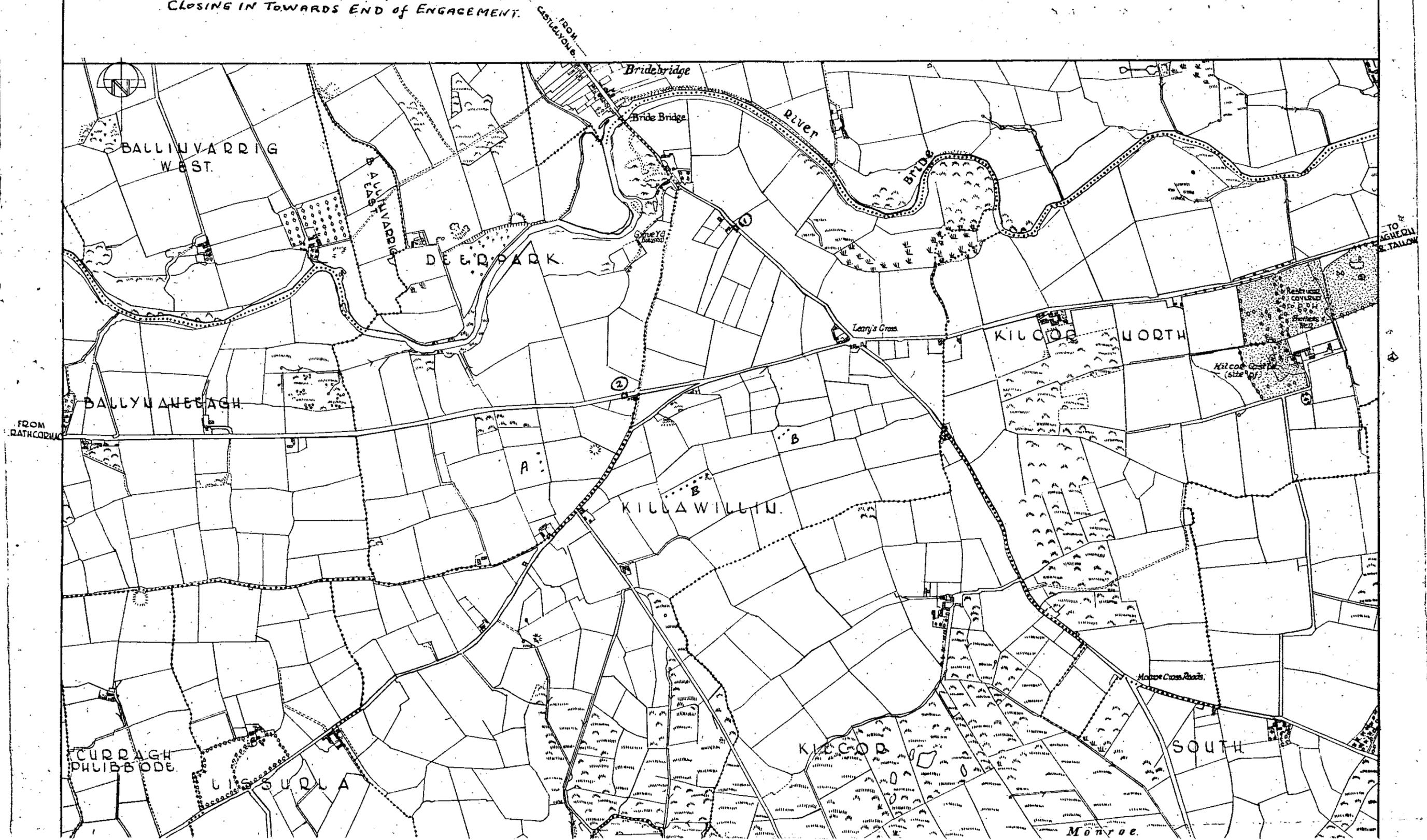
BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21

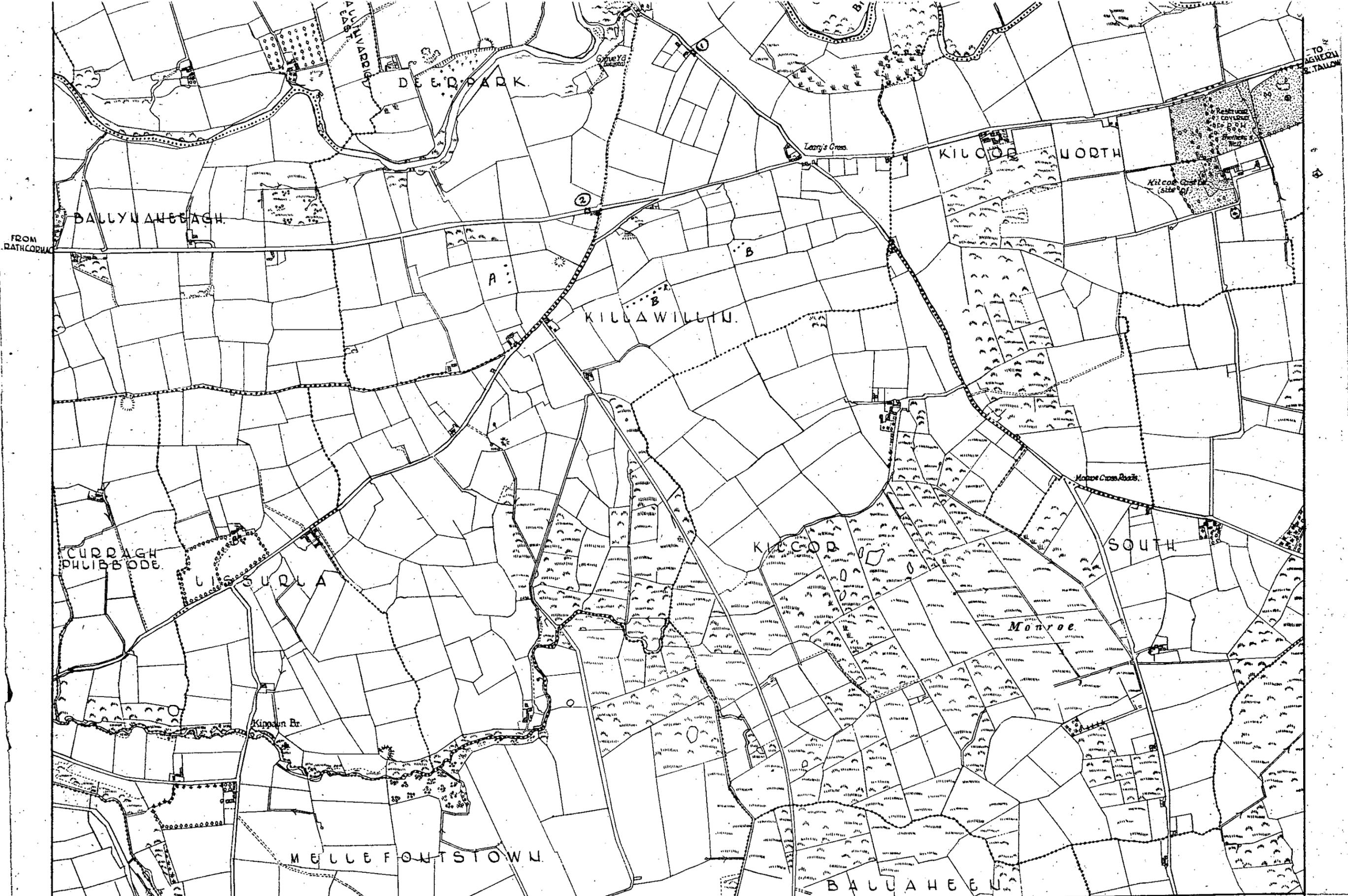
BUDO STAIRS MILEATA 1913-21

No. W.S.

- ① POSITION of Lorry WHEN SEEN.
 - ② " " " " STOPPED BY I.R.A. fire.
 - A. Lorry HALTED BY RIFLE FIRE FROM 3 MEN HERE.
- LEARY'S CROSS**
- B. REMAINDER of COLUMN IN THESE POSITIONS UNTIL CLOSING IN TOWARDS END of ENGAGEMENT.

CASTLELYONS DISTRICT.





SCALE - SIX INCHES TO ONE STATUTE MILE.

10 Chains	0	10	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	90	100
40 Perches	0	40	80	120	160	200	240	280	320	360	400

10 Chains = 200 Paces } 1 Mile.
40 Perches = 80 Paces } 1 Mile.